

[CIRCULAR.]

[OFFICIAL.]

To the Teacher of each Common School in Upper Canada on his duty under the new Common School Act.

EDUCATION OFFICE,  
Toronto, 14th August, 1850.

SIR,

The new Common School Act for Upper Canada is now printed and distributed to all the municipalities and School Sections. It may be regarded as the great charter of Common School Teachers in Upper Canada. It stamps their profession with new importance, and throws over their interests and character the shield of a new protection. I can now say truly, that I know of no State, where a popular School system exists, in which the rights and interests of Teachers are so effectually protected, as under the provisions of the new School Act for Upper Canada. The pages of the "*Journal of Education*" and the "*Correspondence on the School Law*," lately printed by order of the Legislative Assembly, attest the feelings I have entertained and the efforts I have made to elevate the position, protect the rights, and improve the circumstances of School teachers; and I rejoice to witness the enactment of a law so far satisfactory on this subject, as to prompt me, for the first time during my five years' occupancy of office, to address an official circular to Teachers—believing that their position and prospects are now sufficiently encouraging to justify me in holding up the profession of a Teacher as a comfortable as well as respectable and useful employment for life.

2. The new Act provides Trustees of Common Schools with greater facilities for raising the salaries of Teachers and furnishing the Schools with all needful maps, apparatus, and text-books, than I know of in any other country; while, at the same time, it makes corresponding provision for the punctual payment of Teachers, both from the School Fund and School rates. You have only to study carefully the provisions of the Act to be impressed with the conviction, that they have been conceived in the spirit of the warmest regard for the interests and efficiency of the Teacher's profession, and contain all that can be secured by law to a Teacher, under a system of local self-government, where the patronage and emoluments of each School (beyond the amount of the School Fund apportioned to each School Section) are in the hands of a local elective Corporation, and not of a central Executive, as in other systems of government. The facilities for Normal School Instruction to all Teachers who wish to avail themselves of it, are also greater, under the liberal provisions of the new Act, than in any other country in America. A valuable series of uniform text-books coming so generally into use, and the Trustees being authorized to supply all the pupils with them, cannot fail greatly to relieve and facilitate the labours of the Teacher. It will also be observed, in the Regulations which have been made by the Council of Public Instruction (under the provisions of the new Act) that the independence of the Teacher, in the teaching and classification of his School, is placed beyond petty interference or individual tyranny. Under the more effective system for examining and licensing Teachers as provided for by the new Act, and the Programme for the examination and classification of Teachers to be prepared by the Council of Public Instruction, a proper line of demarcation will be drawn between Teachers according to their relative qualifications, and each Teacher will acquire the position and advantage to which he is entitled.

3. Such being your position, relations and prospects under the provisions of the new School Act, I am desirous of making a few general remarks and suggestions relative to your future conduct. Your general duties are prescribed in the several clauses of the sixteenth section of the Act, and the rules according to which you are to conduct your School, will be found in the third and fifth sections, Chapter vi, of the General Regulations for the Organization, Government, and Discipline of Common Schools, adopted by the Council of Public Instruction. I hope you will meditate upon, and make yourself thoroughly acquainted with the intention and spirit of these requirements of the law and of the regulations authorized by it. What I have now to offer is of a more general character.

4. Permit me first to say, value your profession. If you do not value it, others will not. But do not show your estimate of it, by assuming lofty airs, or making lofty pretensions; but by making yourself thoroughly master of it, by devoting your energies to it, by

becoming imbued with its spirit. Let your actions speak, and let your heart feel. If an orator would have his audience feel, he must first feel himself; and if a Teacher does not feel, and does not give proof that he feels, the value and importance of his work, can he reasonably expect others to do so? We often hear it said, "Teachers are not respected." But is it not almost as often true, that teachers do not respect themselves—that they do not act respectably—that they themselves provoke the disrespect of which they complain. A Teacher cannot be made respectable by Act of Parliament. He must make himself so. In every ordinary employment of life, a man who acts upon high principles, and shows that he understands and values his business, will invariably command respect. Nor are the Teacher and his work an exception to the general rule. Nay, wherever a teacher has shown himself the possessor of noble principles, and that he understood and loved his work, has he not commanded respect, and soon acquired commanding influence in the neighborhood of his residence? I am persuaded that the people of Upper Canada do not, to any considerable extent, disrespect teachers worthy of respect. A people in so young a Province, and in the infancy of the school system, who voluntarily taxed themselves last year to the amount of two hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars (considerably more in proportion to population than the amount raised last year by the people of the State of N. York) for salaries of Teachers alone—irrespective of the legislative school grant, and of the sums assessed and collected for the erection of school-houses and the incidental expenses of schools—cannot but respect every respectable Teacher. It is true that narrow and mean views are entertained by some as to the amount of a teacher's remuneration, but the same persons entertain similar views as to the remuneration of all public officers. But the number of these enemies of knowledge and petty tyrants of mental labour, will diminish as intelligence and manly virtues advance in society. The large increase which has already, in many instances, taken place in the salaries of efficient Teachers, and the increasing demand for such Teachers in various parts of the Province, indicate a progress full of encouraging hopes and anticipations for the future.

5. Then, if you value your profession yourself, employ the proper means to give it a place, not only in the esteem, but in the interest and sympathies of others. The profession of a Teacher is a means to an end; it exists not for the sake of the Teacher himself, but for the interests of society. It is a work indispensable to the progress and well-being of society. What is the Teacher's work? It is to develop the mind, to mould the heart, and to form the character of the future citizens, magistrates and rulers of our land! It is to teach and implant that which is the only true guarantee of liberty, order, and social stability—the essential element of a country's prosperity and happiness. Show that you sympathise with these objects—that your heart is in them—that your thoughts and aims do not terminate in yourself alone, but embrace others,—and especially encircle the rising generation. Such a spirit, like heat in the atmosphere, will be diffusive. Others will imbibe it; the indifferent will become interested, and the selfish will begin to feel the impulses of intelligent generosity; parents will become increasingly anxious for the education of their children, and children will become increasingly anxious to be educated. In any neighborhood, both in town and country, where any youth are allowed to grow up uneducated, a Teacher should be an educational missionary, as well as an educational pastor; and every instance of success will add to his influence and means of support, as well as usefulness. No class of men in the country will derive so large an individual advantage from the progress of society as School-teachers, and they ought to be intent in efforts to excite every sentiment and feeling, and to procure and circulate every publication, which will tend to diffuse education and knowledge. A Teacher who folds his arms in slothful inactivity—neither improving in knowledge himself, nor advancing it among others—and yet complaining that no Hercules comes to his relief, deserves neither respect nor assistance; while the Teacher who nobly exerts himself in both acquiring and diffusing knowledge, will receive both emolument and respect, if not admiration and applause.

6. The mutual intercourse of teachers—mutual visits to each others' Schools—forming, and meeting occasionally or periodically in Associations for mutual improvement, and the promotion of professional objects,—which are no other than public interests;—these and kindred measures, in connexion with professional reading and