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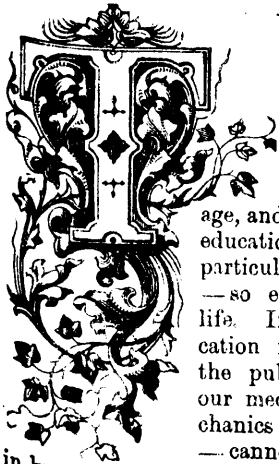
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HOW MECHANICS' INSTITUTES COULD BE MADE POPULAR SCHOOLS OF TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.



HERE can be no doubt that if Mechanics' Institutes were properly conducted they might be made the means of supplying to those who have to leave school at an early age, and consequently with a deficient education, those missed studies—particularly of a technical character—so essential to their success in life. In fact, until technical education receives more attention in the public schools of the country, our mechanics—and the word mechanics has a very wide signification—cannot be expected to be equal

in knowledge and skill to the mechanics of other countries under better training and enjoying special advantages; therefore, if Mechanics' Institutes, by properly applying the Government grant and other funds at their disposal, can fill up the blank in technical knowledge which exists in the education of children leaving public schools half educated, they will be performing a most meritorious task, and deserving of the assistance from the educational department of the country, in addition to the small annual sum voted by the Legislature.

The early age at which so many boys, of necessity, are compelled to leave school to assist, by their small earnings, their parents in providing for a large family, cuts them off from any opportunity, thereafter, of recovering that lost knowledge, which they would have received had they remained a few years more at school; and the only way by which it is possible for them to recover this loss is by self-culture, or by attending evening classes; and if evening classes can be so organized as to obtain teachers capable of teaching, practically, the simple elements of a technical education to those who have never received any at all, even that, followed up by self-culture and access to more advanced technical books, would be a great point gained, and ultimately lead to better results.

Before proceeding further with these remarks, it would be well to define who we understand to come under the denomination of mechanics, with the view of classifying those who would be qualified, under any new arrangement that might be adopted, to take an actual lead in the affairs of Mechanics' Institutes, as some difference of opinion appears to exist as to where the line of distinction should be drawn.

By the term mechanics, we generally understand that class who earn their livelihood in the present, or have done so in the past, altogether by the use of their hands—that is working mechanics, and it is to this class especially that technical education is so necessary, although to some trades it is more essentially requisite than to others.

For the sake, therefore, of distinction, we will assume that all those to whom the study of technics enter more or less into their profession or trades, may be classified as follows:—

CLASS I.—Consisting of those called professionals. Consisting of civil engineers, architects, astronomers, surgeons, chemists, dentists, &c. Mechanism of some sort or other is slightly connected with each of the above professions, and although the persons practising those professions may not be able to make the instruments they require (although some can), yet they can invent or direct the construction of many useful implements for mechanical appliances.

CLASS II.—May be presumed to comprise certain mechanical trades or lines of business, in which mechanism is an auxiliary only, but not an absolute necessity in all cases. Now to such as follow these trades technical education is not so absolutely necessary as to those of the third class. The second class we will suppose to consist of tailors, shoemakers, plasterers, paper-hangers, and other trades of a similar character.

CLASS III.—Which includes a variety of trades—would then consist of such as mechanical engineers, working machinists, bridge-builders, carpenters, carriage-makers, painters, smiths, plumbers, metal-workers, agriculturists, &c. To this class the elements of a technical education are most essentially necessary.

Each of these classes, therefore, in any community, would be justly entitled to take part in Mechanics' Institutes. In our previous articles which appeared in