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THE TRAINING OF ASSISTANTS.

The report of a committee of the American National Photographic Association, appointed at the last annual meeting to consider the propriety of establishing a system of apprenticeship, the details of which appear in another page, discountenances the idea of apprenticeship as unsuited to a people used to the free institutions which flourish under a republican government. The committee believe that parents born and educated under such institutions will hesitate to sign away their children's liberty; and further, they believe that boys bound for a term of years will be likely to take less interest in their duties than they will when they know that the retention of their services and continuation of their tuition must of necessity depend upon their good behaviour. In place of apprenticeship they recommend a system of studentship, the standard period for which shall be three years; or, if commenced before a youth is seventeen, the period shall continue until he is twenty years of age. This term of instruction completed, it is recommended that the student shall receive a diploma, stating the period of study, the branches in which he excels, and the moral character he has manifested during his novitiate. Some other details will be found in the report, to which we refer the reader.

On the whole, we think that such a system of studentship as that proposed would answer every purpose of apprenticeship, and would prove a material boon to the profession, both assistants and employers; and hence it is scarcely worth while to discuss the somewhat illogical objection which the committee urge against apprenticeship, otherwise it might easily be shown that in apprenticeship there is no further sacrifice of liberty than is involved in every social or commercial compact. No compact of any kind can be entered into without the sacrifice of a certain amount of liberty. As a rule, the shortest contract upon which any kind of service is entered upon involves the surrender of liberty for a week under some kind of forfeiture. In higher classes of service a month's contract becomes a necessity, and in others three, six, or twelve months. In fact, the simple act of living under any government involves a compact implying more or less sacrifice of liberty, the subject agreeing to avoid all acts which may injure the state or his fellow-subjects, as one of the conditions upon which he is admitted to the protection of the laws. An apprenticeship is merely a compact of service for a certain period in return for tuition and opportunity to acquire skill in a certain trade or profession. Without some definite compact securing the ser-

vice to the employer, he would have little interest in imparting instruction. The obligation on the part of the employer to teach in return for service which is involved in apprenticeship is, when properly carried out, of immense advantage both to the individual assistant and to the whole community of assistants, as raising their status and increasing their value.

In the course of studentship proposed by this committee a close approximation to apprenticeship is attained, but the bond between the student and teacher is one based upon mutual self-interest, rather than upon legal obligation. If well carried out, the results of both systems will be similar, whilst the possession of a diploma signed by a trustworthy authority, setting forth period of instruction, age at the date of the diploma, special qualifications and accomplishments, social and moral habits, and characteristics of the student, cannot fail to be of material service to him in securing engagements; and such vouchers of fitness, if honestly given by capable men, must prove an immense aid to employers in determining their selections from several applicants. The report of the committee concludes by recommending the establishment of a photographic academy for the better education of photographers and the higher development of the photographic art. The value of a good photographic academy in which photographic chemistry, art as applicable to photography, and the general practice of all branches of photography could be taught by efficient professors, cannot be doubted; in this country, however, we fear that the possibility of making such an establishment self-supporting would be a very remote one; what may be done by our more enterprising brethren in the States we cannot at present determine. The report to which we refer constitutes, of course, recommendation only, and the subject is considered so important that action therein has been postponed until the next year's meeting of the Association at St. Louis.

The future of the practitioners of the art is a matter of as vital importance in this country as in the United States, and hence any course of action which is adopted after due deliberation by a large representative body of photographers there, is worthy of grave consideration here. One of the very natural questions which will occur at the outset of any such consideration will be to this effect: If a certain number of the coming operators are to be provided with special educational advantages, and provided with diplomas or certificates, will not all the older operators who commenced their career at any earlier date be placed at a serious disadvantage in competing with certificated hands for engagements? We think not necessarily, certainly not in relation to capable men. Every process of improvement will, of course, in some degree militate against the incompetent; but amongst operators of fair capability the possession of longer experience will gene-