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MONOGRAPHS.  
THE VOCATIONAL  
GUIDANCE OF YOUTH**

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**MEYER BLOOMFIELD & HENRY SUZZALLO & PAUL H. HANUS**

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Riverside Educational Monographs

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THE VOCATIONAL  
GUIDANCE OF YOUTH

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To  
MRS. PAULINE AGASSIZ SHAW  
WISE AND GENEROUS FRIEND OF YOUTH

**THE VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE  
OF YOUTH**

# THE VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE OF YOUTH

## I

### THE CHOICE OF A LIFE-WORK AND ITS DIFFICULTIES

"HE therefore sometimes took me to walk with him," writes Benjamin Franklin of his father, "and see joiners, bricklayers, turners, braziers, etc., at their work, that he might observe my inclination, and endeavor to fix it on some trade or other on land."

The busy age we live in does not seem so favorable for the kindly offices of youth's natural advisers. While many a parent, teacher, or friend spends energy and sympathy to give some girl or boy vocational suggestion and help, the fact is clear enough that a vast majority of the young people in our land enter upon their careers as breadwinners in the trades and professions unguided and uninformed. Chance is usually given



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the upper hand to make or mar the critical period of working life.

At no other time in history have the sons and daughters of the people been turned out to earn their living on so large a scale, or into so complex a social order. Never has there been so great a need as now for intelligent coöperation with the novitiates in the vocational life.

Young Franklin on a brief visit to the shop or foundry could probably have seen a whole trade in process. To-day this could scarcely be. Minute division of labor, specialization to a degree that leaves the average worker in ignorance of the steps which go before or follow his own partial operations, do not encourage the same personal view of industry. Commerce and the liberal professions are hardly less detailed, and hardly less in the hands of specialists. Spinning, weaving, and the making of a coat, the manufacture of nails, watches, and shoes involve scores of operations. Likewise the management of a store, an office, or a factory calls for qualities peculiar to a highly developed age of applied science. A new profession has arisen in the efficiency engineer,

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whose business it is to study the costly results of overlooked waste and extravagance in our large-scale production and distribution of goods. Big establishments are working out personal data sheets in order to measure scientifically the value of their employees. One specialty store in Boston has developed a system of personal records which leaves little to guess-work in the employment and promotion of its eight hundred or more people.

We are indeed living in the midst of a restless period, impatient with crudeness, and too preoccupied to pause over the stumblings and gropings of its bewildered youth. Into this arena of tense effort, the schools of our country send out their annual thousands. We somehow trust that the tide of opportunity may carry them to some vocational destination. Only the relatively few who reach the higher training institutions can be said to have their problems at least temporarily solved during the critical period of adolescence. What becomes of that young multitude sent out to cope with the new conditions of self-support? Whose business is it to follow up the results of this transition from school to work?

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Whose business is it to audit our social accounts, and discover how far our costly enterprises in education, the pain, the thought, the skill and the sacrifice we put forth with the growing generation, are well or ill invested in the field of occupation? These are vital questions, and perhaps the most vital is how far the work our children turn to is the result of choice, accident, or necessity. The higher training schools are as profoundly concerned in this problem as are the elementary schools. The well-to-do are no less affected than the poor. Until society faces the question of the life careers of its youth, the present vocational anarchy will continue to beset the young work-seekers. Wasting their golden youth, they discover too late how much a helpful suggestion at the critical moment might have shaped their destinies. They are unhappy and discouraged, and hence the pitiful letters written to those who care about these problems, from men and women who realize too late the reason for their futility as workers.

Society has been slow to recognize the need of coöperating with its future workers in the