

IS TEACHING A PROFESSION?

SO far as the leaders are concerned teaching is a profession. There are no men in this country more thoroughly professional than the presidents and professors of the leading American colleges. Principals of large academies, masters of city high schools, are universally conceded to be professional men. Superintendents who have come into position after years of faithful service in the schoolroom, who are promoted because of their distinguished service, are professionally recognized. The same is true of many grammar school principals in large cities, men of scholarly attainments who devote themselves to the study and practice of the art of teaching. There is no question about the professional standing of such men, and, if they only were considered, teaching would rank to-day in dignity, influence, compactness, and promise, with law, medicine, literature, or the ministry. There are as large a proportion of the legal profession who are not professional men as of the leading teachers.

But, unfortunately, the teachers classified above are a small part of the fraternity. The difficulty is to make a profession out of a calling which has so many members. There are difficulties in the way of professionalizing teaching, and it is useless to quarrel with circumstances. There is, however, one phase of the question to which we would give a passing word. There is an opinion that we sometimes hear given heedlessly that the obstacle is in the fact that so large a percentage of the teachers are ladies, teachers of small children. We confess that there is a share of reason in this, but it is as vicious as it is false. The time was when conservatism, with its antique inertia, so fettered society that the presence of a

majority of ladies in a profession would have prejudiced the public mind, especially the leaders of public sentiment. That day is fast passing away. Another age of the world's history is dawning, and the uniform brilliancy of Prest. Alice E. Freeman is conspicuous beside the uniform stupidity of some masculine dignitaries who might be mentioned. Women have at least looked across the threshold of every profession, inspiring men do their best. Teaching small children is no more unprofessional than practising medicine with young children. There are two insurmountable obstacles to the making of teaching in its entirety a profession. The lower places, the poorly paid positions for men, are used merely as stepping stones. It is a rare thing for a man to leave any of the better positions for any other calling. A man is as apt to leave law for politics, or medicine for literature, the ministry for school work, as a leading teacher for any other profession. But nearly every lawyer, doctor, and minister tells about having been a teacher. The effect of this upon themselves and the public is to give the impression that they look upon law, medicine, and theology as more professional than teaching. These men, however, left the lower ranks; they never tasted the successes of teaching, never enjoyed the professional atmosphere. So long as the non-professional positions are used as stepping-stones for other professions, that grade of work will never rank as professional. Ladies, also, are looked upon as awaiting matrimonial privileges. It is in vain that we point to teachers of our acquaintance whose utter indifference to the sentimental side of life leads them to be professionally anchored, the pub-