

CORRESPONDENCE.

TEACHERS' SALARIES.

To the Editor of the *Witness* :

SIR,—I noticed a letter from one signing himself "Farmer," in your columns a few days ago, touching the question of teachers' salaries, and using some of the most remarkable arguments ever heard of from a man so intelligent as your correspondent appears to be. In some of his contentions he is undoubtedly correct, and notwithstanding the fact that some high officials of the educational world of this province advocate legislation by which the minimum salaries of teachers should be fixed by law, I cordially support "Farmer" in his opinion that such would be absurd and unjust. From the days when our English ancestors passed the Statute of Laborers until now, the law of supply and demand has regulated the rate of wages. Legislative enactment can never, has never, made any very great inroads upon this law, and even when men were branded with an "F" upon their foreheads for seeking to better their position financially, the law to which I have referred, and which is a natural law, perforce regulated the case to a very great extent. I think the community may look with suspicion upon any attempt to force wages above or below what that law decides to be right under the circumstances, be that attempt the work of labor societies or paid officials of the educational bodies of this country.

But when the work and wages of educated and trained teachers are compared unfavorably with the work and rightful wages of domestic servants, I for one must dissent most vigorously. Whether some teachers

are or are not receiving all they are worth is not the question; the question is whether there is a greater value to be placed upon one kind of labor than upon another, and also whether the one who spends years of preparation and much money should receive a higher remuneration than the one who has done neither. I contend that there is no comparison between the work of the teacher and that of the domestic servant. In so far as mind is above matter, in so far as the character and fitness of our future citizens are above the cleanness of our floors or the whiteness of our linen, in so far as manners and morals are above puddings and pies, so far and farther is the work of the teacher to be ranked above that of the domestic servant in value. I do not wish to appear to underrate the work of a domestic; I would not belittle any honest labor. To me all honest toil is the service of God; but I do rank the labor of the preacher, the physician and the teacher at a higher value than the unskilled labor of the domestic or farm servant. To be logical, "Farmer" would have us believe that the miserable quack who administers Epsom salts and castor oil "ad libitum" should be paid for his services at the same rate as the skilled physician who has given years of study and has spent thousands of dollars in preparation for his life-work, if the former chance to spend more hours per day at his ignorant attempts to save life or ease pain.

Some of our teachers have spent two, three or four years at the academy, one or two at the Normal school and four at college at great expense, and yet "Farmer" would pay such men and women no more to teach his children than he pays to his servant who milks his cows and