

The time of the Inspectors during the second half of the year was also largely occupied with the classification of assistant teachers, as provided for in the new grading scheme. In this connection short visits were also made to all the principal technical high schools with a view to obtaining an independent estimate of the teachers engaged in teaching the usual secondary subjects in these schools; the information so obtained was available for the technical grading officers in drawing up their classification list.

The usual work of editing examination-papers for the Department's June examinations, and of setting, editing, and correcting papers for the public examinations in November and the teachers' certificate examinations in January, was also proceeded with.

THE GRADING OF TEACHERS.

In June the Hon. Minister of Education summoned a conference of selected Principals and assistant teachers representative of the different types of secondary schools. In all about twenty delegates attended, including the Secondary-school Inspectors. The sessions extended over two days, and the conference discussed very fully the advisability of introducing some system of classification for secondary-school teachers, the relative rates of pay of men and women teachers, the desirability of making special provision for married assistants, and the grading of secondary schools and the positions therein. The scheme of classification as proposed by the Secondary Schools Assistants' Association was accepted as a basis for the discussions, and many of its leading features were approved by the conference.

Immediately after the conference the senior Inspector was detained in Wellington to assist the departmental officers in drafting a classification scheme, and the draft was subsequently submitted to the Principals and staffs of all secondary schools for their comment. The Inspectors in all their visits to schools in the latter part of the year also took the opportunity to explain the proposed scheme to the teachers, and were able to gather many valuable suggestions from the criticisms proffered.

In November and the early part of December the Inspectors were very fully occupied in assisting with the drawing-up of the Regulations for the Classification of Secondary-school Teachers, and in preparing and publishing the classification list. The scheme, though admittedly not perfect, has been received on the whole with approval by the teaching profession, and the number of complaints from individual teachers as to their own classification has been remarkably small. As was anticipated, it was found impossible to introduce at once a rigid system of classification; many long-standing anomalies in staffing and salaries could not be immediately removed, though every effort was made to reduce the number of these without inflicting hardship on the teachers concerned.

As a result of the introduction of the scheme the salaries of the assistant teachers of the public secondary schools of the Dominion have been increased for the years 1920 and 1921 by over £18,000; this amount will in 1922 be further augmented by over £2,000 through the first payment of annual increments. The average increase for women teachers has been £35.75, for married men £86.33, for single men £36.14, and for all male assistant teachers £63.69. The salaries of Principals have also been in most cases materially increased under the new system.

As time goes on it will become increasingly difficult for teachers who have not a good academic status to rise to the highest positions in the profession, and in this connection we may say that we have already noticed that younger teachers are displaying a greater desire to complete their university courses.

GENERAL.

The past year has witnessed a considerable improvement in the quality of the teaching and in the standard of work accomplished in the majority of secondary schools. A great deal of such improvement is due partly to the fact that many experienced teachers who had been away on active service have now resumed their duties, and partly to the recovery of the children from the adverse effects of the influenza epidemic of 1918-19. At the close of 1918 no fewer than eighteen women teachers were employed in seven boys' schools in place of masters absent with the Expeditionary Force; the majority of these did faithful and efficient work, but their sphere of usefulness in such schools was obviously restricted. Since that time the number has been reduced very considerably, and during last year only three women teachers were employed, one in each of three separate boys' schools. The supply of qualified male teachers is not yet by any means excessive, and several schools, especially those in towns which are not University centres, have experienced great difficulty in obtaining suitable men for their staffs.

Marked progress has been made in the teaching of home science; two of the largest girls' schools in the Dominion have been provided with cookery-rooms for the first time, and several others have been supplied with new laboratories or have been enabled to equip adequately laboratories which hitherto had been sadly deficient in apparatus. The supply of experienced home-science teachers, however, still presents a difficult problem; a large proportion of teachers in this subject marry at the end of a few years, and practically all the incoming teachers are quite untrained in school method.

CONCLUSION.

In every case we have attempted, as far as time would permit, to discuss with teachers all points of special interest to them. Our views on the best methods to be followed in the teaching of all the principal subjects have been fully set forth in the inspection reports, copies of which are in the hands of both Principals and Boards, and we feel it unnecessary to cover the ground again.