

boundless heroism and self-sacrifice, and left me without a doubt that it was within that movement Jesus of Nazareth taught two thousand years ago. Because we have not understood it, we and our professional brothers, the doctors, have fallen into a way of assuming a tone of superiority and aloofness which are funny examples of little human pride. Do let us learn to see that the trade unions are for workers the same that our organisations are for us—bonds of brotherhood and protection, designed for mutual aid, conference, stimulation and uplift. Their faults are like ours and the doctors'—faults of imperfect human nature which is going to school for the lessons of co-operative effort. We may have been excused for not knowing this movement so long as it was directly confined to men, but now that women and young girls down to fifteen years of age are in industry by the millions, and are also forming their protective and upreaching organisations, we are able to see that this movement is just another variant of our own.

The question then comes home, What is our relation to this world of work? I think the answer is: We are morally and honourably bound to do nothing that crushes it down and makes it struggle harder, and we should be glad and thankful to do everything we can to help it upward and onward.

The immediate demands of this world of work lie along three lines: Education, hours of work, wages.

As to education, I think we do keenly realise and thoroughly understand our obligations to our less fortunate sisters. Our own sense of the needs of our own profession makes us insist on honest and sufficient educational standards, and in this we are helping all workers, even though we are unconscious of doing so, for so close is our relation that every minimum standard we can fix and assure helps to bring up standards for other groups, and makes it easier for others to demand and to attain a fitting preparation.

As to hours of work, we are not quite so clear-headed. We have not known enough history, and so we have not understood what the vast immense world movement of labour for a shorter working day has been, and what its significance. Eager to throw ourselves into the crises of our own tasks, which are indescribably dramatic because they hinge always on the acutest questions of life and death, we have resented any interference with hours of work, and have echoed the sentiment too often skilfully suggested by hospital directors personally interested, that a "profession" must

not become tainted with "trades unionism," and that legal ordering of working hours would savour of trades unionism and destroy professional ethics. All solemn pharisaism! And hospital directors know it is. And because our work is fascinating in the extreme, they have used us to help crush back the rightful demand of those co-workers whose work is purely laborious and devoid in itself of any dramatic or intellectual joy; those who deal only with dishes, mops, machines, and drudgery. I am sorry to think how often, for instance, the great need for shorter hours of the workers in all kinds of hospital institutions in Massachusetts has been denied in the Legislature, with the help of nurses and doctors, who have appeared before it to declare that their professional honour would be injured if the law fixed hours of work. So because of their sensitive pride, other classes of toilers have been deprived of the protection that they needed. If you would clearly understand what overstrain is in the world of work, read Josephine Goldmark's monumental book, "Efficiency, Fatigue." To the fact that I was privileged to collect some of this material for her I owe all such knowledge as I have myself of the difference between work and overwork—the one, blessed, healthful, inspiring, even if the labour involved is of the humblest order—as it often must be; the other, crushing, saddening, or brutalising, destroying all joy in work, taking the light out of the day.

The whole long history of the labour movement shows the effort to so adjust the burden of toil that the worker may feel joy in his work. The struggle for the shorter working day is the struggle to live—to be a human being—to have a soul. It is this struggle we must learn to comprehend, for we have a relation to it that we do not now understand, and there is a claim upon us which we are not fulfilling when we oppose legislation to limit the hours of work in hospitals.

As to wages, our conscience is again clear. We know that we must not undersell: that this is treachery to fellow-workers, and helps to drag down even remote classes of such. Be it frankly admitted that this is a fundamental principle of unionism, and a most necessary and indispensable one, so long as we have our present social system. The material basis of life is the foundation on which we stand to build up the higher things, and if this basis is not secure, we all go down together. To the labour movement we owe examples of heroism and loyalty in holding this principle that we, a fortunate and on the whole privileged set

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)