

therefore, really exist in this country any opportunity for youths to become skilled workmen. This is the third and last of the main reasons why Americans avoid mechanical pursuits, whenever they can.

In the report from which I have already quoted we read :

"Nowadays, it is impossible for a boy to acquire anything like a fair knowledge of a trade. Besides the principal causes, machinery and the great subdivision of labour, there are several minor ones, among which is the fact that it does not seem to be the duty of any competent person to instruct the boy. The foreman is frequently a poor mechanic, not hired for his proficiency in his calling, but simply for his capacity for driving men. Great evil befalls the apprentice, because he unconsciously learns to skimp his work in his attempt to please the rushing foreman. The employer, too, in many cases knows little or nothing about the trade, and consequently cannot teach it. . . . The ancient practice was for the apprentice to work under the master's eye, and be taught by the master, who was responsible, both legally and socially, for the apprentice's advancement. . . . It is difficult to call to mind a modern trade, however, unless it be a small tailor or dress-maker, in which the principal stands or sits at the side of the apprentice. The 'learners,' who are not so poor as to begin by running around or cleaning up the workrooms, are usually turned over to the foreman or forewoman, to do such task work as they seem fitted for, with such instruction, verbal or technical, as the patience or consciousness of the chief worker and director may suggest. In factories or large establishments the junior hands only see the chiefs of the establishment as they walk to and fro, and there is seldom a word of inquiry, called out by some special

incident, either for praise or blame. A printing-office that takes juniors is an illustration of this *laissez-faire* system. The boy runs errands, cleans the forms, fetches and carries, until some one in authority discovers that he is willing and has brains. Then he is allowed to pick up and sort type, or do some work for the office which is not good enough for the practical printer, and thus he works his way slowly until he is allowed to set type for himself, and little by little learn the trade. Much depends on the employer's interest in his shop and his people, much on the foreman, much on the men, but most of all on the lad himself. He learns his trade somehow, it can scarcely be said that it has been taught him. Such was not the old-time idea, nor is it the true meaning of the word 'apprentice.'"

It will perhaps be a surprise to many persons to learn that the apprenticeship system is defunct; but such is the case. It is true that apprenticeship laws still appear on our statute books, and that in some workshops there are youths calling themselves apprentices; but the former are a dead letter, and the latter are misnamed, not being indentured, but free to walk out when they choose. And over the decay of apprenticeship no one seems to mourn. On the contrary, it is everywhere acknowledged to be utterly unsuited to the conditions of modern industry and the spirit of modern times. It had its proper place in the old days of settled conditions, authority, slight competition, craft-guilds, small businesses, and hand labour, when the master was himself a skilled workman, who made his apprentice a member of his family, cared for him in sickness and in health, gave him personal instruction, and took pride in him when he turned out to be a skilled journeyman. These days have passed away, never to return, and with them have gone the