

TRADE OR PROFESSION?

WHAT is teaching? There, are plenty of people who would like to vote that teaching is a profession, but the public in general deny this; they look on it as an occupation and they will continue to do so until there is a change in the attitude of teachers themselves towards their work. The public cannot be coaxed to consider teaching as a profession; it can be made to feel that it is by the doings of the teachers; when the teachers consider it a profession then the public will, and not before. Here is a young woman who is at work in a store; she gets an appointment as a teacher through a politician; is she doing professional work? In New York State the teachers are obliged to attend the institutes by law, they don't want to be improved enough to come otherwise; are they professional people? Only one teacher in ten owns a book on education; are the nine non-owners professional people?

An "occupation" is some employment. A man habitually earns money; his main object is to get a living. We say a farmer "occupies" the land; the word indicates that something is held to as a necessity. The word "trade" comes from *tread*; it has reference to putting things on the track; a man has a trade when he produces things wanted in life's tracks or treads. To "learn a trade" is to learn a kind of work that provides things in the general tread of life.

An "office" is an employment to which one is elected, or to which he is appointed—this carries with it both honor and remuneration; of course the office of sweeper in the custom-house is at the bottom and is an occupation merely. A "calling" is an employment which a man feels he has special aptitude for. The use of it in theology to indicate the selection

by the Creator is disappearing, it will be noted. Persons now turn to preaching as they do to teaching—of course with more reverence and feeling of responsibility.

A "profession" designates an employment in which there is learning (the scholarship, fitness) and humanitarianism or altruism (the fitness of sensibility). There are three if not four professions:—Preaching, law, medicine, writing and art. Once preaching was considered as a "calling"—a man supposed he had a "call" from the Creator. The "call" idea has given it a high cast. He begins with a desire to benefit the world and considers that he has fitness in power of speaking, a love for religious subjects of thought and to this adds knowledge. The lawyer begins with knowledge, sees he has fitness in speaking or utterance, and a taste for subjects in which there is to be an application of legal thought. The physician starts with knowledge too, but puts next to this a desire to benefit his fellows; once he was not allowed to take a fee. The writer begins with fitness to express himself and to this adds knowledge; his aim is to benefit, to entertain, to amuse. Newton wrote to benefit; Scott, to entertain; Mark Twain, to amuse. The artist begins with knowledge and aims to reach the sense of beauty.

What is teaching? Is it an occupation, a trade, an office, a calling, or a profession? It depends on what the teacher places first. If his main idea is to benefit the children, if he feels he has fitness in interesting them, and to this adds knowledge, it is a profession and ranks along with preaching. If he only wants to get a living out of it, then it is a trade or occupation.