

The candidate, however, who successfully takes even one of the seven optional subjects, places himself in the front rank of the "qualified" candidates. His chances of success are obviously increased by every additional optional subject in which he passes. Financially he is a gainer. For, in the matter of salary, an additional sum of \$50 is secured to him for each of four of such subjects, should he pass in them.

To the prospective candidate this explanation, as to the merits and effects of these examinations will enable him to determine whether it would not be more advantageous to him to take one or more of the optional subjects, in addition to the merely "qualifying" examination, rather than to take that examination alone.

4. *For Promotion.* This examination, as its name implies, is designed to determine the qualification of the persons in the service, so that when "entitled to promotion, they may be advanced from the class to which they belong to the class next above it, and in the department in which they are serving." The subjects of examination are chiefly of a technical kind, and, as a rule, refer to "duties" or details of office work. The literary subjects are "Composition, Constitution of Canada and Geography."

From the last report of the Dominion Civil Service examiners (for 1886) it is clear that most of the candidates are content to pass the "qualifying" examination alone. Thus, of 271 candidates for this examination, only 76—a little over one-fourth—took options, and entered the competition field. Of these, 38, or just one-half, passed; 29 succeeded in but one out of the seven options; 8 in two, and one in three.

The question as to the comparative value to the civil service itself of a merely "qualifying," or a "competitive" examination, has, as I have intimated, been a matter of discussion in civil service reports. Differences of opinion have arisen on the subject; and it is yet a debatable question. In his evidence on this point, before a Royal Commission, in 1880, Mr. W. H. Griffin, Deputy Postmaster-General, and the oldest civil servant in the Dominion, gave his testimony in favour of the competitive, as against the pass, or qualifying system of examination. So, also did Mr. J. M. Courtney, Deputy Minister of Finance, Mr. Sweetnam, Post-office Inspector for the Toronto division, and Mr. P. M. Robins, chief clerk and accountant of the Inland Revenue Department. My own opinion, formed on a lengthened experience, coincides with that of these gentlemen. I thus expressed it in my evidence on the subject before a committee of the House of Commons in 1877:—

Mr. G. E. Casey, Chairman, put the following question:

"Q. We have had a recommendation to adopt a scheme of holding 'qualifying' examinations from amongst the successful candidates, out of which members of the Civil Service should be chosen at the will of the Minister. What do you think of such a system?"

"A. I think there is one difficulty in the way of carrying out that system, which would be fatal to its success. From the fact that such an examination would merely give the passed men a sort of *quasi* official status you would get in a shoal of aspirants to office, equally qualified. . . . Besides, the moment you get a number of young men nominally 'qualified' for positions in the service, personal solicitations of influence would be brought to bear upon members of the government to get appointments; and, that, after a 'competitive' examination as a condition, would be subject to such silent influences that they could not well be resisted to prevent an unsuitable appointment.

"Q. We would, in fact, be thrown back upon patronage?"

"A. Yes; under the guise of a 'competitive' system of examination. Another objection to the system would be this:—A great many might come up to a fixed standard and pass. If, however, in the first place you pitted one man against the other and said, 'The best men only shall receive appointments' you would then put all of the candidates upon their mettle to take the highest rank. There would be no such impulse to excel under a merely 'qualifying' examination," etc.

Mr. J. L. McDougall (present Auditor-General,) asked:

"Q. Do you approve of a 'qualifying' examination, and their being appointed at the will of the Head of the Department?"

"A. I think that would be fatal. My particular objection to that system, if applied to one department, would be that, if a maximum were fixed upon and that were passed by a number of candidates, the Head of the Department could not refuse to admit them. But, when you have a competitive examination, you only choose

the best men. The moment a man is 'qualified,' if he had to pass a second examination, influence might be brought to bear to get him through in some way," etc. \*

These practical explanatory statements may be considered by prospective candidates as somewhat discouraging. They relate, however, to the preliminaries for admission to the service. Once in, it should not be overlooked that advancement is slow, and increase to salaries somewhat uncertain, especially as the periodical demand for "retrenchment" generally touches the Civil Service first. And yet the desire to enter that service is a laudable one. As a profession, it is most honourable and useful—honourable in the important public matters with which it has to deal, and useful in the performance of most valuable and often highly confidential service for the country.

#### THE UNIVERSITY SIDE OF THE QUESTION.

It may be asked: "If the purely literary standard for entrance into the public service is so low, what has the University to do with the preparation and fitness of men for that service?"

The answer to this query may be in effect this: The standard for entrance into the service has only to do with the lowest grades of it. The requirements for that entrance do not pretend to touch the higher grades, nor provide for the special and imperative needs of the departments in these grades. Even the promotion examinations scarcely meet the case, as they are quite too technical and circumscribed in their range.

Years ago, such a preparation and literary training as is now admittedly necessary in the public service was not required, and was scarcely thought of. On this point I gave, in 1877, the following evidence before the Parliamentary Committee to which I have referred, as the result of many years' observation and practical experience:

"There is one thing which should not be lost sight of and that is that the Civil Service is different now from what it was years ago. It requires much higher and better qualifications than before, because new questions of administration, more important than formerly, are constantly arising. The higher officer in the service would find that, without a thorough training, he cannot keep himself up with these questions. A man in the position of a Deputy Head of a Department ought to be familiar with the new and delicate relations which exist between the local, the central, and the home governments. He should also be acquainted with questions of finance, legislation, political economy and kindred subjects, as his department might have to deal with them."

A decade has passed away since these words were uttered. The standard then laid down was moderate, as compared with the necessities and requirements of to-day. Since that time university training, as a preparation for success in the various professions, has become the rule, rather than the exception. In the Legislatures and in business circles, there is now quite a sprinkling of university graduates. So that those aspiring (and doing so with a laudable ambition), to the higher positions in the public service, must make the necessary literary preparation, by a thorough scholastic training, a training which a College or University alone can give them.

Even in commercial life a high degree of literary training has become necessary, especially in the larger establishments and banks, etc. This is now especially the case in England, where there is a keen competition between Germans and Englishmen for clerkships in English mercantile houses, chiefly those having a foreign trade and connections.

The underlying forces at work, and which lead to this competition, are admirably illustrated by the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his recent inaugural address as Lord Rector of the University of Aberdeen. What he says applies as well to the Civil Service of Canada as to the commercial life of England.

In that address Mr. Goschen lays down the broad principle that it is the "intellectual" which a man infuses into his work that alone gives it vitality, and ensures success.

\* The proposal (as to a second examination), to which I here referred, was one which permitted the "competitive" examination to take place at any time after the "qualifying" one, and as a condition to an appointment to a vacancy then existing. Now, the two examinations take place together; but the "options" are not even then, as they should be, compulsory.