

# THE VIRGINIA TEACHER

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## TEACHING AS A VOCATION

WITH the possible exception of the vocations in which your parents are engaged, you have had more contact with teaching than with any other. The years that you have sat in school have given you an excellent opportunity to observe at first hand the character, methods of work, and mode of living of at least two groups of teachers—elementary and high school. While teachers in the high and elementary schools constitute by far the largest group of those engaged in the business of education, the profession claims many others of quite varied talents, including college professors, deans, and presidents; supervisors of art, music, and physical education; members of the professional staffs of state and federal departments of education; and a large group engaged chiefly in administrative phases of education. The administrative group, which is usually recruited from the ranks of successful teachers, includes principals of high and elementary schools, superintendents of county and city school systems, state superintendents of education, presidents of colleges and universities, secretaries or directors of great educational foundations such as The General Education Board and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

In point of numbers employed, teaching stands at the head of the professions. As an agency for molding the lives of the youth of the nation, its place may be disputed only with the home and the church.

If you are concerned for the welfare of society, more interested in people than in things, fond of study, and willing to go

through years of college training, you are justified in considering teaching as a vocation. In any consideration of teaching as a life work, the preparation required, compensation, qualities that contribute to success, and the difficulties encountered should receive attention.

Graduation from a two-year normal school course is now recognized as the minimum for teachers in the elementary grades, but many school systems are gradually introducing into these grades college graduates who have specialized in elementary teaching. The minimum requirement for high school teachers is now college graduation, with the principalships and better paid teaching positions going to those who hold the master's degree, which requires completion of a year's graduate study. While the colleges and universities employ as instructors and assistants, college graduates who have not attained the Ph. D. degree, there is little chance to secure a full professorship unless that degree, which requires three years of study beyond college graduation, is held.

In Virginia, beginning salaries of normal school and junior-college graduates range from \$80 per month in the rural and small-town schools to \$115 per month in the city schools. Teachers in the rural elementary schools seldom receive more than \$100 per month, but in the cities a salary of \$200 per month, on a nine-months' basis, may be attained when the teacher has completed ten years of successful service. College graduates who are appointed to positions in the elementary grades of rural schools usually begin at a salary of \$100 per month; in the cities at a salary of about \$125 per month.

While the notion that teachers in the high and elementary schools, whose preparation and experience are of the same nature,

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This talk, the third of a series on choosing a vocation, was delivered to the high school pupils of Virginia through radio station WRVA, Richmond, Virginia, at 6:30 p. m., on October 16, 1930.

should be paid equal salaries is gaining favor, the practice of paying high school teachers better salaries is followed in most school systems; and, further, men are usually paid higher salaries than women, even though the preparation, ability, and type of work performed are approximately the same.

In the rural high schools the salaries of women range from \$100 to \$133 per month, for men from \$125 to \$200 per month; in city high schools the salary range for women is from \$110 per month to \$244, for men from \$125 to \$250 per month. High school principals receive from \$1,350 per year, in the less wealthy counties, to \$4,500 in the larger cities, the average salary being \$2,300 per year. It should be noted in connection with the salaries of principals as well as of teachers that payment is usually on a nine-months' basis.

The salaries of county superintendents range from \$1,600 per year to \$5,500, with an average of \$2,600; city superintendents receive from \$3,500 per year to \$7,750, the average being about \$5,000. The compensation of college teachers of professorial rank may be as low as \$2,500 or as high as \$6,000 per year, depending upon the reputation of the professor and the wealth of the institution.

In considering these Virginia salaries, it should be noted that while they compare favorably with salaries paid in other southern states, they are markedly below those paid in the New England and western states, and well below the average for the nation.

It must be admitted that considering the preparation required and the responsibilities placed upon teachers, the pay is poor. Along with the poor pay, there should be listed such other disadvantages as the tendency of teachers to become dictatorial and irritable, the necessity of working at high tension, the monotony of teaching the same subjects year after year, the depressing effect of long hours in contact with immature minds, and

the necessity of having to submit, in purely personal matters, to the comments of self-appointed critics who are ever ready to pass judgment on the affairs of teachers.

In considering the inducements offered by teaching, it is interesting to observe that "Who's Who in America" lists among the nationally prominent more persons engaged in teaching than in any other vocation; and in attaining recognition in the same list of eminent contemporary Americans, of all vocations, the children of educators are second only to the sons and daughters of preachers. Other advantages of teaching are that teachers occupy a position of respect and are privileged to contribute to the social and spiritual development of their communities. The daily hours of work are shorter than in most vocations, Saturdays are usually free, and the Easter and Christmas vacations are longer than in other lines of work, while the summer vacation offers an added inducement to those who are interested in advanced study and travel. There is an opportunity for the development of such collateral activities as magazine writing, textbook editing, public lecturing, private tutoring, and research; and, of no small consequence, the privilege of sharing the benefits of a State pension system for teachers.

In teaching, as in most other lines of endeavor, there are certain general qualities which contribute to individual success, the more important ones being good health, honesty, diligence, co-operation, good humor, tact, and self-control.

The specific qualities which make for success in classroom teaching are consideration for others, patience, idealism, self-control, ability to impart information, power to create in others a desire to seek and to apply knowledge, youthful spirit, knowledge of child nature, and power of command or ability to discipline. Whatever other qualities you may possess, if you lack this mysterious educational *it*—which brings respect without asking for it, leadership by consent,

friendship through understanding—your efforts in teaching will surely fail.

The qualities which are of importance as contributing factors to promotion from the ranks of classroom teachers to administrative positions in education are leadership, broad-mindedness, perseverance, resourcefulness, the ability to organize, tact, and power to work long hours.

A very important consideration in the choice of a vocation is the probability of securing and maintaining work. It is therefore stated in connection with teaching that at present there are many more persons who hold licenses to teach than there are teaching positions to be filled; but there is not a marked oversupply of persons who have the scholarship and other qualifications that are now being required of teachers. Competition in teaching, as in other professions, is keen, consequently only those who are prepared to meet maximum rather than minimum requirements should consider teaching as a life work.

THOMAS D. EASON

### GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS AFFECTING RURAL CHURCHES OF ROCKINGHAM COUNTY

AS ONE drives in different directions from Harrisonburg, he is impressed with the number of well-cared-for rural churches in Rockingham county. It has been said that when a church property presents an outside appearance that suggests that it receives careful attention, one may safely decide that the organization of that church membership is active. But if the outside of the building shows need of repair and the church lawn and shrubbery or trees have evidently been neglected, an observer may safely decide that an inquirer will find that there is a lack of well-directed activities in the organization of the church membership. The Rockingham county ru-

ral churches make a favorable appearance on the outside. This observation interested the writer, and after talking with persons who are well acquainted with Rockingham county, it seemed that a study might indicate some geographic influences which have contributed to the favorable condition which appears to be present in the churches of that county. It seemed advisable that the study should have a limited field rather than attempt an investigation including more territory.

If time had permitted, there would have been an attempt to learn the land utilization by the membership of each church group. Such information would have indicated the number of acres devoted to each of the following: corn, wheat, oats, other cereals, alfalfa, pasture, orchards, and woodlands. It is reported in Rockingham county that as they use different crops and do not depend on one crop, it is possible to feel less effects of the failure of a specific crop. When the income of the rural group does not vary to extremes from one year to another, the church program can be more dependably financed. Money may not make religion, but it is not easy to maintain a religious program without money.

Permanent land ownership was another influence concerning which information could not be secured in the few weeks during which this study was made. Rockingham county people say that many farms have passed from one generation to another, so that, for several generations, farms have been owned by one family or its ancestry. This has linked the family, generation after generation, to the same local church. The sentiment which associates with inheritance thus attaches to the site and building provided for the group worship of the community. It is often stated that sentiment cannot be measured, but at least a part of the contributing factors influencing sentiment may be noted. The greater sentimental attitude helps to furnish