



The Workingman's Mite, from "Harper's Weekly"

Date

published May 20, 1871

Primary Maker

Thomas Nast

Medium

Wood engraving on newsprint

Description

American Reconstruction Era. "Through his illustration of an impoverished wife pleading with her husband, Nast conjures middle-class anti-union sentiments. In the decades following the Civil War, support for trade unions was mixed: some believed that workers should trust their employers instead of union leaders who engaged in strikes. Contrasting with the wealthy family in the background, the worker contributes his hard-earned wages to the Workingmen's Association, against the interests of his wife and children. Nast portrays the woman as a moral foil to her husband: slightly hunched over with an empty basket, she gazes at up at him in desperation. Her compromising position mirrors her economic dependence allowing the viewer to empathize with her situation and condemn his actions." (SOURCE: Mary Bei Prince, "Thomas Nast's Conception of Nineteenth Century Women", 2019)

Dimensions

Composition: 13 1/2 x 9 1/8 in. (34.3 x 23.2 cm) Sheet: 16 1/8 x 11 1/2 in. (41 x 29.2 cm)