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## The Educational Weekly

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TORONTO, MAY 13, 1886.

THE question of teachers' salaries touched upon in our last issue is no unimportant one. That the average salary of a Canadian schoolmaster is low seems to be taken for granted throughout the country. But in speaking of the low salaries of teachers we not seldom forget that low salaries seem, in a comparatively new country, to be the necessary adjunct to intellectual labour. We think it will be found that, taking everything into consideration, the labour most highly paid in the Dominion is manual labour. And this is, of course, according to the natural order of things. In a country which is still in its youth we cannot complain because there is more demand for the absolute necessities of life than for the amenities.

The *Current*, it will be remembered, found one of the causes of low salaries in the fact that teachers "deliberately use positions as stepping stones to something else." And in this the *Current* is perfectly

correct, and until some remedy is found for this salaries will remain low. It makes the supply greater than the demand, and at the same time lowers the standard of that supply. But against this latter result teachers should guard. Here, as elsewhere, the best article will fetch the best price; and the true and rational way to work for the better price is to raise the quality of the article.

But on the whole we think the problem of low salaries is included in the greater problem of the want of permanency in the profession. And this problem, in addition to its greatness, is an exceedingly intricate one. Sooner or later, however, we believe it must be grappled with. A teacher is not made in a day. The value attached to "experience" is an evidence of this. Length of service is of all criteria of excellence in a schoolmaster perhaps the best. There should, therefore, be some persistent effort made to insure length of service. It would redound on the whole to the benefit, not only of teachers, but of trustees and of pupils also. Salaries would rise, and although perhaps trustees might look upon this as a disadvantage, in reality it would be the reverse—a better article would be obtainable, and a good article at a high price is, all will admit, less expensive than a poor article at a low price. The whole standard of education would be appreciably raised. The country as a whole would benefit.

To bring about these results we firmly believe that no changes, however radical, should be left unconsidered. It is a vital question, one which underlies our whole educational system. If stringent regulations are needed by all means let stringent regulations be enforced. The welfare of the pupils, the standing of old and experienced teachers, demand that some thought should be given to this subject. If the outcome be that a certain number must be sacrificed, the sacrifice should be made. The good of the majority must be maintained.

Another point should not be lost sight of. "It is not because salaries are small," says the *New York School Journal*,

"but because wants are large that makes living comfortably a matter of difficulty. Teachers are often pinched because they frequently try to make a thousand dollar show on a five-hundred dollar cash income. A man who lives five-hundred dollars' worth on a thousand dollar income will have an abundance. It is not what we get, but what we spend, that gives us a Dr. or Cr., cash balance, on the last day of December. Debt is the teacher's guillotine. It has cut off more heads than all the Boards of Education ever elected. Debt is not only an expensive ruler, but a merciless tyrant, whose aim is to kill as many as possible. Poverty in our land is no disgrace, but debt is. We recently came across the following incident, which we give in the author's own words. It carries with it a first-class conclusion: 'If a girl earning her own living makes it her highest ambition to dress with the nearest appearance to wealth, she simply ties a stone to true happiness, and drowns it in the pool of her own foolish vanity. Her foolishness is always apparent. Recently a large, rather coarse-looking girl was noticed among a number of girls, who met weekly; she dressed in the most elaborate manner, entirely out of keeping with her looks and position. The girl was missed for a couple of evenings; on inquiring, it was learned that she was ill. When visited, she was found lying on a mattress in a room that was at once parlour, sleeping room and kitchen. She was without suitable clothing for sickness, and was glad to accept financial assistance. Her standards of living were a silk dress and an opportunity to wear it. No amount of income within the reach of labour would save that girl from suffering.'"

At this point, we may, for the present, leave this important topic. It cannot, however, too soon come under the notice of all educators—both those engaged in practical tuition and those engaged in forming regulations for the conduct of the system. We shall be glad to insert in our "Correspondence" columns expressions of opinion on the subject of teachers' salaries.