

The *personnel* of our teaching staff remains, on the whole, unaltered, though there has been a very considerable interchange of positions on the part of teachers within the district. We hail with unaffected pleasure the advent of a few promising recruits from outside the district—some fresh from the Training College, bearing with them the latest educational ideals, the remainder with success well attested in other educational fields. We are glad that the Board has thus been able, while justly conserving the interests of its own teachers in the matter of promotion, to stir the educational pulse of the district, in some degree, to new life, by the infusion of fresh blood.

The uncertificated teacher still remains with us in considerable force. It is our clear duty to give him all the assistance we can; but it should not be forgotten that this, when our hands are full of work, means lessened attention to schools manned by certificated teachers. It should be our continual aim to replace, as soon as possible, the uncertificated by the certificated teacher. Moreover, it is well that this understanding should be rendered clear and definite to all uncertificated teachers, lest they feel aggrieved when the time comes for them to make way for better-equipped teachers.

During the year the hardship entailed on those pupil-teachers who had completed their apprenticeship to the satisfaction of the Board and passed the D examination, but who, on account of not having passed the Matriculation Examination, were debarred from entering the Training College as students under Division A, was brought under the notice of the Department. It is satisfactory to record that under the new Training College regulations an ample measure of justice is meted out to them.

Foremost in our thoughts during the past few months has been a feeling of satisfaction at the issue of a new and more liberal scale of staffing and salaries. There is no disguising the fact that for some years there has been a feeling of unrest and discontent among teachers as to their general status and remuneration compared with those of other classes of workers with equally responsible duties. This feeling the new regulations—as liberal, possibly, as the Dominion can afford to make them at the present time—will do much to assuage, if not altogether to remove. Most teachers, too, appreciate the increased benefits conferred by the new superannuation system. Indeed, the option of coming under its operation would, we believe, be universally exercised if the conditions under which a teacher could retire at the age of sixty were made absolutely clear. There is no doubt in our minds that, in the interests of the teachers themselves, and in the interests of education generally, it should be entirely within the option of a teacher to retire at the age of sixty.

A new set of regulations for the inspection and examination of schools came into force this year, delegating the annual examination of all classes to the teacher, and fixing a uniform period for such examination—viz., the end of the school year. (The school year is, in all cases, to extend from the 1st January to the 31st December in each year.) By these regulations the Inspector, except in the case of the proficiency and of the competency certificates, ceases to examine individual pupils as such, though on either of his visits to a school he may test the quality of the instruction given in that school. It would be quite premature to pronounce on the success of this new departure. It does not seem to us to diminish materially the usefulness of the Inspector. If it limits his outlook in some directions, it increases it in others. Meanwhile, it behoves every head teacher to consider carefully the great power now placed in his hands, and to determine, with his whole heart and soul, to use it wisely and well, without either fear or favour. The teacher who does so may no doubt occasionally run counter to local prejudice, and, as a consequence, meet with petty annoyance; but he will, in the end, be recognised as really worthy of his office, and win his way to the highest esteem and trust.

It follows from these considerations that the new regulations make one point quite clear—the absolute necessity of considering character in the appointment of teachers. And we may point out that it is not sufficient—that, in fact, it is quite insufficient—that the teacher, in the acts of his own personal and non-official career, exhibit the purity and strength of high moral achievement; his moral fibre must be strong enough to bear the fierce local light that beats on all who have public duties to perform, and to resist successfully the constant temptation to secure ease and passing popularity by the sacrifice of right.

At the time of writing, the teachers' annual reports, in which are indicated the quality of each pupil's work, and his progress from class to class, are passing under our review; hence, it is impossible for us yet to assert, with any degree of accuracy, to what extent the new examination scheme is worthy of approval. There are fairly clear indications, however, that, if it is to be successful, a more stringent interpretation of the syllabus will be desirable on the part of a fairly large proportion of our teachers.

We should like to point out that the incomplete, and sometimes incorrect, form in which many of these reports have reached us has been a source of much worry and annoyance. In spite of a carefully drafted circular, in which we vainly imagined we had pointed out the way of escape from every difficulty likely to beset a teacher, the returns sent in are, in many cases, replete with error and omission. In fact, it is safe to say, in regard to the whole bundle of reports, that everything that should not have been done has been done, and everything that should not have been left undone has been left undone. We trust that by next year there will be an improvement in this respect.

Of the different courses open for awarding proficiency certificates, that of having suitable centres and of examining the candidates at these centres towards the close of the year seemed to be best adapted to the circumstances of our district. Accordingly, about twenty centres were chosen, which, in the end, we believe proved convenient and suitable to the candidates in attendance. As there was some doubt as to whether parents understood clearly the obligation laid upon them (for the first time) of entering their children for this examination, forms of application were, by order of the Board, prepared and issued to all likely candidates, not only for the proficiency certificate in Standard VI, but for the competency certificate in other standards. This plan, on the whole, answered exceedingly well, so far, at any rate, as proficiency candidates were concerned. Candidates for the competency certificates still present themselves to your Inspectors at most inconvenient times. It would be well if teachers would, as clearly as possible, notify children who wish to enter on employment or to be exempted from