

missal of teachers is left in the hands of unprofessional men, with no right of appeal to anybody. A few years ago when the teachers of Massachusetts were urging the enactment of a law providing for a better tenure of office for teachers, they did not think it wise to ask that school committees should be restricted in their right of dismissal to dismissal for cause, or that committees should be required to give a teacher an opportunity to be heard before execution, or even that an appeal should lie to the state board of education or to the courts. We did not dare to ask that in case of dissatisfaction the teacher's work should be examined by an expert. We thought it safe to go no further than to ask for a law allowing committees to dispense with annual elections, if they chose to do so, and to permit teachers to serve till they should be dismissed. We thought half a loaf better than none. So that now, here in our enlightened Commonwealth, no teacher as such is allowed, under the law, to be tried by a jury of his peers, but is liable at any time to be dismissed without cause, and without notice and without appeal. It certainly would seem as though some further reform was needed in the matter of the legal status of teachers.

The making of courses of studies remains, both theoretically and practically, for the most part, where it was fifty years ago, namely, in the hands of school committees. This is the most important work of education next after teaching. Its results are wide spread and far reaching. They touch every pupil and often last for ages. It has well been said that the making of programmes is the most difficult of all work connected with the common schools. It requires a profounder knowledge of educational science and a greater familiarity with educational practice. And yet it is

often performed by men whose only qualification for the work is a plurality of the votes cast at the last election.

When programmes are made by such men, it follows from what has previously been said that much harm is done. In the first place, programmes are changed with undue haste and wasteful frequency. A new member of a committee hears of a subject, a knowledge of which, he thinks, would be beneficial to a large class of pupils, and at once he proposes its introduction. If none of his fellow-members are able to show that something better will be crowded out, the new subject becomes a part of the course of study. This year the course in geography is extended downwards and upwards. Next year its extension upwards is curtailed; and still the next, it is excluded from some of the lower grades. Now map-drawing of the whole world is required, now it is excluded altogether. One year the arithmetic is attacked as being poorly taught, and at once more time is given to arithmetic; another year it is discovered that the language of the pupils is poor and at once the time devoted to arithmetic is reduced. Now the spelling book is ordered out, and soon it is ordered in again. Suddenly the method of teaching reading is discovered to be wrong, and at once the method is ordered changed, even where the change doubles the work of learning to read for those who have half learned by the method to be displaced. At one time technical grammar occupies a large part of the pupil's time, at another it is excluded altogether. Now great stress is laid upon story-telling and story-writing by the pupils, and now it is discovered that telling the truth is just as good language work as telling stories, and story-telling takes a back seat. And so the ill-considered tinkering of the course of study goes on year after year.