

CONTEMPORARY OPINION ON EDUCATIONAL TOPICS.

TEACHERS' TENURE OF OFFICE.

President Eliot, of Harvard University, in an address before the Massachusetts Teachers' Association, on the Teachers' Tenure of Office, said: "If no intelligent method of selecting efficient teachers is used, the shorter their tenure of office the better, as inefficient ones could thus be quickly got rid of. The means of careful selection are two: First, examinations upon the subjects taught in schools, and such other examinations as may best exhibit the capacities of candidates. These examinations should include a fair range of optional subjects; for it is rather the candidates' power of acquiring, than their actual acquisitions, that are to be tested. Secondly, probationary service under the eyes of competent judges of teachers' work. There is no dispensing with actual service on probation, if teachers are to be chosen with reasonable care; for examination can only test knowledge and readiness, whereas the good teacher must also have conscientiousness, force of character, devotion, enthusiasm, and these can only be successfully displayed in actual teaching, under the watchful eyes of professional persons of high character, good judgment, and long experience.

There is no need of argument to prove that a system of long tenure for teachers can be successfully carried out only by competent inspectors, who themselves are reasonably secure in their positions, and who actually serve for long terms. Long probations imply long continued observation of the candidates.

FULL APPOINTMENT.

Supposing now that a teacher has given all the securities for future usefulness which thorough preliminary examination and long probation can supply, we ask what should be

the nature of the ultimate appointment? In the interest both of the profession and of the community, it should be an appointment without limitation of time. There should be no recurring election. Nevertheless, the teacher should be subject to removal for inadequate performance of duty, or for misconduct, and there should be a regular provision for the retirement of superannuated teachers upon pensions or annuities. I touch here the subsequent question, from which I am not able to disengage the question of tenure. Long tenures logically involve pensions or annuities. Further, there should be absolute security against reduction of salary for each individual once admitted to the permanent service. If the financial necessities of cities and towns really compel the reduction of teachers' salaries,—a well-nigh impossible supposition,—these reductions should take effect upon new appointments only, never upon the old. I know that this principle of good public administration is violated at pleasure by our national, state, and municipal governments; but I take leave to say that the practices of our governments in this respect are to the last degree barbarous, shiftless, and uneconomical. It is to be observed that this remark applies only to public administration; the servants of industrial or other private companies of uncertain income cannot be completely protected against the adverse chances of business; but government, whether national, state, or municipal, ought to be able to give its servants two rewards, which, to an appreciable extent, replace immediate money payment,—namely, security of income and public consideration.

The dignity, independence, and freedom from solicitude of the teacher's life would be greatly enhanced by deliverance from the necessity of securing an annual re-election