

It must be borne in mind that high school pupils are no longer little children, uninformed and unsophisticated. Besides possessing a considerable store of general information, they have usually learned to read human nature tolerably well where their own interests are concerned. Superficial knowledge, and limited mental power, narrow views of life, rusticity of manner—all of them marks of meagre culture—rarely escape detection in a high school; and particularly for the brighter and socially superior pupils offer a serious obstacle to the teacher's usefulness, if they do not destroy it altogether. It is a serious disadvantage to every high school pupil, whether he is aware of it or not, perhaps even more serious if he does not know it than if he does, to have his mental horizon determined by the narrow mental horizon of his teacher; his intellectual vistas and sympathies limited or dwarfed by the inadequate intellectual insight and want of perspective on the part of his teacher; to have his notions of social refinement and cultivation unformed, or deformed, or even perverted by the uncultivated man or woman who happens to be his teacher. The high school supplies to most pupils their last chance at these stores of inspiration and guidance, and they should be the very best. Such disadvantages to the pupil do not appear, and such obstacles to the teacher's success can hardly exist when the general culture and refinement of the high school teachers are sufficient always to command the just respect and challenge the regard, if not to inspire the imitation, of the best pupils. For such an equipment those who have tried it will agree, I am sure, that, in general, four years of training in a good college are little enough.

This view is strengthened by the reflection that there is no period in a young person's life in which impres-

sions received produce a more lasting effect, in which incipient interests, and habits of thought and conduct are more permanently influenced than during the period covered wholly or in part by secondary education—the period of adolescence. It is often said that the earliest impressions are the most lasting and the earliest training is the most important for intellectual and moral development, and for the future usefulness and happiness of the individual; but I cannot believe that in most instances this is a true statement of the case, so far, at least, as those pupils are concerned whose school career is continued into and through the high school. If good early training were always followed by equally good subsequent training, if the child's opportunities for growth in knowledge and power were continuous, if his moral training and his social environment improved with his growth from early childhood through later childhood and youth, if his earlier acquisitions were really made to serve continuously and progressively as the foundation for continuous subsequent growth, then the earlier and earliest training would be of the utmost importance; for it would be the foundation on which later development would be most economically and securely laid. But such conditions of development are rare. The cases are not common in which each stage of a child's progress is so nicely adjusted to the previous one. Such an arrangement of our courses of study and our teaching processes is as yet too commonly rather a vaguely conceived ideal. Moreover, the instability of the population, the perpetual migration of people in this country from one place to another, enormously increases the difficulty of approximating to such an ideal, even when it is consciously and conscientiously aimed at. But suppose that such an ideal were generally realized.