

**THE PEOPLE'S SCHOOL;
A STUDY IN
VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

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The people's school; a study in vocational training by Ruth Mary Weeks

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RUTH MARY WEEKS

**THE PEOPLE'S SCHOOL;
A STUDY IN
VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

Riverside Educational Monographs

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A STUDY IN
VOCATIONAL TRAINING

BY

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE author is indebted to the late Stadtrat Emile Munsterberg of Berlin, Monsieur Ét. Martin Saint-Léon of Paris, Mr. C. W. A. Veditz of Washington, Miss Alice Barrows of New York, and many school officials at home and abroad for aid in collecting material for this volume; to Dr. Richard T. Ely of Madison, for helpful review of the present text; and to her mother, Mrs. E. R. Weeks, for constant critical assistance in preparing the manuscript for publication.

RUTH MARY WEEKS.

May 6, 1912.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

IT seems to be difficult for us to learn that human institutions may not be borrowed outright. The sight of some new form of efficiency in our neighbors over the sea stirs the conscious progressives at home to minute and wholesale imitation. This is particularly true where we feel second-rate, — in art, science, and education. In politics and industry, we are a trifle cock-sure of ourselves and copy scarcely at all ; but elsewhere we tend to be over-impressed by foreign example.

The history of conscious educational reform in America offers many illustrations of indiscriminate institution-matching, all the way from the kindergarten to the university. There have been large gains, of course ; but we have paid an unnecessarily high price in maladjustments. If only we had noted the essential elements of foreign experience and moulded the institutional forms to suit our own population and national ideals, we could have made our institutions far more effective.

Just at the present hour, when we are assuming a vast program of vocational education, we

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should have a particular care as to the way in which we are influenced by European experience and example. The social currents of our own life can no more be neglected in the construction of new human institutions, than the laws of gravitation in the building of material structures. It is all a matter of concrete conditions — the place where we build, the materials used for construction and the purpose we have in mind. Our human conditions never are coincident with those in any European country, and we ought at the very outset to assume that no European system of vocational training will wholly fit our needs. This might be laid down as a first principle.

We shall of course need to study foreign practice. A truly rational progress is always founded upon the lessons of experience, and when we have had little of our own, we are bound to understand that which belongs to others. But certainly we need to give as close study to our own social and economic conditions as to the educational devices of a foreign land, for whatever we see in the latter must be transmuted in terms of the former. In no other way can we render foreign experience into practice economically and stably valuable for ourselves.

Just because the following monograph presents

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the problem of vocational education with an approach and emphasis opposite to that of much current discussion, it is offered to the educational public with a special faith in its worth. The volume is more than a stimulating presentation of facts and generalizations; it exemplifies a method of studying a vital institutional problem that ought to gain a wider acceptance among our educational reformers.