

Where is the wealth of Spain now? With difficulty is she able to meet her engagements—as the meetings of Spanish bondholders make manifest. In railroad enterprize she is behind all Europe, and when, even late, she enters into the field, it is to England she must look for engineers and for machinery.

We learn from this that the benefit of wealth to a nation, as to an individual, depends not so much on the amount gained, as on the manner in which it is acquired and the use that is made of it. And, above and beyond all wealth, is the preservation of national and of individual character.

The lesson which the history of Spain, since the discovery of America, teaches should not be lost on us.

If we desire that our country should possess that proud position which it now occupies in the world, we must ever watch indications of character. The gold discoveries have not as yet produced the same effects as they did in Spain; but they have developed reckless trading, and in America that species of marauding violence which is called filibustering.

It is to be feared we are not enough on our guard against such dangers. It is too much the fashion of the present day to encourage the intense pursuit of mechanical work, and material prosperity, whilst too little attention is paid to higher views, which make business subservient to man instead of man to business.

Again, it is sought to reduce all the relations in life to mere money bargains and legal rights, and to ignore these great social duties which, suggested by our conscience, we feel to be the commands of a higher power.

The teaching of social science in past times is not free from the charge of contributing to some extent to this materialism.

I can only do my part in endeavouring to show you from the history I have brought under your notice, what I believe to be the greatest truth in social science—that human actions have an infinite effect on society—that it is impossible to aim at truth by studying the material aspect of any subject only—that, for individuals or for nations, the only prosperity worth seeking is that which arises from industry, when combined with manliness and moral excellence.

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### III.—*Competitive Examinations and their bearing on the Civil Service.* By Frederic W. Connor, Esq.

[Read February 18th, 1861.]

THE condition of the Civil Service has, within recent years, obtained a fair share of that public attention which has been directed, and with the best results, to the general administration of government affairs; for the only security for any thorough, comprehensive, and permanent departmental reform lies in an enlightened public opinion being brought steadily to bear on the subject, and so preventing the adoption of crude and incomplete remedies. Although the demand for reformation in the Civil Service took the popular form about 1855, yet the necessity for serious improvement in the mode of admission into, as well as in the management of public offices, was

long keenly felt, and had to a certain extent been acknowledged by the Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury. It could not be denied that the Civil Service was not devoid of materials for reprobation; the evils of abuse had for years been accumulating in its system, until employment in this department of the state, became, in popular estimation, synonymous with a life of indolence, incompetence, and irresponsible security. With many such, office-holding was regarded as a family heir-loom, and by others, a sinecure, absolutely safe from the prying gaze of vulgar inquiry. Patronage was exercised so imprudently, if not wantonly, and in so total a disregard of all intellectual, physical, and in some cases, even moral qualifications in the persons appointed, that the public, when aroused, became shocked and indignant, and at last made their voice so effectually heard, that their demands for a new order of things became irresistible—"the powers that be" gave way—and the close-borough system of the Civil Service was subjected to the progressive and purifying tendencies of the day. The public simply desired that, great as was the Diana of the civil department of the state, the temple should be vigorously explored, and its impurities removed. In a word, they desired the application of those tests and safeguards to the Civil Service which would ensure the admission of the fittest men, and tend consequently to the judicious and economical management of its affairs.

Considering the magnitude of the duties performed by the Civil Service, and the vast responsibilities entrusted to its care, the nation cannot feel other than the deepest solicitude for its welfare. It comprises the machinery of executive government, embraces a wide-spreading connexion with the various ramifications of our commercial life, works out the policy of cabinets, and collects the data which direct and control that policy. Our relations at home and abroad, our interests throughout every part of the habitable globe, come within its gigantic grasp; it is the custodian of the income of the empire, and the disbursing of its pecuniary liabilities; it registers the evidences of our progress, husbands the proofs of our greatness, and administers the measures of our internal economy. So vast and so complicated a machine is not to be left to its own natural workings; its parts wherever cumbrous must be lightened; where rigid, softened; where worn out, renewed; and the only regulator, the only detector of imperfections in the unity and harmony of this machinery, lies in the vigilant and jealous supervision of the nation.

In a social and economical point of view, also, the Civil Service has strong claims on the attention of the public. A service which numbers 103,058 individuals, employed in various capacities, is too important an interest to be heedlessly regarded. No small portion of the annual revenue is appropriated to the remuneration of its members, and they are questions of grave moment to ascertain, if the nation gets a fair day's work for a fair day's wage, is faithfully served by the selection of competent servants, and not burthened by unnecessary or worthless hands.

The civil servants generally may be described as having comparatively light duties to perform, occupying a respectable social position, enjoying gradually increasing salaries, with the ultimate

prospect of reasonable superannuation. The duties are easily learned, —partake largely of a sameness of character—are insensibly acquired, and call for no very extraordinary exertion. Their position is respectable and secure, only the grossest misconduct will necessitate their dismissal, and their advancement takes place by seniority, and, it is to be hoped, by merit.

From the Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons of 1860, on Civil Service appointments, the following is the general result of the number of persons employed in the Civil Service :—

1. Heads of departments (political),	...	...	...	34
Ditto, (non-political),	..	...	...	156
2. Sub-heads of departments, and heads of branches,	...	...	...	1,489
Clerks (established),	...	...	...	13,768
" (temporary),	...	...	...	389
3. Professional officers (superior)	...	...	...	1,922
" (inferior),	...	...	...	1,921
4. Inferior officers (in-door),	...	...	...	2,259
" (out-door),	...	...	...	36,566
5. Artizans and labourers,	...	...	...	29,613
6. Persons not wholly employed, women, &c.,	...	...	...	14,941
Total,				103,058

My purpose is primarily to deal with these classes which come immediately under the cognizance of the Civil Service Commissioners, and which are nearly wholly comprised in division 2, and, to a certain extent, in division 4. Popularly, what is understood by the term government clerk is one holding a temporary appointment, and paid at the rate of 5s., 7s., or 9s., per day; or one holding a staff, permanent, or establishment appointment, commencing at a salary of £78 or £90 per annum, rising by annual increments of £5, £10, £15, or £20, to the maximum of these gradations through which he must pass until he reaches the first class, becomes the head of a branch, or the sub-head of a department. Of course, the "inferior officers"—so designated by the committee—as "excise officers, tide-waiters, and letter carriers," come also within the definition of a civil servant, which is defined by the Superannuation Act of 1859 (22 Vic., cap. 26), to mean one serving in the permanent Civil Service of the State, and admitted into it, from the passing of the Act, with a certificate from the Civil Service Commissioners.

Previous to the appointment of the Civil Service Commissioners the usual mode of procedure to obtain an appointment in the Civil Service, was to get "the member" to use his influence with the government, or to get some one to speak to, or to write to "the member." In proportion as this pressure was applied, or according to the claims which the applicant had upon the member, depended the chances of success. The principal motive, however, which weighed with the member was favour; either the favour springing from the likings of nepotism, or from the remembrance of political work and labour done; and which his gratitude was expected to interpret into a lively sense of favours to come. The "Ins" had to reward their supporters, and the occasion must indeed have been very rare, where a purist member exercised that Spartan virtue of

procuring an appointment for a person apart from family or political motives.

The appointment—now-a-days we use the phrase nomination—procured, the lucky individual was immediately installed into that position where the nation would have the honour of his talents, and the benefits of his industry.

It is not my intention to garnish the history of the Civil Service at this period, with racy anecdotes and striking illustrations of the persons quartered on the nation's purse by the system of uncontrolled nomination—of the many objectionable on account of age, on account of broken health, on account of bankrupt character, and on account of inferior, and of total want of intellectual qualifications. The system had the average crop of evils that ever springs from abused institutions. Further, I do not mean to be understood as implying that the nation had no security against this contagion ; for some departments—to their credit be it recorded—subjected candidates to an entrance examination, conducted according to a sliding scale, whose minimum test was too often proportioned to the high pressure employed.

In 1853, the lords of Her Majesty's Treasury commissioned Sir Stafford Northcote and Sir Charles Trevelyan to prepare a plan for the organization of the permanent Civil Service. These gentlemen in their Report forcibly dwelt on the inefficiency of the Civil Service, and, towards effecting a reform, suggested that a thoroughly efficient class of men ought to be secured by means of a proper system of examination ; that industry ought to be encouraged and merit fostered, by teaching all public servants to look forward to promotion according to their merits, and to expect the highest prizes in the service ; and that a greater uniformity in the first appointments ought to exist, as well as a greater opening made to staff appointments in other departments than their own. Further, it was recommended that the right of competing for appointments in the Civil Service should be open to *all* persons of a given age, subject to the necessity of furnishing satisfactory references as to character and health.

This Report, made in 1853, afforded the basis of that scheme of Civil Service Reform which Mr. Gladstone intended to submit to parliament, and which was noticed in the Royal Speech at the opening of the session of 1854. As Mr. Disraeli was prevented from bringing forward a scheme, by the ejection of his party from office, so the Russian war prevented Mr. Gladstone from proceeding with his. However, the Commissioners' Report was in the meantime circulated amongst the principal civil officials and educationists of the kingdom, for an expression of opinion. Upwards of thirty-eight replies were returned, the majority sustaining the principles of the Report.

On the 21st May, 1855, an order in council appointed the present Civil Service Commission. The Commissioners, on entering on their duties, first corresponded with the heads of the various public departments, with the view of fixing the limits of age, and a programme of examinations for candidates seeking admission thereto. On the 30th June, 1855, the Commissioners held their first examination in London, others followed in the provinces, in Scotland, and in Ire-

land, under the auspices of duly appointed, competent, and trustworthy assistants.

In July, 1855, Mr. Scully moved a resolution in the House of Commons, declaratory of the principle of open competition for admission to the junior appointments of the Civil Service. This resolution was negatived by 140 to 125. In April, 1856, the Earl of Ripon, then Lord Goderich, carried by a division of 108 to 87 a resolution, approving of making a trial of the method of open competition. And in 1857, on a motion made by the same nobleman, the house unanimously resolved, that from the experience of the working of the Civil Service Commission the principle of open competition ought to be extended.

From the fifth and last Report of the Commissioners, ending December, 1859, a few statements will illustrate the working of the Civil Service Commission. The total number of nominations, to which the order in council has been applied, from June, 1855, up to December, 1859, was 10,860. Of these, 8,039 were of one candidate only. The competitors have been 2,821, for 732 appointments; or nearly 4 to 1. In 1859, there were 1,179, for 259 appointments, or 4.5 to 1; but this average includes 391 persons, who competed for 9 clerkships at the India Office, on the only occasion on which the principle of an entirely open competition has been practically tested. The certificates and rejections have been respectively 5,705, and 1,972. The number of rejections was greatest in 1855-6, when out of 1,686 more than one-half failed to pass the test; since then it has gradually decreased, owing rather to a lower standard of examination having been adopted, than to an improvement in the attainments of the candidates. There were rejected, between 1855 and 1859, on the score of age, 343; of health, 88; of character, 76; in all, 507, making, together with these who failed to pass the intellectual test, 2,479. It is worth notice, that of these latter, all, except 106, were rejected as deficient in arithmetic or spelling, clearly proving that the educational requirements imposed on the candidates are not needlessly high. It would further appear that up to the present time simple nomination, rather than competition, among even a limited number of candidates, has been the rule acted upon in about 91 per cent. of all appointments made since the order of council in 1855; that this proportion was considerably diminished in 1859, showing a gradually increasing tendency to resort to the competitive method; and that 1,900 persons, which includes all classes of the Civil Service deficient in the ordinary rudiments of a good education, have been nominated in five years to the Civil Service, and excluded by the examination test. In *pass* examinations there is no fixed minimum, nor are marks assigned; the candidates are reported upon by epithets applied to the work they have done, the use of which is so far constant as to supply a fixed test. It is the commissioners, and not the examiners, decide whether the candidate has passed or not. In *competitive* examinations marks are employed; and the examiners emphatically deny that candidates *have ever been rejected* for failing to answer questions of a difficult or recondite character. No instance has ever occurred where either the candidate or his tutor has become unfairly possessed of an examination paper.

Few will deny that the best way to *turn out* good clerks, is to *turn in* the best material for making them ; and to those, and there are many, who view the operations of the Civil Service Commissioners with ridicule, it remains to show what claims the Civil Service has, to have candidates for its junior offices exempted from those tests which are so well calculated to determine intellectual acquisition. In a private establishment, or in our large railway offices, an employer is not considered reprehensible for declining to accept the services of the ignorant, or for rejecting the offers of the invalided. The Civil Service may not, in a sense, be regarded as a commercial speculation, but surely it must have a just regard to some kind of a balance of profit and loss. Those who do not look below the surface of things, cannot find any relation between geography and copying letters—history and the tabulation of figures. They select a question from the examination papers of the commissioners, and triumphantly ask, what it has to do with the making of a good clerk ; much on the same principle as the citizen of Heliopolis, who having offered his house for sale, asked you to judge of its character from the specimen brick which he carried about with him. With such people ignorance is bliss. Young men of talent are generally men of industry and power—for we are told that knowledge is power ; and the patience bestowed in preparing for an examination affords a fair index of the student possessing habits of energy and application—no bad stock in trade to begin with. Further, men of comparative youth are more likely to be moulded to the peculiar duties of office than men of middle age and less teachable dispositions.

In reference to the examination test, the committee of 1860, unanimously are of opinion, that sufficient time has not been allowed for a fair and full trial of the regulations of 1855, and that of the witnesses examined, not one has affirmed that, so far as appointments of junior clerks are concerned, the service has suffered harm by their adoption ; while their tendency to exclude men intellectually unfit is recognized without exception by all.

Next to securing the exclusion of the incapable, how is the Civil Service to be best opened up, so as to give facility to the intelligent and well-educated to enter, though devoid of political patronage, and yet possessing the conditions as to age, health, and character ; to secure not the best among a definite number nominated, but the best who can be obtained under a system of open competition.

Mr. John Stuart Mill states that “the proposal to select candidates for the Civil Service of Government, by a competitive examination, appears to me to be one of these great public improvements, the adoption of which would form an era in history. The effects which it is calculated to produce in raising the character both of the public administration and of the people, can scarcely be over-estimated. It has equal claims to support, from the disinterested and impartial, among conservatives and among reformers. For its adoption would be the best vindication which could be made of existing political institutions, by showing that the classes who, under the present constitution, have the greatest influence in the government, do not desire any greater share of the profits derivable from it than their merits entitle them to, but are willing to take the chances of

competition with ability in all ranks; while the plan offers to liberals, so far as the plan extends, the realization of the principal object which any honest reformer desires to effect by political changes, namely, that the administration of public affairs should be in the most competent hands. \* \* \* \* If there be any who maintain a contrary doctrine, and say that the world is not made only for persons of ability, and that mediocrity also ought to have a share in it, I answer, certainly, but not in managing the affairs of the state. Mediocrity should betake itself to those things in which few besides itself will be imperilled by its deficiencies. There will be, assuredly, ample space for the mediocrities in employments which require only mediocrity, when all who are beyond mediocrity have found the employment in which their talents can be of most use."

Our constitution is composed of mixed interests, and no class presumes to claim an oligarchic right to the patronage of the state. A. and B. are equal in the eye of the law, and, let us suppose, in age, moral character, and acquirements. A., through influence, receives a nomination, undergoes his examination, is successful, and receives an appointment. B. can command no "influence," and this misfortune excludes him from the chance of public employment. Does any rational man hold that B. ought to be sacrificed to the system which provides for A. And what is this system? It is one of nomination, the offspring of political patronage and the activity of nepotism. Ought these prescriptive customs to be broken in upon? Ought we to abolish these absurd privileges, and limit this arbitrary power?

It is urged that if the right of nomination be taken from ministers, government cannot be carried on. This presumes that party fidelity must be rewarded, which tends to grave abuse at the nation's expense; or that the ministers themselves would be deprived of what is to them a kind of payment for their services. But when the bait of patronage is taken away from *all* parties, surely none can suffer. The ambition of being a foremost servant of the state is in itself no mean reward, and we need not feel alarmed lest the vessel of the state should ever want willing pilots to steer, because a patronage which has its burdens, its importunities, and no mean anxieties, has been taken away. Would not such abolition relieve our representatives from these disgraceful and harassing applications which crowd his letter-box, and which he cannot dispose of in the waste-paper basket, to provide for some active election agent—applicants who dog the member's footsteps through the corridors of the House of Commons; for it is a generally received maxim, that if you want a member of Parliament to serve you, it is but etiquette to hunt him to death. Again, it is alleged that the nomination system guarantees correctness of character in the nominated. Now, it is well known that he who bestows the nomination has rarely any personal knowledge of the recipient of his favour; but relies on the recommendations of others—recommendations proverbially easy of acquirement from partial and good-natured friends. In open competition, testimonials can be demanded and additional faithfulness secured by the institution of inquiries similar to those made by Insurance Companies.

A business capacity, whether under a system of limited or open competition, can only be discovered when the opportunity for testing and developing it arises; and by making the ratification of all appointments contingent on a period of satisfactory probation—which is the plan now in force—the presence of industry, punctuality, and zeal can be fairly discovered. The Right Honourable Sir John M'Neill speaks of the adoption of the principle of open competition as excluding many who might excel their successful opponents in integrity, judgment, good sense, vigor, and every other quality calculated to inspire confidence in character, and assurance of real usefulness. The assumption is here made that open competition fails to ensure these qualities, if not positively prejudices them. The argument cuts both ways, and the answer lies on the surface. If men possess integrity, &c. it is not in consequence either of the system of nomination or of examination, and if there be any difference under either system, the advantage rests with competition, where we have afforded some evidence of their existence, and have ascertained the probability of their continuance. Further, it is assumed that a high standard of literary competition would induce a class of men too scholastic and intellectual—mere book-worms—for the kind of work they would be required to undertake; that they would consequently become disaffected and discontented. As a class, literary men are proverbial for their patient and laborious industry; and as for anticipated discontent, this is but the usual bugbear evoked by those who fear innovation. Some allowance must, of course, be made for the putting of new wine into old bottles, for the infusion of new blood into shrivelled frames, for the gearing on of new parts to old machinery. Indeed, the world is not so fruitful in examples of happy families, that we ought to feel our sense of propriety wounded by not finding every office an Agapemone. The latest authority on this point is a writer in the current number of the *National Review*, who informs us that clerks appointed by the system of open competition would be only relegated to office, “to mope, wither, and blaspheme.” The conclusive answer to all these charges, however, is to be found in the Report of the Committee of 1860, wherein it is unanimously affirmed the intellectual test has worked well.

Now does a youth of study unfit us for a manhood of action? Does experience prove it? Will any one assert that Lamb was a bad clerk, or that M'Culloch, Fonblanque, Mill, and Trollope are inferior clerks, because of their literary character? Is a life of study incompatible with a life of practical duty? A moment's reflection would furnish a thousand instances to the contrary. Sir Robert Peel was a *double-first* at Oxford, and certainly exhibited in his parliamentary career no inaptitude for business. So with Sir William Molesworth. The Right Hon. James Wilson, it has been said, would go to a newspaper office “to write articles after the house was up, and has been found on the floor of the editor's room in the deadly swoon of over-exhaustion.” Sir Henry Ward edited a newspaper while he he was secretary to the admiralty, and the Right Hon. J. Wilson Croker, when filling the same office, contributed extensively to the *Quarterly Review*. Edward Baines rose early every morning at six o'clock, during the session, to answer constituents' letters and pen



leading articles for the *Leeds Mercury*. A'Becket could write comic histories, grammars, and Blackstones—write the whole of the leaders for an impression of the *Times*, and ably discharge his duties as a metropolitan magistrate. Mr. Tom Taylor writes comedies and magazine articles almost weekly, and no one has charged the secretary to the Local Government Act Office, with neglect or want of zeal. Mr. Gladstone, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, receives deputations, makes experiments with Syke's hydrometer, answers the letters of any financial amateur who is not content with his speeches in the House, conducts a well-sustained correspondence with half-a-dozen Greek scholars on Homer, and writes occasional letters of forty pages to a lawyer on some legal point. Sir G. Cornwall Lewis is no idle *litterateur*, no indolent statesman; and, although in the sear and yellow leaf, Lord Brougham is more than an abridgment of all that is industrious in man. Are not the senate, the bar, the church, and the medical profession prolific in instances of hard work, of over-work, co-existing with high and sustained mental culture? Yet we are gravely asked to conclude, in the face of these evidences, which I ought to apologise for introducing, that the infinitely less ambitious station of life filled by, and the qualities required in, a junior government clerk, become impaired somewhat in the proportion as his mind has been enlarged, and has approached the standard of a perfected sentient being? It has been laid to the charge of open competition that the remuneration of the Civil Service is inadequate to reward the class of clerks who would succeed. But this is rather an objection to the arrangements within the service than to the mode of admission into it. If the service be not adequately paid, the rate of payment should be raised. However, the matter is a peculiarly personal one. The candidate does not read up for a prize ignorant of its value, nor are we to assume he has not considered the prospects of his advancement. Pay worth well, take merit by the hand, fraternize with zealous industry, proclaim a fair field and no favor, and there need be no anticipation either of a "strike" or a "lock out."

A large class of objectors to the system of open competition are like those men who have eyes and yet see not, and who defend their prepossessions something on the principle of the dislike extended to Dr. Fell. Sir James Stephen boldly pleads on behalf of the mediocrities—rather a large constituency to represent, if one is to judge from the earnestness of his defence. As we cannot entrust the affairs of this great kingdom to mediocrity, we can listen to no appeal on its behalf. A more plausible plea is put forward, wherein it is alleged that the educated people would drive the blood of all the Howards out of the public service. We have no fear of any such result. The aristocratic candidates will hold a foremost rank in any competitive examination. If they shrink from the trial, or if they refuse to let plebeian blood come between the wind and their nobility, on their own heads will be the consequence. A Civil Service will exist if even the aristocracy be dissociated from it, and its duties be perhaps none the worse performed. High birth gives no warrant for an efficient or faithful discharge of duty. We can have no state hospitals for incapables, be they peasants or be they peers. We can acknowledge no superior claims but those of worth and

virtue, and these must take rank side by side—patrician with plebeian, lord with commoner. Nor is it easy to perceive the hardships meritorious civil servants will be subjected to, if a minister can no longer directly appoint their sons to office. The merit and long service of a father is no reason for the employment of an incapable son; such sons must take their chance with the crowd, they must be content to suffer for their country's good, as their country has long suffered for theirs. As merit is personal, so let the payment be; if this be sufficient, there will be no need of further provision. Nor are we to be deterred from the carrying out of open competition, because its plan of examination might "pluck" a Nelson or a Wellington. Men of such type will be found to possess all the essential elements, industry, patience, shrewdness, tact, readiness of acquisition, and quickness of perception, to pass any examination. We cannot therefore subscribe to the notion that dunces at school turn out the best men in after life, nor can we part with a check that keeps out some 1,900 incapables, on the chance that we might exclude some mute inglorious Milton. Indeed we find, now-a-days, that men of genius will not long have to conceal their talents in a napkin.

Sir George C. Lewis, a strong opponent to the plan of open competition, asks why has it not been adopted by private persons and public companies, or why stop with junior clerks, and not apply it to the superior civil servants, from the Lord Chief Justice downwards, &c. Private firms have a direct pecuniary interest in securing the right man in the right place, and do not long continue an incapable officer whose services do not pay. Public companies, though somewhat less strongly actuated by this interest, are yet not altogether insensible either to its importance or responsibility. But the individual vigilance and calculation which animate private firms and public companies, cannot be said to exist in the large establishments of the state. As to selecting the Lord Chief Justice as you would a junior clerk, it must be remembered we examine a candidate clerk because he is an untried man, and we select the Chief Justice because his professional ability has been subjected to a life-long open competition with his brethren at the bar. Sir George seems to have overlooked that what is good in principle cannot always be perfected in practice; that all our improvements have been secured by a "bit by bit" reform; that if we cannot at a bound progress a yard it is no reason why we should hesitate to advance a foot; that we cannot effect a social change by propounding a maxim, or take down our reforms from a pigeon-hole as did Abbe Sièyes his draft constitutions. If we cannot obtain all the points of the charter, it is not bad policy to accept as many as we get.

The practical refutation to all the objections against the system of open competitive examinations is to be found in the fact, that where it has been honestly tried, the evidence of its working, scanty and imperfect as it must necessarily be, has been satisfactory. Thus has it been in the Civil Service, the Medical Service, and Public Works department of India, and the scientific branches of the military profession, both with regard to the Imperial and the Indian army, which have been thrown open to all competitors; neither does

there appear in parliament, or among the people, any disposition to regret or draw back from the large concessions thus made to public opinion at the expense of patronage. The principle has also been acted upon in our colonies, and in France it has been extensively recognized for years.

In August, 1857, the committee of Section F. (Economic Science and Statistics) of the British Association recorded it as the strong opinion of the meeting of the section, that in the settlement of the plan of competitive examinations, in the public service of the home government, the basis of the whole should be the principle of open competition.

It does not fall within the object of this paper to describe a plan for carrying out the system of open competitive examinations. Such has been accomplished in the case of the Indian Civil Service, and an extended machinery, operating in allotted districts, with a matriculate examination to weed out incapables, and the charging of a fee to all who enter the lists, as has been sketched by the Civil Service Commissioners, and their able registrar, Mr. Horace Mann, is fully calculated to meet this mechanical want.

Since the appointment of the Civil Service Commissioners, it has been attested that a great improvement has taken place in the intellectual and moral status of the junior clerks; that their business habits have not been seriously impugned; that the more unlimited the competition, the greater has been the tendency to secure fit persons. We have the evidence of high officials, men of great sagacity and ripe experience, in favour of open competition we have parliament unanimously approving of the principle, and the general public supporting the views of their representatives. We have observed it successfully adopted in several great departments of the state, and that it is calculated to impart a powerful and healthy stimulus to our systems of education at large; and to afford salutary and happy inducements to youths of fair promise to qualify for appointments in the service of the state. Neither must it be forgotten that up to the present we have had no *bona fide* open competition for any office under the Home Government, and that socially, politically, and morally it is prudent and desirable that the principle should be formally recognised. Further, we have the Civil Service Commissioners themselves desiring the immediate and general introduction of open competitive examinations, and we have the Secretaries to the Treasury of several administrations voting for and publicly advocating the measure.

With whom rests the responsibility of carrying out the scheme to a successful issue? With the public. When, during the Crimean war, the lamentable break-down of the several government departments impressed itself deeply upon the public mind, the public clamored for reforms—reform in the Civil Service amongst others. They were appeased by concessions, but there was only conceded to them a part, which, in the jubilation of their success, they mistook for the whole. Since then the public have relapsed into indifference, the most dangerous state for securing what they have won, and the most hopeless for recovering what they lost. It is the duty of the public not to allow their experience in the matter of Civil Service

reform to become a dead letter. A nation may be ruined by despair, it cannot be injured by hope, and ours is a hope that will not be easily alarmed by shadows of imaginary evils, still less dazzled by visions of impracticable good. A great question is still at stake; let it not be lost by apathy; let it not be wrapped in the ceremonies of exploded errors; but, relying on its inherent worth and strength, let us push it boldly forward on the broad platform of general society.

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IV.—*On the Use and Abuse of Apprenticeship.* By George F. Shaw, LL.D., F.T.C.D.

[Read Monday, 18th March, 1861.]

In the report presented last year to the Association for the Promotion of Social Science by their Committee on Trades' Societies, the following passage occurs:—

“On the subject of apprenticeship and the rules written or customary by which many trades' societies enforce the necessity and restrict the privilege of it, as a condition of exercising their respective trades, the committee forbear at present to express any opinion. They would be glad if it were practicable that this question and others arising out of it should on some future occasion receive special and systematic inquiry, on the basis of a tolerably complete and exhaustive collection of facts.”

The present paper is not by any means intended to supply the want indicated by the committee, but to serve quite a subordinate and preliminary purpose. I quite concur with the committee in thinking that any satisfactory solution of the various questions arising out of the custom of apprenticeship, must be based on a species of statistical knowledge which nobody has been, as yet, at the trouble of collecting. But I also think that the statistical inquiry itself may be rendered more compendious and fruitful, by distinctly stating what are the questions that have to be settled, and by putting them in certain points of view which have perhaps been hitherto not sufficiently attended to. This I shall endeavour to accomplish, and however imperfect may be my success in a subject which has been so much neglected by political economists, I trust that much benefit will accrue at all events from evoking the discussion of it in this Society.

By apprenticeship is meant a legal compact in virtue of which a young person agrees to give his master the benefit of his labour for a definite term of years, in requital for receiving from that master instruction in his trade. Now the first question that suggests itself about this compact is, what is the good of it *to society*? Why should there be special laws to protect it, and why does society actually maintain it, instead of leaving every youth to pick up a trade whenever and however he can? Would not the market of skilled labour be as well supplied if we left the supply to the general principles of human nature; to the principles, namely, of parental affection and of private interest, which would place within reach of a youth the acquisition of any trade which was really worth acquiring, while it