

**TECHNICAL EDUCATION:
WHAT IT IS, AND WHAT
AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SHOULD TEACH. AN ESSAY**

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Technical Education: What It Is, and What American Public Schools Should Teach. An Essay
by Charles B. Stetson

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CHARLES B. STETSON

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TECHNICAL EDUCATION:

WHAT IT IS,

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SHOULD TEACH.

AN ESSAY

BASED ON AN EXAMINATION OF THE METHODS AND RE-
SULTS OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN EUROPE, AS
SHOWN BY OFFICIAL REPORTS.

BY CHARLES B. STETSON



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TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE education required by a people is not a fixed quantity. That which is adequate for one generation or for one locality is not, necessarily, adequate for another generation or for another locality. It may be said, in general, that the education of a people should always conform to their necessities; that, as the conditions of life change, the education of a people should undergo a corresponding change: it may be one of degree or of character, or it may be a change involving both. The present is a time when those who have the shaping of popular education in America should consider anew the practical application of this simple truth.

For the American laborer, whether in the work-shop, in the counting-house, or on the farm, the conditions of life have, within the last fifty years, undergone a radical change, and of such a nature, that the laborer must now receive a vastly better education than he required one or two generations ago: otherwise he cannot advance himself as he should, nor even maintain his old position. This will be evident from a simple glance at three or four things which strikingly distinguish his present situation from his past.

COMPETITION NO LONGER LOCAL, BUT WORLD-WIDE. — First, the railroad, steamship, and telegraph have changed, in a marked degree, the condition of the American laborer. Before they came, the competition he had to meet was almost wholly local. If he did his work as well and as cheaply as those who went to the same church, or sat on the same jury, with himself; there was for him no need of further concern. He, and these neighbors of his, fixed the price of their products, since they sold in a market from which all but local competition was virtually excluded. There is nothing of this now. Telegraphy and steam have made, as it were, one neighborhood of the whole world; and the competition the American laborer must now meet, even at his own door, is no longer local: it comes from the ends of the earth. In a market admitting the competition of the

world, those who go to the same church, or sit on the same jury, cannot longer determine the price of their products. The world, of which they are but a part, settles that.

Has an Ohio farmer a fleece of wool to sell? He meets in the market the wool-grower of Australia. Has a Minnesota farmer a bushel of wheat to dispose of? The return for it depends, more or less, on the crop in California, or along the shores of the Black Sea. Is the seller a cotton-manufacturer of Lowell? He must compete with the looms of Lancashire. A Maine manufacturer of axes? He must face the ax-maker of Birmingham, whom he has, by the way, driven from the American market, while he successfully competes with him in the market of the world. Is it a Philadelphia builder of locomotives? He feels the influence of Creuzot, though he may never have actually met a French locomotive on this side of the Atlantic. Is it an American ship-builder? He knows, to his sorrow, that there are other builders on the Clyde. Indeed, there is scarcely one product of American industry, whose market-price is not now determined, in large degree, by the competition of the whole world; and this as the result, mainly, of steam-carriage and telegraphic communication. The more efficient these new instrumentalities become, the sharper will be the world's competition, reaching even the most secluded hamlet.