

CLOTHING MANUFACTURE

AT THE beginning of the Civil War, the government was suddenly confronted by the necessity of providing clothing for hundreds of thousands of men. This gave an impetus to the wholesale manufacture of ready-made clothing, even stronger than that furnished by the introduction of the sewing machine. At first, the clothing was made principally by journeymen tailors, who were skilled workmen, each one making an entire garment. In 1876, however, a radical change took place. The task system was introduced—principally as the result of the great influx of Russian Jews.

The whole number of clothing manufacturing establishments in operation to-day is placed officially at 48,000; but clothing is manufactured in hundreds of tenements and in small shops in the rear of dwellings, statistics for which it is impossible to gather. Among the wage-earners employed in all branches of textile clothing manufacture, three in every five are women, more than 300,000 of them being engaged to somewhat less than 200,000 men, and to about 16,000 children. These are the average numbers for all branches, not only including men's, women's and children's clothing, but also shirts, men's furnishing goods, hosiery and knit goods, and hats and caps.

Nine men and boys in every ten wear ready-made clothing. That the multitude patronizes the clothier, leaving the few for the tailor, is shown by the fact that clothiers dwell in palaces, while tailors still live in back rooms. The tailor makes one suit for one known patron; the clothier makes a thousand suits of the same pattern, color, and material, for as many unknown customers. The great centre of the industry is New York, where the capital invested is three times greater than in Chicago, which ranks second.

The annual manufacture of nearly \$900,000,000 worth of clothing has called for thoroughly organized methods in the conduct of this great business. Each worker in a clothing factory does only one thing, day after

day, and a dozen different men may have a hand in the making of a single garment. The services of the designer, who is a high-salaried man, may be compared to that of the architect in the building trades. Then comes the artist of the knife and shears; the cutter, who cuts a half dozen or more "coatings" at a time; then a tailor, who sews certain parts of the garment only; then another tailor, who sews another part, and so on. Vest makers there are, who make nothing but vests, and "hands on pants" and button-hole makers, each having his "specialty" and doing nothing besides.

The specialization of the manufacture of men's and children's clothing has reached a point at which even the contractors make only one class of garments. A coat may be made in New York to go with a pair of trousers made in Philadelphia, and with a waistcoat from Boston. When the several garments are completed, they are shipped to the central firm, and are there "assembled" into a suit. The "finishing" is almost entirely done in the tenements. It is estimated that one-half of the coats are made under the "task" system, which will be described presently. The factories classify men's and children's clothing as coats, vests, pants, knee-pants, and children's coats. This specialization has led to the invention of special machines for cutting almost any number of thicknesses of cloth, and to the improvement of the sewing machine—which was largely responsible for the rapid development of the ready-made clothes system—and to the use of steam and electricity.