

THE CASE OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

I THE WITNESS OF THE TEACHER.

THE *Atlantic Monthly* recently circulated widely among superintendents and teachers of the public schools in every part of the country inquiries (1) as to the average number of pupils per teacher in the several grades of the public schools; (2) in what proportion the teachers have changed their profession during the last ten years; (3) in what proportion they are more than thirty-five years of age; (4) as to the freedom of teachers from political or other improper influences on their appointment or removal; (5) as to the salaries of teachers of the several grades, whether they have been increased within five or six years, whether they are regarded as sufficient, and whether higher salaries would attract to the profession men and women of greater ability and of more stable purpose; (6) as to the requirements for appointments, whether they are rigid and uniform, and whether a certificate is required from some normal or training school of higher grade; (7) as to the chances that teachers have for promotion from the lower grades, and whether it is the custom to fill the higher grades by promotion: whereunto was added a request to give any further information in regard to the status of teachers which would naturally supplement these inquiries.

Accompanying this circular was the following letter:—

"The *Atlantic Monthly*, following its plan of paying especial attention to educational subjects, will take up for discussion the Status of the Teacher, and consider how the profession may be made a calling of greater dignity and of more suitable reward; for, clearly, teaching is not held in as high honour as it ought to

be. It is doubtful, indeed, if the public school system will reach its proper efficiency until in every community the teacher's status is as high as the status of any other profession. To lift the teacher into the highest esteem, two things are necessary:—

"(1.) To give efficient teachers security in their positions and freedom to do their best work.

"(2.) To pay them salaries large enough to make the profession attractive to the very ablest men and women, not as a makeshift, but as a life career.

"In discussing a subject of such importance, it is desirable to have as large a volume of facts at first-hand as possible. We therefore take the liberty to ask you to answer these questions concerning the teachers in the public schools in your community."

The replies, which have been both full and numerous, have been placed in my hand, together with a summary of their results, and are the basis of the following study. Their value was not expected to consist in accuracy, but rather in showing tendencies correctly. The statistical information that can be extracted from them is of less account than the fact that we have here fresh confessions and first-hand observations and experiences from men and women actually engaged in school work; those most competent to speak on these matters, but in the existing state of things least often heard from. There is every internal indication that the reports are absolutely frank and honest. They thus constitute a valuable protocol of data for points of view no less reliable than they are new, and which are, I think, certain to command the