

# Primary Teacher in Scotland

By William Campbell

SCOTLAND has very rich traditions in education. The system first began to take shape under an Act of Parliament in 1696 and, during the following centuries, its prestige grew under the influence of rural schoolmasters — the Dominies — many of them University-trained, who taught all stages in their village schools and sent their brightest boys direct to the Universities. The present form of Primary Education was set up after the Act of 1872. Many changes have taken place since then. Primary education for pupils between the ages of 5 and 12 is given in primary schools and in the primary departments of secondary schools. These schools and departments vary widely in size. Nursery schools and classes for children from 2 to 5 years of age are voluntary and, though firmly established, are still comparatively few in number.

The minimum qualification for teaching in a primary school is the Teacher's General Certificate. Women students have a more open choice than men who for the most part must be University Graduates. Women may enter a Training College straight from secondary school at the age of 17 or 18 years provided they gain an approved group of passes in the Scottish Leaving Certificate Examination or a Certificate of Fitness of the Scottish Universities Entrance Board. These entrants take a three-year course. Extra courses may be taken by students seeking additional qualifications and each year the Colleges offer Summer Courses for teachers-in-service.

In Scotland, all courses of training for teaching are conducted in the Training Colleges which are a part of the public system of education. The Universities, though they have Departments of Education, do not undertake the professional training of any category of teacher. Men and women who wish to teach in the primary school may qualify for admission to training by taking a pass degree at the University. They are then required to take a one-year course at a Training College.

On the successful completion of courses of training, students receive Training Records from the Training Authority and Probation Certificates from the Scottish Education Department. A Probation Certificate cannot be issued if the student does not sa-

tisfy the standard of physical fitness required by the Department. At the end of a probationary period of teaching service, usually of two years, and on the basis of reports by head teachers and recommendation by Her Majesty's Inspectors, teachers receive their Final Certificates. During the period of probation, the conditions of service and the salary of the teacher are not affected by the fact that he has not yet obtained his Final Teacher's Certificate.

Towards the end of his course, the student takes steps to obtain a post. Appointments are made by Local Education Authorities (there are 35 of these) usually through application and interview. It is not now the custom, as it once was, to appoint an assistant teacher to a particular school. He is appointed to the staff of the Education Authority and may be transferred at their pleasure to any school in their area, but there is nothing to prevent a teacher leaving the employment of one Education Authority and taking up an appointment with another. All that is required is the period of notice, usually one month, for which the contract provides. In times of shortage of staff, like the present, students in general find positions relatively easily where they want them and, after a time, may move to other appointments or other areas if they are not suited.

Approximately 15,000 women and 3,000 men are serving in primary schools. About 4,000 of the women and over 2,000 of the men are University Graduates. There are 760 non-graduate men. This number includes those men who were in the teaching profession before graduation was required for entrance to training and those who entered after the War under an emergency scheme when there was a temporary relaxation of requirements.

The salaries (made up of a basic and a responsibility element) of all teachers employed by Education Authorities are fixed by statutory regulations which are revised every three years. A general revision is in progress at the present time. Certain alterations have been made quite recently. To take approximate figures, college-trained women who are not graduates are on a basic scale which begins at £435 and rises to a maximum of £670 in 20 years. The scale for women graduates is from £490 to £715

in 18 years. Non-graduate men and male graduates are on the same scale, £556 to £866 in 18 years.

The men's basic scales are higher than those for women teachers, but last year the principle of Equal Pay was accepted and women's scales are being increased by stages so that this principle will be implemented fully by 1961. The chief positions of special responsibility in the primary school are those of Headmaster, First Assistant and Infant Mistress. Responsibility payments are determined by the number of pupils on the roll. The responsibility elements of head teachers of primary schools (men and women) are based on a scale from £70 for the smallest school to £350 for the largest. The responsibility payment of the deputy head teacher or second master is 25 per cent and of the infant mistress is 30 per cent of the responsibility payment is determined in the same way as that of the second master.

The social and economic changes of the last 10 years have pressed very hard on professional people including teachers. The standard of living throughout the country has risen very considerably but the standard of living of teachers has not risen at the same rate as that of many other classes in the community. This change in relative, to the disadvantage of teachers, is felt all the more keenly because the community expects from teachers certain standards which are not expected from many others.

The teacher has, however, considerable security of tenure. Very few teachers lose their employment. He has also the benefit of a contributory superannuation scheme based on length of service. Every Authority operates Sick Pay Regulations under which the teacher absent through illness receives salary for periods fixed in accordance with his length of service. There are special provisions for teachers absent on account of respiratory tuberculosis. This entitlement does not depend on length of service.

The nature of a teacher's work and of his out-of-school activities is naturally much influenced by the size of the school and by its geographical position. A very large number of primary schools in Scotland are small country schools many of them remotely situated. Some of these schools (and they include schools with only one teacher) are situated in the Hebrides and in Orkney and Scotland and are so remote that a special salary addition has been prescribed to attract teachers to them. The development of broadcasting and the extension of television will be an increasing blessing to teachers in those schools. In other small rural schools, teachers have the problem of taking several stages together but these teachers have the advantage of getting to know well both children and parents through living in the

same community and they are respected not only for the important work they do in the school but also for the assistance they give in the social and cultural activities in their district.

In the Cities and in urban districts, primary schools and classes tend to be very large. Many of these schools have more than 600 pupils: some have more than a 1,000. Quite a considerable number of classes have more pupils than the number (45) laid down in the Code. Some of the difficulties are met by group teaching in which teachers have taken special instruction. Nevertheless, the sheer pressure of numbers makes the work of the teacher difficult and arduous.

It is not possible in a short article to say much about the curriculum. This matter and methods and techniques in the primary school are discussed with great understanding and insight in "The Primary School in Scotland" issued by the Scottish Education Department and published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. The whole professional background to the life of the Scottish primary teacher is admirably portrayed in "Primary Education — A Report of the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland" also published by the Stationery Office.

Though the length of the school day is not the same in all areas, school are usually in session from 9 till 4 each week-day except Saturday. Infants have a shorter day and every school has a break in the forenoon. The normal school session extends to 400 meetings (1 full day counts as 2 meetings). With very few exceptions, Scottish primary schools are co-educational. Within the general scheme of work approved for the school, the teacher has very considerable freedom in shaping the subject matter of his teaching and in conducting his class. Schools are inspected by Officials of the Department but on account of the cordial relationships between the Inspectorate and the teaching profession there has grown up a spirit of co-operation and mutual helpfulness which has been of great benefit to the children.

The conditions under which our national system of education is being developed are not easy, and the problems have weighed heavily on the primary school. There are too few trained teachers and too many many existing schools accommodation for the children is unsatisfactory and amenities for the teachers quite inadequate. In the midst of economic and social change and its effect on standards and value, the teachers, both primary and secondary, are having a hard task to win from the public and from the Government due recognition for their service to the children.