

**"WOMAN'S RIGHT TO
LABOR;" OR, LOW WAGES
AND HARD WORK: IN
THREE LECTURES**

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"Woman's Right to Labor;" Or, Low Wages and Hard Work: In Three Lectures by Caroline H. Dall

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CAROLINE H. DALL

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"Woman's Right to Labor ;"

OR,

LOW WAGES AND HARD WORK:

In Three Lectures,

DELIVERED IN BOSTON, NOVEMBER, 1859.

BY CAROLINE H. DALL.

"Thank God ! a song for the women as well as the men."

CHARLES AUGUSTER.

BOSTON:
WALKER, WISE, AND COMPANY,
245, WASHINGTON STREET.
1860.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859,

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Massachusetts.

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BOSTON:

PRINTED BY JOHN WILSON AND SON,
21, School Street.

"RES, NON VERBA."

TO

ANNA JAMESON,

In Grateful Commemoration

OF

HER LETTER TO LORD JOHN RUSSELL,

1850

"Plain Words" are Indicated.

"And could he find
A woman, in her womanhood, as great
As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,
The *twain together* well might change the world."

"But he never mocks;
For mockery is the fume of little hearts."

"For, in those days,
No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn;
But if a man were halt or hunched, — in him,
By those whom God had made full-fed and tall,
Scorn was allowed, as part of his defect."

GUINEVERE, in *Lights of the King*.

P R E F A C E.

MORE than two years ago, I conceived the thought of twelve lectures, to be written concerning Woman; to embrace, in four series of three each, all that I felt moved to say in relation to her interests. No one knew better than myself, that they would be only "twelve baskets of fragments gathered up;" but I could not distrust the Divine Love which still feeds the multitudes, who wander in the desert, with "five loaves and two small fishes."

Nine of these lectures have now been offered to my audiences. In the first three, I stated Woman's claim to a civil position, and asked that power should be given her, under a professedly republican government, to protect herself. In them I thus stated the argument on which I should proceed: "The right to education—that is, the right to the education or drawing-out of all the faculties God has given—*involves* the right to a choice of vocation; that is, the right to a choice of the end to which those

faculties shall be trained. The choice of vocation necessarily *involves* the protection of that vocation,—the right to decide how far legislative action shall control it; in one word, the right to the elective franchise."

Proceeding upon this logical formula, I delivered, in 1858, a course of lectures stating "Woman's Claim to Education;" and this season I have condensed my thoughts upon the freedom of vocations into the three following lectures. There are still to be completed three lectures on "Woman's Civil Disabilities." I should prefer to unite the twelve lectures in a single publication; but reasons of imperative force have induced me to hurry the printing of these "Essays on Labor." Neither Education nor Civil Disability can dispute the public interest with this subject. No one can know better than myself upon what wide information, what thorough mental discipline, all considerations in regard to it should be based. I have tried to keep my work within the compass of my ability, and, without seeking rigid exactness of detail, to apply common sense and right reason to problems which beset every woman's path. At the very threshold of my work, I confronted a painful task. Before I could press the necessity of exertion, before I could plead that labor might be honored in the public eye, I felt that I must show some cause for the terrible earnestness with

which I was moved; and I could only do it by facing boldly the question of "Death or Dishonor?"

"Why not leave it to be understood?" some persons may object. "Why not leave such work to man?" the public may continue.

In answer to the first question, I would say that very few women have much knowledge of this "perishing class," except those actually engaged in ministering to its despair; and that the information I have given is drawn from wholly reliable sources, as the reader may see, but can be obtained only by hours — nay, days and weeks — of painful and exhausting study. Very gladly have I saved my audience that necessity: greatly have I abbreviated whatever I have quoted. But I *meant* to drive the reality of that wretchedness home: I *wanted* the women to whom I spoke to feel for those "in bonds as bound with them;" and to understand, that, to save their own children, male and female, they must be willing to save the children of others. It will be observed that I have said very little in regard to this class in the city of Boston; very little, also, that was definite in regard to our slop-shops. The deficiency is intentional. I would not have one woman feel that I had betrayed her confidence, nor one employer that I had singled him out as a victim; and it is almost impossible to speak on such subjects without finding the application made to one's hand.