

might have said to some subordinate in the office: "Take the Civil Service examination and write your opinions as to its practicability." But had I done so, my opinions would necessarily have been formed from his opinions. As I wanted information at first hand, I took the examination myself.

There is a rising tide of public opinion that the examinations prescribed are more theoretical than practical. There is a growing contempt for the Civil Service Commission. Created to correct abuses, the idea has gained a foothold that it is beginning to confirm and petrify them. Aimed at wrongs, is it not surrounding inefficiency with a network of officialism worse than the original evils? For those who "pass" may be the least capable of filling any position demanding the exercise of common sense and experience.

A glance at the papers prepared for the examination proved the impossibility of my attaining a sufficiently high average to pass. Indeed, I feel assured that the Civil Service Commissioners themselves could not pass. And I know that two-thirds of the members of the President's Cabinet would "fall down" in the attempt. Not but that the members of the Civil Service Commission and the President's Cabinet are competent to fill the position, but simply because the questions put are in a great measure of a class that are of no practical use.

If I remember right, one of the questions asked the definition of an isosceles triangle. In an examination in geometry how appropriate this would have been, but so far as its applying to the collection of statistics, just as sensible a query would be: "What is a Whangdoodle?" or, "How does a Giasticutis walk?" Probably half the questions asked were not practical. They were not unanswerable; they simply had no relation to the subject-matter in hand.

A boy fresh from the high school

can take the papers of definitions and mathematical problems and attain anywhere from 80 to 90 to his credit. In fact a fortnight's work would enable most any one of average intelligence to "cram" himself for an examination which he could pass. There are two elderly men who haunt this office daily, so absorbed are they in the "Problem" department. The Civil Service list of mathematical puzzles would be peaches and cream to them. They would fairly wallow in them, and all their answers would be correct. Yet for practical work these old gentlemen are not worth their salt. Still they very likely could have passed the Civil Service examination with more credit (marks) than would be accorded yourself (perhaps) or your correspondent.

Another point: So wrapped up in formalism and "signs" is the Civil Service Commission itself that the very letter I am attempting to answer had to pass through the hands of "W. H. W.," "E. D. P.," "W. L. P.," and finally "L.," before it could be trusted into the hands of the President of the Commission, and for transmission through the mails.

What warrant has anybody for thinking that the person finally selected for assistant statistician, Agriculture Department, had the highest average, or even passed at all? That is, if no figures are given out. Someone must be told. Who is it? If no one is informed, is the Chief Examiner the sole judge and jury? Has he taken such an examination as to be able to pass on everybody else? Put him in a room with 150 postal clerks and postmen, some of them sitting on his table and talking of "assessments," "entertainments," and the news of the day, and see what show he will make in adding up even a column of figures. That is what I saw when two young men wanting employment in watching a fish-pen were trying to figure out the difference between Fahren-