

Teachers' Organization.

The teachers of New Brunswick have organized themselves into an association, the objects of which are stated on another page. The convention held in Moncton was a business-like one; very little oratory was indulged in, and the members earnestly and quietly proceeded with the business in hand. Their claims are reasonable, and they should have the sympathy of all right-minded and thinking people in their demands for recognition and improvement in salaries. This recognition can in large measure be obtained by the legislature and leading men throughout the province acting in harmony with the body of teachers. Their claims are so patent to every one that teachers themselves should not be expected to bear the brunt of the discussion. They have taken the initiative after bearing patiently for years a state of things that they could no longer bear and maintain their self-respect, and it remains for the public to extend to them the encouragement and support they so well deserve.

It is for the best interests of this country as it is of others to have a progressive system of education effectively and wisely administered. It is impossible to administer it effectively without proper rewards which would tempt and retain in the service teachers of the right quality, properly trained and equipped for the work, and paid a sufficient wage to enable them to live with some comfort, meet the needs of their position in society, and make some provision for emergencies and old age.

What does it mean to have the present low salaries of teachers continue? It means a poorer and more superficial quality of teaching. Many of our best teachers have left or are leaving the service for other countries or other vocations where there is more assurance of a living competence. Those who are taking their places are not preparing themselves for teaching as a life work, because they have no encouragement to do so. If salary is the measure of appreciation that people bestow on teachers the people will finally receive just what they are willing to pay for—a meagre service. This is not a pleasant thing to contemplate for those who would like to see our country keep up the good reputation it has already won for its schools and scholars, nor is it a pleasant prospect for those teachers who have given some of the best years of their life to qualifying themselves for teaching, and who are not now in a position to seek other positions or other homes.

The minimum salaries which the members of the new association propose to accept are very moderate. It is not much over fifty cents a day for a teacher

of the lowest class. This is as modest a recompense as the most illiterate and untrained wage-earner receives. The male teacher of the highest class may get a little over a dollar a day, which is not much more than a fourth of what a stone-mason gets. We forbear to comment further on these figures. There is hope that a better state of things is setting in. In nearly every state of the Union and nearly every province of Canada public sentiment is setting strongly in favor of higher salaries for teachers. Intelligent men and the press are everywhere favoring this as an act of simple justice. More than this, they regard the low wages of teachers as a serious menace to the efficiency of education and consequently to the welfare of the country.

In the United States the average wealth per head in the year 1800 is said to have scarcely exceeded \$100; in 1900 it was estimated at \$1,200 per head for men, women and children, workers and idlers. It is probably much under the figure to estimate that the average wealth per head in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick has doubled in the past twenty-five years. Is it not reasonable to ask that teachers who have been so great factors in this material increase should share in the prosperity and general advance in the wealth of the country? But their salaries have not increased. Nay, more, teachers are now poorer financially than were the teachers of a quarter of a century ago, for the cost of living is much greater. And during this period the wages of all other classes of workers have increased! "Are not teachers mean-spirited if they submit longer to this state of things?" said an earnest teacher in our hearing the other day.

But it may be urged that some communities are paying as much now for education as they can afford. That may be true of some sparsely settled country districts, but it is *not* true of cities, towns and the great majority of country districts. Where it is true the remedy is in consolidation of weak districts. Parish instead of district boards of school trustees would help to bring about a better state of things.

The association deserves success. It should have the sympathy and active support of every teacher in the province. The teachers of Nova Scotia, where a union exists already, may give encouragement and support by a more active organization along the same lines. Those of Prince Edward Island are in sympathy with the movement. Teachers will best show that they deserve the active co-operation and support of the community, by keeping in view all the objects of the association, especially "to exalt the character and efficiency of teachers," and "to improve the condition of teachers and school." Steadily working with such objects they will win support and success.