

Apprenticeship System

The question of apprenticeships, which is exercising the minds of practical men from John o' Groat's to Land's End, is one of great moment in the history of the country. It is many years since the practice of binding by indenture to a trade—or apprenticing, i.e. to learn—was rendered obligatory by statute. In the reign of Elizabeth it was enacted that no person should exercise any "trade or mystery" without having served a seven years' apprenticeship. In consequence of the anomalies to which this legislation gave rise, the section relating to apprenticeships was repealed in 1814, and apprenticeship has since been a voluntary act.

In the days when handicrafts were at their zenith, youths were indentured for seven years. The master was a highly skilled workman. In many cases he could command a substantial premium. The term of years was considered no more than sufficient to instruct the learner in his "profession, craft or mystery" under a qualified man, teacher, or doctor—these terms being synonymous—and to reimburse the latter by service for the training received. This was always considered to be the only effectual means of acquiring arts as should enable a man to exercise them to advantage. The regularly trained artisan was the only one whose work could be relied on. The rise of trade unions, coincident with the fall of the old trade corporations, indicates that artisans felt the necessity for some more powerful and orderly protection than the mere operation of the blind principle of supply and demand. The advantages of apprenticeship are obvious, and the institution of some order or degree by which, in certain trades, a workman who has passed through a regular apprenticeship may be distinguished from the man who has not so qualified would probably meet with approval.

But it is the moral effect of an apprenticeship for a term of years at the most impressionable period of adolescence which needs emphasizing. The relationship between master and apprentice is a salutary one. In addition to the fulfilment of mutual obligations, enforceable at law, regular habits are formed, discipline is enforced, business principles are inculcated, punctuality and diligence are required, and the apprentice becomes an efficient, skilled artisan, to develop, peradventure, into a successful master and an exemplary citizen. In any event, generally speaking, his master has, in old-fashioned phraseology, "made a man of him," he "has a trade at his fingers' ends," and he goes out into the world with confidence in his ability to "fight the battle of life."

The Royal Commission Helpless

What, it may be asked, can be done to counteract the effect of the decadence of indentures? This is a vital question, for an answer to which we look in vain. It presented itself to the Poor Law Commission, who, be it observed, floundered to their conclusions and recommendations as men without faith. Its importance can be appraised by the fact that the class of persons consisting of all who serve their employers by hand labor (exclusive of domestic servants, shopmen, clerks, etc.) comprise upwards of a moiety of the present adult population of the British Isles. It is therefore exceedingly disappointing not to have from the Royal Commission anything more than a few academic suggestions with regard to the treatment of boys leaving school, and the exercise over them of paternal government until they are twenty-one.

When the age of leaving school was fixed at fourteen, it was presumably intended that this should be the minimum for the great majority. It has, however, proxed the maximum.

Moreover, the almost universal experience is that in large towns, boys, owing to the carelessness or selfishness on the part of their parents, or their own want of knowledge or forethought, for the parents very often have very little voice in the matter, plunge haphazard, immediately on leaving school, into occupations in which there is no future; where they can earn wages sufficiently high to make them independent of parental control and disciplined for the lower wages of apprenticeship; and whence, if they remain in, they are extruded when they grow to manhood.

Between 70 and 80 per cent of boys leaving elementary schools enter unskilled occupations. Thus, even when the boy ultimately becomes apprenticed to, or enters a skilled trade, these intervening years, from a national point of view, are entirely wasted. Indeed, the boy is shaped, during these years, directly towards evil.

A Social Menace

This problem owes its rise in the main to the enormous growth of cities as distributive centres—chiefly, and most disastrously, London—giving innumerable openings for errand boys, milk boys, shop boys, bookstall boys, van, lorry and trace boys, street sellers, etc. In nearly all these occupations the training received leads to nothing, and the occupation themselves are, in most cases, destructive of healthy development. This is regarded as a perpetual creating of future pauperism and a grave social menace.

The resultant evils may be thus summarized:

- (1) The recruiting of a chronically excessive army of unskilled casually employed, merely brute labor.
- (2) The illegitimate use by employers of successive relays of boys as cheap substitutes of adult workers.
- (3) The failure to provide for the healthy physical development of the town boy.
- (4) The creation of the hooligan.

"Nothing," says Mr. Sidney Webb, "is of any real use that does not stop the sources of pauperism. And one of these sources is our present failure in London to turn our boys into physically strong and industrially trained men. . . . We have on the one hand, a great development of employment for boys of a thoroughly bad type, yielding high wages and no training. We have, on the other hand, a positive shrinking—I mean disappearance—of places for boys in which they are trained to become competent men."

Hear, too, Professor M. E. Sadler: "Many callings connected with transport and communication, and some branches of manufacture, use juvenile unskilled labor to a degree which, if no counteracting measures are taken, must cause grave lasting injury to the national life."

With these appalling possibilities it might be expected that an attempt would have been made to go to the root of the matter.

Professor Sadler suggests compulsory attendance at continuation schools and the placing of employers (and in this category I must, alas! include the Government) under statutory obligations to allow persons under seventeen to attend courses of physical, technical and general instruction, for four hours a week at any rate, during the winter months, at the times of day when the pupils are not too tired to profit by the teaching!

Of what practical utility would such instruction be to a lad withdrawn at seventeen? Another strange suggestion is that in post offices in large towns classes should be organized (by co-operation with the local education authority) for the instruction of telegraph messengers, in shifts, during the hours of duty! Again "Cui bono?"

It is all very well to recommend, as the Commission does, after its prolonged and painstaking inquiry, that boys should be kept at school until they reach the age of fifteen instead of fourteen, but unless by the adoption of some drastic measures the present system of elementary education is revolutionized, the country will be no better off in the next generation or century than it is in this. Nor for the same reason can any importance be attached to the suggested exemption being granted only for boys leaving school to learn a skilled trade. These are only palliatives or, as in the case of the advised school supervision until sixteen and replacing in school of not properly employed, simply a perpetuation of the existing state of affairs which is deprecated by so many practical minds. By all means let us have improved facilities for technical education after the present age of leaving school is reached, but the ground work of such education should be commenced *pari passu* with other subjects in the Education Code, when the young mind is most impressionable, or before it has time to trouble or be troubled about the immediate future, when its memory is most retentive and its whole being is most responsive to the influences by which it is surrounded, moulded and fashioned. It can then readily assimilate all the knowledge which is imparted to it, and the teacher being impressed with the importance of physique, a continuous system of physical drill should be instituted, commenced during and continued after school hours.

The Need of Legislation

It is, of course, somewhat easy to stigmatize the present system of elementary and secondary education and methods of training by which a large proportion and the best time and energy of the youth of the country is rendered nugatory, but, as has been seen in regard to the Poor Law Commission, it is quite another matter to devise a more acceptable scheme. It would appear that nothing of a satisfactory or practical nature will be attempted voluntarily by any class or section of men. The change, therefore, that has to be effected, must be accomplished by legislation. If the legislature can impose statutory obligations in one case it is competent to do so in any, and it behoves the Government to take some drastic steps for the prevention of boy and girl labor, either in skilled or unskilled occupations, until certain salutary conditions have been fulfilled, and possibly to revert to compulsory apprenticeships to obviate the deplorable effects of the present haphazard system.

In order to discourage boys from entering occupations which offer no prospect of permanent employment, there might be established in connection with the labor bureau a special department for affording boys, parents, teachers and school managers, information and advice respecting suitable occupations for children leaving school. Moreover, with a view to fostering the old spirit of apprenticeship in the minds of tradesmen and others, it might be deemed expedient to offer an inducement to them to take apprentices in the shape of a remission of taxation, as is done now in the case of people visited with large families.

Practical Education

There is a widespread, growing feeling that the education imparted in our public elementary schools is too academic and should be more practical; that in training our youth for an industrial life, their education should be less literary and better calculated than it is in existing circumstances to adapt the child to a useful career. To this end our curriculum should be revised. The aim should be to develop character and intelligence rather than to merely impart book knowledge, the result of which is in so many cases deplorable, and is to be seen in the prolific crop of "howlers"—

in the publication of which some of our highly paid pedagogues take such a peculiar pride.

It may serve to indicate the trend of the times if this article concludes with a reference to a summary of recommendations submitted to the Printers' Managers' and Overseers' Association by Mr. Seeley, who, in the course of an able address, said it had been acknowledged that the technical training of apprentices had been "more honored in the breach than in the observance," and there was a lack of supervision of selection. For the technical training of the young Mr. Seeley suggested the obtaining of money from public bodies; the augmentation by Government of existing funds for technical training in the printing craft; greater facilities for lads attending existing classes in the day time, with classes practical men and abreast of the times, the more numerous, and instructors competent management of the classes to be in the hands of practical men and less in the hands of educationalists; and the leading men of the Master Federation, the trade societies and every worker to take an interest and pride in the technical classes, which should not only be for the technical training of the apprentice, but for the advancement of the whole craft.

There is much food for reflection in this brief summary and much leeway to be made up before the nation occupies the position she has to some extent lost by the lack of attention to the important matter of handicrafts and apprenticeship.—J. H. White.

CAN WOMEN KEEP SECRETS?

There is an ancient and reverend gibe against women that they cannot keep a secret. It has passed into a popular belief, and, like most popular beliefs, it is a popular fallacy that is extremely widespread.

Plutarch tells us that one of the three regrets of Cato's life was that he had confided a secret to a woman.

Hamlet cried, "Frailty thy name is woman!" And in various forms and phrases these judgments have been hurled at women all the ages. So popular have these charges become that they are accepted as truisms, and few men stay to examine them with questioning eye. A conundrum swept over America like an epidemic a few years ago which ran somewhat in this wise: "What are the three best ways of spreading news?"

The ungalant answer was, "Telegraph, telephone, and tell a woman."

Very frequently the reputation for a certain quality is fixed upon men or women. When we come to examine closely into the matter, asking ourselves whether the units of our own particular circle are guilty or otherwise of the popular stigma or virtue as the case may be, we find that there is as little foundation in truth for this as for most other popular superstitions.

Women like secrets, men do not. Woman in fact is a living secret herself. She has as yet been solved by very few men, though very many have spent much time and thought upon the problem. But as regards women keeping secrets there is one thing that must be kept in view; that is they are less likely to keep the secrets confided to them by another woman than those imparted to them by a man. Mrs. Smith will tell her husband some dark secret told to her by Miss Jones, or she may tell it again to her dearest female friend, under the strictest of seals. And in either case the news will be handed on. But let Mr. Tomlinson tell Mrs. Smith something which is troubling him, ask her help and get her to promise secrecy, Mrs. Smith would no more dream of telling anyone else than she would of attempting a single-handed expedition to the North Pole. Her loyalty will be beyond question and this loyalty is strengthened if the woman has any affection or genuine liking for the man.

The true explanation of this is undoubtedly that a woman is gratified by a man's confidence. She feels that he has paid her the greatest compliment in his power and she appreciates the fact to its full value. She knows that a woman gives her confidence to several; a man to one only. Even if the secret be one which reveals the man as a blackguard or as a breaker of the laws. She still respects his confidence; she still remains loyal. If the man has committed a forgery, say, he will be quite safe in telling a woman friend. He is never safe in telling a man; he can never be certain how his man friend will take his delinquency, for a man may divulge the secret rather than shelter a criminal. But women never had, nor ever will have, such respect for the laws and its terrors.

Numberless cases have occurred where a woman has laughed at the law, and assisted in the escape of its prey because she loved the victim better than the law. A man may be the greatest rogue unchanged but he will not be betrayed by the woman who has shared his confidence though not his guilt.

Test a woman and you are halfway to making her love you. How many cases are there on record of a woman betraying a man who has committed a crime?

Very few indeed, and these few can all be put down to one thing—revenge.

Do her an injury and her lips are unsealed, which, after all is the nature of men and women alike all the world over.

FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS

"Good heavens, John, how did you come to send such an ugly woman from the intelligence office? She scared the lady into fits."

"My dear, I did exactly as you told me, and informed the office we wanted a plain cook."—Baltimore American.

The German music teacher was endeavoring to be polite yet truthful. "Of course," he said, "your daughter does not yet read notes very good, and she strikes der wrong keys occasionally. But," he added with enthusiasm, "she plays der rests fine."

First Efforts of Writers

It used to be said that all roads lead to the drama; but there is no more variety in the playwright's beginnings than in those of the authors. In other countries there are more frequently men of letters among the writers for the stage than in the United States, where the dramatist is not likely to have any other occupation. This is true in a degree of England, but in France and Germany dramatists are often men of letters, pure and simple, and only incidentally playwrights.

Adolf Kilbrandt, who died in Germany the other day, was a practical playwright, and he also wrote novels. So practical a dramatist was he that for five years he managed the Hofburg Theatre in Vienna. His play, "The Daughters of Fabricius," was an altogether practical drama with little or no suggestion of the literary man about it. Its quality may be judged from the fact that McKee Rankin made a local melodrama out of it to introduce Nancy O'Neill to New York audiences some 16 years ago at the Murray Hill theatre.

But in his beginnings Wilbrandt was a man of letters, and he had made his reputation as a writer of fiction before he attempted to add dramatic writing to his other work.

Not all German playwrights of the day have begun in this way. Hermann Sudermann, who was a novelist before he tried the stage, and taking his work in its entirety has been more successful as novelist than as dramatist, began life as a teacher in a university. Oscar Blumenthal, one of the most successful of German farce writers, was for a while a tutor at Leipzig, where he had made his studies before he began to write criticism and later for the stage.

Ludwig Fulda, who is not only a dramatist but a man of letters, was a lawyer, at least by education, and so was Eric Hartleben. Ludwig Bahr, who wrote "The Concert," and a series of popular comedies, was a lawyer who gradually surrendered to his literary inclinations, and so was Ludwig Thoma, who has written a number of delightfully witty and modern comedies for the stage, but has become better known by his other writings.

Max Halbe, who has lived for almost a score of years on the proceeds of his one play, "Youth," was a teacher and then a lawyer. Of course Goethe is the historic example of the lawyer dramatist.

From the army there came a number of the best known of the German writers for the stage. The late Detlev von Liliencorn and Gustav von Moser, one of the most prolific of writers of farce, were both officers. Gerhart Hauptmann, whose brother is a novelist, was a small farmer in Silesia and later a sculptor before he finally found that as a dramatic poet he was destined to make his greatest success.

Ludwig Ganghofer was employed in an Augsburg factory of machinery and Arthur Schnitzler, who is equally successful with his plays and stories of Viennese life, used to be a physician without patients, just as was Otto Schonherr, whose play, Glaube und Heimath, has made a sensation in Austria. Ludwig Anzengruber was a book dealer's apprentice and then became an actor.

There are of course many recruits from the stage to the craft of the dramatist. There is in fact supposed to be no better preparation for the work. Gustav von Kaddelburg, Franz von Schonthan and Roderich Bendix are among them.

Carl Laufs, who has been prosperous in the lighter dramatic field, was a traveling salesman. Carl Costa was employed in the Austrian Finance Department. Robert Hamerling and Franz Friederich Halm came from the same place. The state departments have supplied many recruits both to literature and to the stage in Germany and Austria.

Career Changed

Henri Bernstein, about the most successful of French dramatists today, was intended for a commercial career, but soon made a prosperous start as a playwright and he has kept in that course. Emile Augier was a clerk, later a notary in the office of a lawyer and finally a writer. Ernest Blum was a newspaper distributor and then a journalist. Raoul Toche was a clerk and next a critic.

The senior Dumas was at one time a notary's clerk, while Eugene Scribe began his career as a clerk for a porter. Adolf Belot was a lawyer. Jules Janin taught Latin and Greek and was afterward an attorney's clerk. Henri Meilhac began in the French administrative service, into which Ernest Labiche later entered.

Pierre Decourcelle, who was a nephew of Adolphe d'Ennery and has just sold his collection of eighteenth century pictures for a fortune, is one of the few modern French writers who have gone directly to the work of playwrighting. He was probably led there through the example of his Uncle Adolphe, who grew very rich at the work, as the author of "A Celebrated Case," and "The Two Orphans," deserved to do.

Francois Coppe began his career as a junior clerk in the French war office and rose to be librarian of the senate, a post to which he was probably helped by the traditional desire of the French government to help men of letters along in their material existence. Paul Hervieu was in the French diplomatic service and was appointed secretary of the French embassy in Mexico before he resigned from his post in 1880 to devote himself to fiction, and later to the drama.

Many From Army

In England the army has furnished a number of recruits to the theatre, and one of the most successful, Capt. Robert Marshall, was

a type of the army dramatist. He died a few months ago after having displayed a wit and fancy that distinguished him among his colleagues. He was heard in this country for the first time through the medium of "Shades of Night," a fascinating bit of imagination which showed the bent of his talent. "His Excellency the Governor," acted at the old Lyceum theatre on Fourth Avenue by William Norris, Guy Standing, Jessie Milward and a company made up especially for the spring plays. Marshall had been assistant adjutant to the governor of Capetown, and later occupied the same post in Natal. It was there that he began to write his plays, which were first produced by amateurs among the English officers stationed there.

Capt. Basil Hood served ten years in the army before he resigned and went up to London to take his chances as a dramatist.

Arthur Wing Pinero is of course the greatest example of the English dramatist who learned his craft on the stage. He had acted in various companies, including Sir Henry Irving's.

H. V. Esmond was also an actor and so was Arthur Law, although he put some years of military service to his credit before he took to the stage as the best means of preparing himself to write dramas. Sydney Grundy was a lawyer in active practice before he left his office in Manchester to try his fortune as a dramatist. W. S. Gilbert was also a lawyer.

James Mortimer, who is known here practically only through his "Gloriana," was at one time secretary to Napoleon III. and was his friend for many years. He helped to secure the escape of the Empress after Sedan. He fought for the former Emperor and Empress the home in which they first lived in London. But before he took to writing for the stage he was a journalist in London.

William Somerset Maugham studied medicine but never practiced it, and Conan Doyle was for a long time a physician at Southsea. Jerome K. Jerome was a teacher after he had served several years as a clerk, and then became an actor before he took to literature. Cecil Releigh sang in the chorus of a comic opera company, was later acting manager of a theatre, and then took a course as a dramatic critic before he set out to write the long series of successful melodramas connected with his name.

Louis Napoleon Parker, who was born in France and is not an American, as he has frequently been described, studied music and taught it for several years at Sherburne school in England. Henry Arthur Jones was put into business at 16, and although he disliked it he was successful as a commercial traveler. He was 18 before he ever entered a theatre. At that age he witnessed a performance of "Lah" by Kate Batema, and that changed the course of his life. He decided to try to write plays, and he succeeded so well in a financial way in this business that he was able to desert commercial life altogether by the time he was 27.

Anthony Hope was a lawyer and J. M. Barrie a journalist from the time he went to London.

Augustus Thomas was in the railroad business, then went into a box office and later took up journalism before he began to write for the stage. Edward Peple, whose short stories have done more for him than his dramas, was also employed by the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway and later went to the Pacific Coast.

Charles Klein was a play reader for Charles Frohman, as was Theodore Savre, who formerly stood behind the counter of his father's drug store at Sixth Avenue and Forty-sixth street. Paul Potter, who was in the Indian civil service before he came to this country, went directly from journalism into dramatic writing.

Most of the American dramatists since the days of Bronson Howard have been concerned with some department of journalism before they took up writing for the theatre. That seems at present the usual course of preparation for the dramatist's duties in this country. Clyde Fitch was an exception to that rule, for after he was graduated from Amherst he came to this city and wrote verse and short stories, but never worked on a newspaper.

David Belasco and Augustin Daly learned their profession in the theatre just as Dion Boucicault had done before them. This was the school of George Cohan. Bartely Campbell was an editor in New Orleans after having worked in the Middle West. His first play was so successful that he devoted himself to dramatic writing.

Porter Emerson Brown, Al E. Thomas, Avery Hopwood, W. J. Hurlbut and the younger generation of dramatists were almost without exception first employed in newspaper offices.

An exception to this rule was William Vaughan Moody, who died after a shore career as a dramatist. He was a college professor. In this particular he was like Jose Echegaray, the prolific Spanish playwright, who was for years a professor of mathematics in the Madrid School of War.

NEITHER DOES CITY MILK

Little Willie—People talk of the milk in the cocoanut.

Mr. Citiman—Well?

Little Willie—Why do they say milk? It doesn't look anything but water.

Mr. Citiman—Well?—Catholic Standard and Times.