

precocious girls of sixteen, the right to control a public school, and it was only as yesterday that we saw and condemned that folly by declaring an additional year's knowledge of life necessary to the female teacher. I venture to express the opinion that we are yet under the mark, and that we must still further raise the standard, by enacting that no young lady shall be qualified to teach until she has reached eighteen. I would go even further; were it possible, and prevent any person from taking charge of a school until fully twenty-one years of age. Just now, that would probably be impracticable, but the day will come, and it is not far distant, when it will be found feasible and advisable to place such a restriction upon those seeking certificates. It will be a step in advance when it is declared that while assistants must be over eighteen years, none under twenty-one shall be qualified to assume sole control of any school. We are all familiar with the argument urged against such a change as is here indicated. Young men, worth anything, are anxious to get along in the world,—some of them wish to take the University course,—and of these a portion hope to earn sufficient, as teachers, to supply them with the necessary means. This seems praiseworthy, from a certain standpoint, and is undoubtedly a convenience to sundry promising young men, but no individual has a right to seek his own advancement at the general cost. To place callow youths in charge of our public schools, and to so enable them to acquire a few needed dollars, at the expense of our boys and girls, whose education must, in consequence, be necessarily of an inferior character, and to keep up an exchange of unfledged matriculant after unfledged matriculant, until the ordinary "schooling" of many of the sons and daughters of our farmers is completed, is to throw away much of the advantage which our costly scheme of public instruction ought to confer upon the community, and to get the smallest possible good out of it for the special benefit of a limited number of our citizens. Nor is this the only objection to the employment of very young teachers. For good or ill, character is often moulded in the school-room. Life receives its cue, in many instances, from the first contact with life which daily intercourse at school affords. The Teacher, as largely as the parent,—in a majority of cases, much more largely than the parent,—forms the mind, the morals, and, to some extent, the future of the child. How all important is it that he or she who assumes this vast responsibility should enter upon the charge of these little ones, with character somewhat developed, with some knowledge of the world, and possessed of that self-control which, although it may seem intuitive to a few, can only come with experience to the great majority! I know much of the precocity which enables our boys and girls to carry off certificates at intermediate examinations, and before County Examiners, but I have yet to learn that efficient Teachers are necessarily and at once manufactured out of this material. Teachers may all be heaven-born, but I fear that the heaven-born qualities do not often develop themselves before manhood and womanhood have put their stamp on the recipients of such special advantages. It seems almost unnecessary to mention, in this connection, the unfair competition to which Teachers, whose lives have been devoted, wisely or unwisely, to the profession, are thus subjected, by boys or young men who use the school salary merely as a stepping stone to something higher, whose hearts are never in the work for the work's sake, and who are