

without, should reflect such order, method, dignity, refinement, and beauty as are rendered possible by local conditions, reinforced by local appreciation and aid. To their credit be it said, however, that many of our teachers and Committees fully recognize the importance of this matter, and are earnestly striving, with praiseworthy zeal, to make the utmost of conditions within their reach.

STAFFING OF SCHOOLS.—During the course of the year the Headmasters' Association called the Board's attention to the effect of the present staffing regulations, with special reference to growing schools in Grades VI to IX. In their report they state: "Notwithstanding the improvements in staffing which have been introduced in recent years, it is still possible, under present regulations, for some schools to be so understaffed that the pupils are debarred from proper education, and teachers are subjected to overstrain." Of the truth of this contention there can be but little doubt. It frequently happens in this district, where the number of children of school age is increasing so rapidly that a school may rise from a lower to a higher grade, so far as the actual average attendance is concerned, and maintain a rising average for some considerable time, before obtaining an increase of staff. It seems unreasonable under certain circumstances to delay additions to staff when an average attendance of a permanent nature once declares itself, and we consider that the difficulty—which in this particular district, with its large number of growing schools, is very real and very pressing—could be overcome to a great extent by requiring additions to staffs to depend on Inspectors' reports. If in the Inspectors' opinion the increase in attendance in the case of any particular school is such as permanently to bring such school into a higher grade, or the decrease in attendance such as permanently to lower the grade in which the school is placed, the addition to or withdrawal from the staff should at once be made. Another matter to which we wish to direct attention is the regulation which requires the withdrawal of pupil-teachers from schools of grades V and VI, and foreshadows the gradual abolition of pupil-teachers from all grades of schools. The substitution of assistants for pupil-teachers is highly desirable, and we shall be the first to welcome this most necessary step in educational progress; but we cannot ignore the fact that the difficulty in this district of obtaining suitable head teachers and assistants for isolated country schools is becoming greater each year—notwithstanding the output of the Training College—so that it is questionable whether, in the interests of the service, it would be wise to advocate any further reduction of pupil-teachers just at present. To strengthen the staffs of the higher-grade schools by the withdrawal of pupil-teachers and the appointment of assistants would certainly tend to accentuate the difficulty of obtaining suitable applicants for our small sole-charge schools, and would undoubtedly result in the appointment to low-grade schools—and these comprise a large majority in this district—of relatively inferior teachers.

TRAINING COLLEGE REGULATIONS.—The issue of regulations early last year was responsible for several changes in the management and work of the training colleges. One of the most important of these makes it possible for those who, admitted as students of Division A or Division B, have satisfactorily completed the prescribed course of work during the period spent in the Training College, to obtain without further examination a teacher's certificate which shall rank in respect of attainments with certificates of Class C or Class D, as the case may be. The award of the certificate will be made on the recommendation of the Principal of the Training College, subject to the approval of the Inspector-General of Schools. This innovation is in keeping with the spirit of modern progress, which rightly attaches importance to courses of instruction rather than to examination tests—the latter by no means an infallible gauge either of accuracy or depth of knowledge. It is the course of instruction and the preparation for examination which really count, so that if due precaution be taken to ensure that these are liberal, suitable, and efficiently dealt with, and if application, ability, and general progress in the case of each student concerned be carefully considered, the test applied will be more severe, and the results in many cases more satisfactory, than under conditions obtaining heretofore.

CORRESPONDENCE CLASSES.—Towards the close of last year the Department notified the Board that a small grant was available for the purpose of assisting uncertificated teachers in outlying districts to obtain a full qualification. This was to be accomplished either by maintaining at suitable centres training classes for teachers in subjects essential to the award of a teacher's certificate of Class D or by establishing a system of tuition by correspondence. As so many of our uncertificated teachers are at work in schools remote from large centres, and for the most part situated in places to and from which it would be difficult to travel, it was decided to adopt the second proposal. The classes, a full enrolment for which was readily forthcoming, have been of considerable benefit to teachers, and it is gratifying to know that they are to be continued for at least another year. But little time was available last year for completing arrangements, owing to the late date at which notice of the existence of the grant was received. This year, however, it will be possible to provide for courses of practical work in science subjects demanded by the new Examination Regulations, and so place the classes on an altogether more satisfactory footing. We are of opinion, however, that, apart from the practical work in science subjects which the Boards might be asked to provide for, it would be in the interest of all concerned for the Department to arrange for the whole of the work throughout the Dominion being undertaken in Wellington. This would result in greater economy and efficiency, and would relieve the Boards of much anxiety.

FREE CLASS-BOOKS.—Into the thorny question of the advisability of supplying free class-books to pupils we have no wish at present to enter. The supply of free class-books has been a feature of our schools for some time past, and this year a liberal grant has been allowed in the case of the two upper standards. Acting on the recommendation made by the Inspectors at their last conference, the Department, in the regulations governing the grant, has made it possible for the Boards to require pupils to purchase miscellaneous reading-books. We altogether welcome this