

What is a Factory?

There has been some dispute about which is the more fundamental idea in the word "factory," as we apply it to-day. Would the concourse of wage-earners working each man with his own hand-power, constitute a factory if there were no machinery at all, no engines, no belts, no motive power? For example, is a place where men co-operate in painting buggies by hand a factory? The best authorities say it is; but whether such a place may be included or not, the typical factory suggested to our minds by the word is one where some motive force—water, steam, or electricity—is continuously used in manufacture. In most cases, indeed, it is the location of this motive power in some certain place which has made it expedient for wage-earners to come together there from all points of the compass to secure work that they could not secure at home. Mr. Carroll D. Wright, in his well-known Report on the Factory System of the United States, gives the following definition:

"A factory is an establishment where several workmen are collected for the purpose of obtaining greater and cheaper conveniences for labor than they could procure individually at their homes; for producing results by their combined efforts which they could not accomplish separately; and for preventing the loss occasioned by carrying articles from place to place during the several processes necessary to complete their manufacture. The principle of a factory is that each laborer, working separately, is controlled by some associating principle which directs his producing powers to effect a common result which it is the object of all collectively to attain. Factories are therefore the legitimate outgrowth of the universal tendency to association which is inherent in our nature, and by the development of which all industrial success has been gained; and from this principle springs the necessity for subdivision of labor, without which the factory system would have met with but feeble growth. The more the principle of association appears prominent in any species of production, the more