

"If your committee wishes for the sake of the common good to examine the methods pursued and the results achieved in our schools under existing conditions, it is welcome to make a most thorough examination and we promise it our cordial assistance, with full liberty to take any proper use of the results of its investigation."

This protest was referred back by the Board of Overseers to the Committee on Composition, which has reported on it to the Board, and the Board is to take action. The report sets forth that the object in proposing the publication of the examination papers was not to make an invidious distinction between schools, but by a comparison of the methods pursued in a few of the best schools, to get, if possible, some suggestion as to the improvement of the whole system. But this is a minor matter. What is most serious in the protest is the teachers' way of accounting for the deficiencies of their pupils and their objection to the public display of the result of the tests to which they are submitted.

The signers object to the publication of the examination papers, on the ground that the public is not competent to judge them. The public in this case, of course, means mainly graduates of colleges, parents of graduates, and generally persons interested in the subject of education. It is only these who would be likely to pay any attention to the papers. If it be true that this class cannot form an intelligent opinion as to the manner in which their sons and other relatives are taught to write and speak their own language; if the choice of methods and the estimate of results must be left entirely to the teachers themselves, the matter is indeed very grave. It would place these gentlemen in a much better position than any other profession in the community. Every other practitioner is judged by the results of his work—the lawyer by the results of his advice and conduct of cases, the doctor by the effect of

his practice on his patients, and the minister by his influence on sinners. In no case is it left to him to say whether he has succeeded or not, though his art may be much more obscure and technical than the teaching of English.

The reasons why the teachers are not to be held responsible are, however, graver than the fact of non-responsibility. They say they cannot prepare the boys in the use of their mother tongue because of the "growing illiteracy of American boys," and they ascribe this again to "the absence of literary interests and of literary standards in the community." The way of accounting for evils, and relieving individuals from blame for them, by ascribing them to general causes, is a very old one. In the early days of the civil-service agitation there was a very widespread opposition to the passage of any civil-service law, on the ground that civil service reform must be accomplished by "the slow uplifting of human nature." In fact, nearly every abuse, has at some time in its history been defended in the same way. If it be true that "illiteracy" is growing among American boys, and there is "an absence of literary interest and standards in the community," the remedy would seem to lie in greater efficiency and energy on the part of the institutions which are specially charged with the duty of combatting illiteracy among youth. It would seem as if the preparation of the schools should be made sterner than ever, and the standards of the college higher than ever, so that everybody who meant to go to college should, from the time he put off petticoats, have in his mind the fact that not good athletics but good English was essential to his getting into college at all, and having "a good time" while he was there.

Moreover, publicity is the great modern remedy and stimulant, and if