

As Marylanders, so long and so intimately associated with this class of our community, we cannot but feel a deep solicitude in their future welfare. Their present condition has been forced upon them without any agency of their own. They are not responsible for it. From former services and dependence they demand our sympathy and assistance, and all impediments, if any exist, to such employments and avocations as they are fitted for, should be removed. But to admit the negro to social and political equality, is contrary to long established habit—revolting to taste and judgment, and violative of the laws of God, who, in His own wise providence, has placed the two races as far asunder as light is from darkness. The welfare of each demands that they shall move in their appropriate spheres. When freed from it, commotion, agitation and conflict will inevitably follow, and a war of races, ending only in the extermination of the weaker, will be the end of the experiment.

Labor then being the key to production, and absolutely necessary to the cultivation of the soil and its full development, it becomes interesting to investigate the nature of labor—what it accomplishes! what are its wants and duties! and how ought it to be dealt with?

WHAT IS LABOR?

According to Webster, labor is defined to be “physical toil, bodily exertion, muscular strength, painful effort, directed to some useful end.” In agricultural pursuits, it encounters fatigue, exposure to all weather—heat and cold, wet and dry, frost and snow. It has one never ending round of duty, from sun to sun, from week to week, and from month to month. There is no period of the year at which farm labor may not be usefully and profitably employed. Then, what does labor accomplish?

Labor fells the forests; drains the swamps; furrows and plows the fields; sows, reaps and harvests the crops; threshes, clears and prepares them for market; makes roads, digs canals, builds houses, towns, villages and cities. From the sowing of the seed to the harvesting of the crop—from the humblest cottage to the palace and full-grown city, this indispensable agent, labor, is always present—always toiling—always necessary. Its *wants*, then, obviously become the next subject of inquiry.

The wants of labor, primarily, are food, clothing and shelter. But since the system of involuntary labor has been abolished, and we now buy labor like any other commodity in the market, its demands must not be neglected. In this age of scarcity and competition, not only the physical, but also the moral and intellectual wants of labor must be supplied. The wages of labor like every other commodity are regulated by the laws