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The Profession of Elementary Teacher.

And, first, is it a profession? Viewed through the delusive medium of personal interest, the majority of our readers may be inclined to consider the question as superfluous. We ourselves had fondly hoped that the growth of the cause of education, and the rapid strides made by the teacher himself in the estimation of the public, had unmistakably stamped his position as on a par with those who receive the courtesies due to gentlemen. Yet platform speakers tell us that "the profession of Elementary Teacher is hardly recognized in this country;" and, if we take advertisements as the straw indicative of the state of the atmosphere of public opinion on the subject, we perceive that the Elementary Teacher is addressed in similar terms to those applied to menial servants. We read constantly, "A man is wanted for the National Schools," or "A Man and his wife are required for," &c., or—to conciliate the extreme susceptibilities of some waif or stray from a higher sphere—the generic term "person" is employed; and where we read "a master" or "mistress" is required, we may consider the extreme limit of advertising courtesy has been reached.

When the elastic nature of the term "profession" is considered, it may cause some astonishment that there should be any dubiousness in the public mind in its application to the teacher. Putting on one side the three recognized professions—the service of the Crown, the Law, the Church—which have the sanction of antiquity and usage, we see a motley army under the banner of "professions," each division of which would consider the delinquent fit only for the other side of the northern wind who dis-

puted, or omitted to give its members, the title and treatment due to gentlemen. If we mention painting, sculpture, music, literature and science, it is only that we may arrive rapidly at the general conclusion that the term profession is applied to those occupations in life in which intellect plays a more prominent part than manual dexterity, and whose members are considered to be above the so-called "working classes" in social status, influence, and consideration. Those peculiarities in the Elementary Teacher that, directly or indirectly, tend to debar him from this position are worth his attention and study, both individually and collectively—individually, from the fact that the whole body is composed of units, and is but a reflex of its members—collectively because it is the movement of large bodies that commands respect, and only in co-operative action can his rights be maintained or his demands enforced.

Perhaps one of the most abnormal states of civilised life is presented in the position of the Teacher. The distinct, and often diverse, influences, each of which is professionally mortal in its effects, that regulate his actions, or control his ideas, may, we think, challenge comparison in any other sphere of life. We have the Government, that holds the rod *in terrorem* of cancelling the certificate if certain notions are not carried out in the management of the school; and however capricious these notions may be—whether, at one time, a master does not turn out his pupils small encyclopædiæ of scientific knowledge, or at another, if he fail in passing a certain percentage in the "Three R's"—"My Lords" can, if they choose, cancel his certificate, or degrade his professional status. There ought certainly to be sufficient "grip" in this power "to keep the wretch in order" who must needs have some set in authority over him; but we have also the committees, sometimes holding opinions and objects the very antipodes of those enunciated by My Lords, and whose powers are nearly co-equal in their effects with those of the central authority. When we mention that there is a third influence—the parental—which, by cutting off the supply, can starve the teacher into a surrender at discretion, it may be thought we have reached the extent of our tether; but beyond these is an army of *cognoscenti* and *illuminati*, who are for ever skirmishing on his borders, alarming him with "drill," frightening him with "ologies," or disturbing his peace with "music." Can, we ask in full confidence, a parallel be found to this state of things in any profession or trade within the limits of this realm?