

THE SALARIES OF TEACHERS—HOW THEY MAY BE REGULATED

Charles P. Muckle, B.A., Accountant, Toronto.

AT the close of the last century, there appeared in one of our leading dailies an article by the Deputy Minister of Education, reviewing briefly the development of the Ontario School System.

From this article I take the following item relating to the average salaries of teachers in the Public Schools.

	1859.	1898.
Male teacher	\$456	\$396
Female teacher	245	293

That the salaries of teachers are low is a fact, the truth of which is readily admitted by all, but its importance on the future life of the nation is considered by few outside the profession. But when we consider the advances in the salaries of workmen in other departments during the last half century, a half century of great progress in national education, we view with surprise figures like the above, which show a decrease in the average salary of the male teachers of the province, an increase in the average salary of the female teacher, and a ridiculously low salary for either class of workers, considering the course of preparation, necessary for work demanding intellectual powers of a high order, combined with almost infinite love and patience.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon these facts, known too well by the teachers for whom this article is written. But why do they allow this state of affairs to exist? "History teaches by example," is a proverb with them, and another proverb which the teacher would do well to remember, is "What man hath done, man can do." Who would have said twenty years ago that the cause of labor would become so powerful as to compel the Government to fix the wages of workmen on national works; to improve the factory acts, and to pass many

laws beneficial to the wage-earners of the Dominion!

Trace the history of trades-unionism and you will find therein the steps which the teacher must take in his onward progress of reform, viz., discussion, union, agitation and legislation. The first step has already been taken, the second, union, has been partially made. The great hindrance to union among teachers is the fact that they are of necessity a scattered people. But they have their County Associations, meeting annually in convention, where this matter could be discussed and a union formed. Then let an organizer be appointed to join these different unions into one grand federation. From "Citizen and Country," the advocate of trades unionism, I am pleased to learn that steps have already been taken to organize the teachers in Waterloo County, and also in South Wellington. When unions have been formed all over the country, the work of agitation will commence. Then the teacher will be in a position to bring legislation to his aid. For why should the Government not legislate on the salaries of the teacher? Glancing at the Labour Gazette, I see that the Government fixes the minimum rates of wages to be paid to the laborers engaged in its work. The wages of a stonecutter, for example, must be at least three dollars a day. If the Government has the right to legislate on the wages of a hewer and fashioner of stone, should it not use its power to see that the hewer and fashioner of the character of its future citizens, the moulder of the nation's life, receive remuneration commensurate with the importance of his work.

Let the motto of the teacher be the same as that of the union man, "Only the best professional talent to be employed, only the highest salaries to be paid."