

WHAT SHOULD COLLEGE PROFESSORS BE PAID?

BY G. H. M.

A GREAT deal has been written of late, especially in the annual reports of college presidents, regarding the inadequacy of the compensation received by university teachers. The writer, to whom the question is one of vital importance, has seen many of these general statements, but has failed to find any which has taken up the matter in conclusive form. This he hopes to do here concisely.

Primarily the question is one of standard of living. If a grocery clerk can maintain his family in a suitable degree of decency and comfort on seventy-five dollars a month, have we a right to expect that a college instructor can do the same? The answer to this involves the demands which society makes upon the respective individuals.

To get at this point the writer analyzed the itemized household accounts which his wife has kept for the past nine years, during which time he has been connected with one of our large and wealthy universities. Two years were spent as instructor, two as assistant professor, and the next five as associate professor.

Summing up his total expenditures for these nine years, and in like manner his salary for the same period, he finds his expenditures have been to his salary in the ratio of 2.1 to 1.

His average annual expenditure has been \$2794.27.

His average salary has been \$1328.15.

For the *privilege of teaching* he has paid the difference, or \$1466.12 annually, from private means.

Even the unbusinesslike professor must pause before such a state of affairs, and try to fathom the reason for this discrepancy, when his firm belief is that he is living on as low a scale of economy as is possible for him, in his position.

In order to find out where the bad management might be, — if bad management there was, — he divided his expenditure account into thirty-one separate items, arranged in tabular form under the following heads: —

1. Household Furnishing and Repairs.
2. Groceries, Meat, Fruit, Vegetables, etc.
3. Servants.
4. Fuel.
5. Light and Water.
6. Gardener and Grounds.
7. Laundry.
8. Taxes.
9. Life Insurance.
10. Fire Insurance.
11. Rent, or Interest on House and Lot.
12. Bicycles and repairs.
Horse, care and feed.
13. Doctors and Dentists.
14. Hospitals, Nurses, Drugs.
15. Death Expenses.
16. Legal Services.
17. Interest on Borrowed Money, for running expenses.
18. P. O. Box, Postage, Stationery, Telegrams.
Telephone, Express, etc.
19. Newspapers, Books, and Periodicals.
20. Clothing, Dry Goods, Shoes, etc.
21. Learned Societies and Social Clubs.
22. University Gifts and Supplies.
Typewriting, Printing and Mimeographing.
23. Children's Tuition and Pocket Money.
24. Subscriptions and Charity.
25. Theatre, Concerts, Athletic Sports.
26. Christmas and other Gifts.
Entertainment of Friends.
27. Wine, Beer, Tobacco, Candy, and other Luxuries.
28. Personal and Toilet Supplies.
29. Business and Recreation Trips, Hotels.
R.R. Fare, Carfare, etc.
30. Family Obligations, or Payment of Education Debt.
31. Savings, other than Life Insurance, looking toward old age.

He believes that, assuming that a college professor has the right to marry and

have two or three children, there is not a single one of these items which may be omitted from a consideration of expenses to cover a period of years. The whole question, then, resolves itself into this: how much per year is it reasonable to allow for each of these items?

In the community in which he lives, with a family of two adults, two children, and one servant, at the present high prices of the necessities of life, he believes that the sums he mentions are the *very least* upon which his household can be conducted. And he bases this belief upon a most accurate analysis of fully itemized accounts.

Taking up the items in detail:—

1. Household furnishing and repairs.

This item must cover, for a period of years, the original cost of household furniture of all descriptions. In addition, it must look after natural wear, tear, and breakage of furniture, glass, dishes, kitchen utensils, rugs, curtains, bedding, etc., as well as carpentry, plumbing, and the like. It must also provide for pictures, "works of art," and household adornments in general.

Does \$75 a year seem excessive for this? Say \$6 a month.

2. For five persons a grocery bill of \$25 per month, a meat bill of \$15, milk, \$5, fruit, vegetables, butter and eggs, \$10, or a total of \$55 (\$11 per person), should not seem unreasonable.

3. We must pay \$25 a month for even a passable servant. Shall we expect our wives to bear and rear children, do all of the housework, sustain their social duties, and remain well and strong?

4. Kitchen, fireplace, and furnace fuel will aggregate \$120 per year, or \$10 a month.

5. Light and water average with us just \$5 a month.

6. The labor of a gardener one day a month is \$2.

7. Our laundry averages just \$10 monthly. Our servants will do no laundry work.

8. An investment of \$5000 in house

and lot, together with personal property and poll tax, makes this \$10 a month.

If there were no house owned, the rent item (11) would have to be increased.

9. To protect the family of a man who is not in a position to save, \$5000 life insurance is not too much. The monthly premium on this amount, assuming a twenty-payment ordinary life policy, will be \$10.

10. \$3000 insurance on house, and \$2000 on personal property, makes \$18 per year, or \$1.50 a month.

11. Six per cent on \$5000 invested in house and lot is \$300 annually, or \$25 a month. This does not provide for depreciation, maintenance, and repairs. No desirable house on the campus can be rented for less than \$35.

12. Not caring to pay so large a rent, we live off the campus and use bicycles. Their depreciation and repairs average \$2 a month. Keeping a horse would cost \$8 a month.

13. An experience of ten years shows us that not less than \$10 a month may be set down for doctors and dentists for the family. A single attack of appendicitis in ten years will take the whole of this.

14. Hospitals, nurses, and drugs average \$5 a month.

15. Since the average duration of life is about forty years, in a family of four individuals one death is to be expected every ten years. This item may be set down at \$2 a month.

16. Occasional notary and minor legal services average \$1 a month.

17. Certain expenses, like life insurance and taxes, being payable in large amounts, necessitate loans from the bank, which are gradually repaid. This item may be set down at fifty cents monthly.

18. For a live family with connections, postage, stationery, telegrams, telephones, express, freight, cartage, and allied items, will aggregate \$3 a month.

19. Newspapers, books, and periodicals. A college professor is supposed to revel in this sort of thing. Suppose we allow him \$5 a month.

20. To clothe four individuals neatly and completely cannot cost less than \$180 a year, can it?

This is \$15 a month.

21. Learned society and social club initiation fees and dues must amount to at least \$2 monthly.

22. University gifts and supplies, type-writing, etc. We are constantly going into our pockets for small items which the university will not or cannot furnish without unbearable delay; or we may be working on lines of investigation which call for outlay. Say \$1 a month.

23. In our case, our children are of the kindergarten and primary school age, so this item is only \$9 a month.

Older colleagues, whose children have advanced to the music lesson and preparatory school age, say they must allow \$50 to \$60 monthly.

24. Some families belong to a church. We all have charitable instincts, we are of that class to which the call of needy or suffering humanity appeals.

May we allow \$2 a month?

25. Our education has given us a refined appreciation of the drama, and we have a knowledge of and love for the best music. The annual foot-ball game is a social event which every loyal member of the college community is supposed to attend. We cut this out long ago. Grand opera exists for us only in the memory of our German days.

Let us keep the spark alive by taking our wives once a month to a cheap concert; say \$1.

26. We have children and friends; there are birthdays and anniversaries, as well as Christmas. Is \$50 a year too much? This is \$4 a month. Dinners, receptions, and the like, are not for us.

27. Occasionally a man is jaded; he has a wild desire to "blow himself." May he have \$1 a month pocket money, to share with his wife?

28. Most of us can shave ourselves, but we cannot cut our own hair, although we may invert a bowl over the heads of our youngsters, and trim around the edges.

Here is another \$1.

29. When summer comes, a teacher is pretty nearly always exhausted. His work is trying and confining. His family requires an occasional change of air.

His professional needs may call for a long journey to attend an important meeting of fellow workers, etc. For an average geographical location \$100 a year, or \$8.50 a month, is not too much to cover these items. For an exceptional location, like the extreme Pacific coast, this item should be trebled.

30. The writer has known many colleagues whose education expenses had put them under obligations which they were pledged to repay. In most cases it takes ten years to wipe out these obligations. Sometimes at the end of this period not even the beginning of discharging the debt has been made. Our college professors often come from families whose means are small. The support of aged parents or other relatives may have to be borne by them in common with their brothers and sisters. Every man is apt to have some such claim on himself or his wife.

To cover these items let us allow him \$10 a month.

31. A few, a *very few*, of our colleges pay pensions to their old and worn-out teachers. In such cases perhaps there is no need for a man to lay aside something for his old age, or to make provision for his children's start in life.

Perhaps he owes a duty to his children, to give them as good an education and chance as he himself received. If so, he must begin to lay aside for it.

Where there is no pension, should he not aim, after thirty years of faithful service, to have \$10,000 laid aside? He is not in a position to know of places where he can get large returns on his small investments.

Shall we allow him \$250 a year to put aside (providing there are no "exceptional and unusual" expenses that year, *as there always are*)?

Let us say \$20 per month.

SUMMARY

These are certainly not great demands. Yet, summing them up, taking the smaller of the two when two sums are mentioned, we have \$262.50 monthly, or \$3150¹ per year. Let us talk no more of bad management, — we and our wives face an impossible problem.

CONCLUSION

If this seems extravagant to those who have to determine upon the proper *minimum* compensation for a man of long training, education, and refinement, we must ask them to look over these items carefully, one by one, and put down what they think a fair sum for each item for a family of the college professor's social status. Then let them foot up the total. The average college professor's salary, in the United States, is about \$2000.² The inevitable deduction from the table of

¹ The difference between this sum and the writer's average of \$2,794.27 is accounted for by the fact that he has saved nothing, and that his accounts begin with his first year of married life, when both his wife and he were well supplied with clothing, books, pictures, and certain items of household furnishings. No children and no servant for the first two years. Owning our own home since the second year, we have not included anything for rent or interest.

² This includes not merely full professors, but the other ranks as well.

analyzed expenses, borne out by the experience of the writer and of all of his colleagues whom he has consulted, is that this must be increased sixty per cent, — the increase to be uniform in all grades, from instructor to head professor.

If the profession of teaching is to attract the highest type of efficient manhood, a *living salary* must be paid. A man who devotes his life to the cause of the advancement of education must feel a "call" to it. He should be of a type which joyfully relinquishes all desire to accumulate worldly wealth or to live in luxury. Large salaries, commensurate with what equal ability would bring in other lines of work (\$10,000 to \$50,000), might be just, but would be undesirable, as they would tend to serve as bait to attract mercenary and lower types of men.

But a man fit to occupy a chair in a university should be paid enough to enable him to live in decency and comfort, rearing and educating his children, and retiring in his old age to something other than absolute penury.

The writer would commend a careful study of his table to all college trustees.

Can a man, whose energies are spent in so unequal and impossible a struggle to make both ends meet, maintain freshness and vigor in his work, be an inspiration to his students, and fulfill in scholarship the promise of his early years? The alternative demanded by the conditions is celibacy.