

# The Commoner.

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## LABOR

The following essay was written by William J. Bryan in his sophomore year and was awarded first prize:

From the smallest thing that God has created, to the heavenly bodies that perform their revolutions through unlimited space, there is nothing that was not made for some purpose, nothing that has not something to do, and nothing that does not cheerfully perform its work. The tiniest herb sends out its roots, puts forth its leaves and draws its nourishment from earth and air. The fish of the sea and the fowls of the air gather their support from the elements in which they abide. All brute creation goes to and fro in search of food, while the earth itself moves in harmony with other spheres.

Of all the works of God, man, and man only, is willing to be idle. If it were true that he has been developed from the lower order of animals, even then we might be surprised that he has not more nearly followed their example in providing for his wants; but when we consider that he was made in the image of One, all-wise and all-powerful, astonishment takes the place of wonder.

We know that, in the lower animals, labor is not only good, but necessary. Is it not also true with man? His physical being demands food; his mental and moral faculties also require nourishment, though of a different kind, and, their sphere being higher, the privation is more felt. Hence the necessity for labor is greater with man than with the lower animals.

The world is large and wonderfully varied in its productions; we find here is a rich abundance, not only of the necessities, but also of what are termed the luxuries of life. But all of these blessings do not fall from the trees or rise from the ground ready for use; much toil is required to prepare them for the many wants of man.

The cotton must be planted, cultivated and gathered; nor is the work done then, it must be woven into cloth and fashioned into garments before it is ready for wear. Coal lies in the ground, but it must be dug up before it can be used to benefit mankind. Gold and silver are of no value as they lie hidden in the earth, but can be formed into articles of beauty and use. God has given the material. Man must shape it. It is possible to grow in size, but strength comes only with exercise. No one can become strong in body without much patient, and, we may say, continued labor, for no sooner does he relax his efforts than the receding tide bears him back whence he started. The talent, which is hidden in the earth, will soon be taken away. Intelligence is necessary to direct physical force, and the training of the mind, like that of the body, is accomplished slowly and steadily. He must be diligent who desires spiritual growth. "My

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A PUZZLING LIKENESS.

Courtesy of Baltimore Sun.

father worketh hitherto and I work," said our Saviour; every true Christian should say the same. That is not worth having which is not worth tolling for; there is no distinguished victory without hard fighting to win it; great honors do not come without great exertions. Success, glory and honor have been placed as the rewards of the diligent; defeat, misery and shame are the lot of the idler.

If it were necessary to refer to history it must be easily shown that all the nations which have, from time to time, swayed the scepter over the world, have risen, while their people were industrious, and fallen, when idleness became the law of the land. The splendor of Greece and Rome departed, not while their great men lived and guided the affairs of state, but when these were gone and luxury and avarice prevented others from rising to take their places. With idleness comes luxury, with luxury avarice and vice, and ruin and death are not far distant.

Though there have been wonderful changes throughout the ages past, yet this has ever been true, that excellence is the result of earnest labor. From the time when Homer wrote until now, the same patient industry has been required to produce the masterpieces of literature. Demosthenes spoke with pebbles in his mouth to overcome an impediment of speech and addressed the raging seas that he might learn to conquer the tumult of the forum. Today there are impediments to be overcome; today the tumult in the market places is as great as then.

If it were possible to rise in the estimation of our fellow men without an effort, honor would lose its charms. What pleasure would there be in a title which all claim, or in an honor which all enjoy? We value that most which

has cost us more of toll, or of its equivalent, to obtain. Gold is more precious than silver, because it is more difficult to procure; marble brings a higher price when polished than when in its crude state, because much labor is necessary to bring it to perfection.

Natural talent does not remove the necessity for labor. Even the flame of Genius burns more brightly when fanned by busy hands. Indeed, it would cease to exist if not employed.

"The lamp of Genius, though by nature lit,  
If not protected, pruned and fed with care,  
Soon dies, or runs to waste with fitful glare."

Man's work is not done when he has provided for his own wants, nor is his happiness secured. Often the greatest pleasure comes, not with the gratifications of our own selfish desires, but with the thought of bringing happiness to those about us.

The common weal demands that every one should be employed. Men are dependent upon each other. All were not created for the same work.

"To some, we find  
The ploughshare's annual toll assign'd:  
Some at the sounding anvil glow;  
Some the swift-sliding shuttle throw;  
Some, studious of the wind and tide,  
From pole to pole our commerce guide;  
While some of genius more refin'd,  
With head and tongue assist mankind."

No class of men can cease from labor. There is a place for all, there is a work for all. No drones are needed in the human hive.

The idle are not only unnecessary, but dangerous to society. From their ranks come all criminals. The industrious have neither time nor