

## EDUCATION.

### What Becomes of Teachers?

In this country the average time spent by teachers in their employment is very short. In other professions this time is usually the entire period of life between early manhood and old age. It is seldom that a physician, lawyer or minister, abandons his profession till death or old age intervenes. This fact is observable in most human employments. A man becomes a mechanic or a tradesman, with the expectation of spending the greater part of his life in his chosen occupation. In teaching, however, the case is strikingly different. A very large proportion of those who are now in the schools of our State will, within a short time, be found in other employments. Comparatively few, even of those who are known as professional teachers, spend more than fifteen years in the school room. It is pertinent to inquire, then, *What becomes of teachers?*

He who examines the annual report of the State Superintendent will probably learn that at least seven thousand out of nine thousand teachers in Michigan are women. It is not difficult to form a probable conjecture as to what will soon become of a large proportion of these. If sensible, as most of them are likely to be, they will marry before they have taught a year on the average. We are now speaking of those who set out with a deliberate purpose to become teachers. It is no empty compliment to say of such that they very readily find good husbands. Did not a certain Governor once take a colony of New England schoolma'ams to the West? All along their lines of travel we may find the *protégées* of Governor Slade, once teachers, now loved and honored housewives. Of ninety per cent of lady teachers it may be said with truthful brevity, *they marry*. Now, we may ask, "What becomes of the men?" Has any one failed to observe how large a proportion of professional men have been teachers? Probably one-half of all the men who are teaching in Michigan to-day design to enter the profession of law, medicine, or theology. Teaching accords with the tastes of such, affords some leisure for study, and, withal, is a ready way of raising funds for an ulterior object. Of the other one-half a comparatively large number will teach for only a few terms, and will then settle down to some manual employment. Only a small per cent of the whole number design to teach permanently; and even a large proportion of these are forced by one circumstance or another to engage in some other vocation. Practically, therefore, teaching is not a profession; it can scarcely be called an employment. It is merely an *avocation*—a halting place on the road to some coveted destination.

The next query is, *Why is this so?* To a great degree this state of things involves its own continuance. Paradoxical as it may seem, teaching is not a profession, because men do not devote their lives and talent to it; and men do not this because teaching is not a profession. The two motives which induce men to enter a profession are *philanthropy, and money*. The motive is sometimes a mixed one: but as matters now stand, it would seem that these two elements are inversely proportional, the field offering the best facilities for one being barren of opportunities for the other. No one thinks of becoming a lawyer, for the good he may do mankind, and the clergyman who expects to receive more than a competence is visionary to the last degree. What is the nature of the teacher's motive? So far as those are concerned who look directly towards another calling, an answer is scarcely required. They seldom look beyond the salary which shall enable them to reach a desired position. But there are others who teach from choice, and are not looking towards an ulterior object. These are they who constitute the profession of teaching, if, indeed, there be such a profession. It is with reference to these that we ask why they do not continue to teach. If we mistake not, there are two causes which have a direct and constant tendency to induce teachers to abandon their profession.

We do not live in patriarchal times, when men led a nomadic life, to-day pitching their tents beside some water-course, and to-morrow journeying towards another camping ground. Men have ceased to be sojourners, and eagerly fix upon some spot where they may have a home, a sacred spot, around which the hand of affection gathers whatever may minister to the wants and the longings of the human soul. When the Trojan women left their burning city, they embraced the door-posts of their houses as a last token of their veneration for homes made sacred by alternate triumph and disaster—by special joys and the presence of the *penates*. There is a profound and controlling sentiment in the human heart, which causes us to long for fixed habitations where we may continue to enjoy the society of those we love—where we may rest under the shade of the trees we have planted, and where at last we may rest from our labors. The love of home is the universal inspiration of the world's toilers. We are content to labor and to suffer if only we may be soothed and refreshed by the sacred consolations of our homes. Here the worries of life do not intrude, here envious tongues are silent, here misrepresentation does not seek her victim. What advantages for the gratification of this sentiment does the teacher's life afford? In a majority of cases, such a home as his tastes require is an impossibility. A house and grounds, books and pictures, presuppose an adequate income, such, as not one teacher in fifty receives. This is not the place to inquire why this is so; but it is sufficient for the present purpose to state the fact which is patent to all. It is not true that teachers are chiefly, or even largely, influenced by the mere question of salary; and yet in these days of high prices it is necessary to look very carefully to one's resources. One of the causes which draw teachers into business or into the practice of other professions is the certainty of a more liberal compensation. The education, industry, and tact necessary to successfully administer the affairs of a public school would, if devoted to other pursuits, yield a generous income.

But even granting that a teacher may be able to have a home as the result of his labors, what is the influence of the certainty that he can it enjoy it but for a brief period? The position of the teacher in this respect is anomalous. To every active citizen of this world there is a constant liability to run counter to the feelings, wishes, or interests of those with whom he has to do. Men's sentiments with respect to duty and propriety are infinitely varied; and each one is subject to criticisms as varied as the phases of human character. In the voyage of life, there is not merely a single Scylla and Charybdis, but every inch of progress is made hazardous by confronting dangers. Our liability to incur censure is increased by the multiplied relations in which we stand to others. Law presupposes relations, and the solitary dweller in a wilderness is alone free to do as he chooses, save only with respect to his Creator. A single companion would at once place him within the reign of human law, and as the community should successively add to its members individual relations and responsibilities would be correspondingly multiplied. This same principle obtains in schools. The number of pupils determines the relations which they sustain to each other and to their teacher. Through each pupil, the teacher is brought into relations with a family, and through successive families with a whole community. What is the nature of these relations? It is one of instruction and also of discipline. What is to be taught, when taught, and how taught, are each questions which admit of widely different views. And then, as to discipline, it is hard to conceive of a matter involving such delicate and weighty issues. In every community, there are those who object to every species of punishment; others sanction corporal punishment, but do not agree as to the occasion, mode, or degree. In all these respects the teacher must act with some uniformity. All must be taught upon the same general plan, and for the same offence one cannot be whipped and the other dismissed with a pious admonition to do so no more. Upon these accounts, as well as upon others which will suggest themselves, the teacher stands in