

appointment, and responsible to her alone. But, on the other hand, there can surely be no good end to be served by imposing upon a reluctant colony a Governor who may be for any reason obnoxious to a large section of the population. To do so would be to court trouble and possible disaster. There must always be available for such posts an ample supply of competent and unobjectionable men; and it could be neither very troublesome nor in any way derogatory to Imperial dignity for the Home Government to ascertain informally before appointment, whether any serious objection would be likely to be made. Perhaps we might safely go further and say that it would not be difficult for the Home Government to make such nominations that no question of the kind could possibly arise.

SELDOM has so vigorous an assault been made in the columns of a great magazine upon any abuse, real or supposed, as that in the current number of the *Nineteenth Century* upon the examination as it exists in the English educational system. Prominent men of all ranks, creeds, and professions, and of all shades of politics, have signed the protest. The names of several distinguished women also appear as representative of their sex. The names alone occupy thirteen pages of the magazine. For Canadian readers there is nothing new or original, however great the amount of truth, in most of the counts in the formidable indictment brought against the competitive examinations which have of late years gained so complete a control in school, college, and university. The process of cramming for examinations strengthens "the rote-faculties to the neglect of the rational faculties." It promotes "a quick superficiality and power of cleverly skimming a subject." Worse still, far worse, if true, it induces "a disinclination to undertake work which is not of a directly remunerative character, after the excitement and strain of the race." Mr. Frederic Harrison, who is one of three professors whose names are attached to the memorial, thinks that the memory cultivated by the examination system is "a ten-day memory, very sharp, clear, methodical, like the memory cultivated by a busy lawyer;" a kind of memory, by the way, as an exchange points out, that may not be so bad a thing in these days of breathless haste.

THE Competitive Examination thus mightily assailed has in England two distinct spheres, viz., that of the Civil Service Department, and that of the schools and universities. In regard to the latter, few educationists could now be found to approve the system as it has been in vogue for the last twenty or thirty years. The Competitive Examination, whose fruits are of the kind indicated in the foregoing quotations, is already condemned. It has been tried and found to be not only wanting in some most important respects, but positively injurious in others. But what less objectionable substitute can be found to take its place? Some test of proficiency and of mental development is indispensable to proper classification in any methodical course of instruction. What better test can be devised than that afforded by the carefully written answers of students to carefully prepared questions? It is high time that the matter was thoroughly discussed, and the defects of present modes of working pitilessly exposed. But the result can hardly be in doubt. The examination cannot be dispensed with, but it can be radically reformed. The faults and evil tendencies complained of are mainly the outcome of the competition, not the examination. When large numbers of answers have to be compared with each other and a distinct value assigned to each, it is almost inevitable that the questions will be so framed that the values of the answers may be readily computed on an arithmetical basis. The character of the questions set at University and Departmental examinations in Ontario has been greatly improved during the last few years, but the root of the evil will remain so long as examiners are required to assign a numerical value to each answer for competitive purposes. Were this feature, which is by no means an essential one, eliminated from the examination system, there would no longer be anything to hinder competent examiners from submitting questions designed and adapted to discredit cramming by rendering it useless, and to promote thoughtful and intelligent work by students in all subjects and at all stages. Not least among the benefits that might be hoped for from such a change would be the gradual substitution of higher motives, such as love of knowledge for its own sake, in place of the thirst for pecuniary advantages, or academic honours, which is stimulated to an unwholesome degree under the present system.

WHAT is the best mode of making appointments and promotions in the Civil Service, is one of the most serious problems presented under a system of self-government. Canadians need not go so far afield as even to cross the border in order to learn the evils of party patronage, and the corrupting

power of desire for office. In England the examining system has wrought a great and tangible reform, and it is not probable that the people would listen for a moment to a proposal for returning to the old methods. However great may sometimes appear the absurdity of determining by a mathematical or linguistic test the relative fitness of a number of applicants for posts in which the duties may be largely routine or mechanical, and for which the chief qualifications are special aptitude or training and moral trustworthiness, there can be no doubt that the results of the examination system in England have been on the whole excellent. The system may be sadly in need of overhauling and improving, but it cannot be set aside. The people will insist that no change shall be made of such a kind as to endanger what Sir George Trevelyan has described as "the acknowledged birth-right" of Britons, to wit: "the privilege of doing their country's work, and eating their country's bread, if only, in a fair and open trial, they can win for themselves the right to be placed on the roll of their country's servants." While a recent debate in the British Parliament shews that there still linger abuses such as those so roundly denounced by Lord Randolph Churchill, it could be wished that Canada were progressing as fast as the Mother Country in the right direction. Though we hear of "Civil Service Examinations" going on from time to time at Ottawa, they do not appear to have wrought much change as yet in the *personnel* of the service, or to have materially reduced the proportion of relatives of Cabinet ministers and their favourites in Dominion offices. Nor does the state of affairs seem to be much better in the Provinces if we may judge from the Quebec Premier's recent threat of wholesale dismissal of officials for non-payment of debts, or the admission of journals friendly to the Government in Ontario that its Premier dare not appoint a registrar in a given locality while an election was pending.

It is not wonderful that the close of every Presidential election in the United States should be the signal for numerous proposals looking to a reform of methods. From a theoretical point of view the workings of the electoral system must be anything but satisfactory. There is in the first place, the almost perennial state of excitement and business disturbance resulting from the shortness of the Presidential term. There is also the fact, which seems on its face incompatible with sound principles of self-government, that often, as in the present instance, the President elect does not receive the suffrages of a majority of the voting citizens. There is, still further, the very serious evil—which however, could scarcely be remedied by any constitutional reform short of compulsory voting—that in every election there are hundreds of thousands of citizens, many of them the best citizens, who do not vote. And then there is the immense expenditure of money, the vast amount of fraud and personation, the quadrennial sweep in the Civil Service departments with all the waste, disorganization, and favouritism it involves, and the danger of a dead-lock, such as that which has now been happily removed, between the two Houses of Congress, which renders important legislation almost impossible.

THE wonder seems at first thought to be that so practical and energetic a people does not profit by experience and proceed at once to revise and improve its methods. Further consideration shows, however, that this would not be so easy a matter. The Presidential term might be increased to seven or eight years, but the effect of that would be to clothe an irresponsible executive with well-nigh absolute power for far too long a period. This defect might be remedied by the adoption of the British system of a responsible ministry, but, possibly for good reasons, the Americans seem to prefer their own less flexible arrangement. The permanency of the Executive probably acts as a balance wheel to steady the movements of the popular machinery. The abolition of the Electoral College and election of the President by direct vote of the people has often been advocated, but that, notwithstanding its logical suitability to a Republican system, would involve more serious changes than the people are ready to risk. The present method unquestionably results in giving some States an undue share of power in the Federal Government. But what a revolution would be involved in the change proposed may be inferred from a couple of specimen facts. In the recent election Georgia, with a population of nearly 2,000,000, cast but about 123,000 votes, while New York State, with a population of about 5,500,000 cast last year a vote of 1,033,047. Direct election by the people would tend to bring out the full vote. Such figures are eloquently suggestive, though far from logically conclusive. It is indeed wonderful that our neighbours do not adopt some system akin to our own mode of balloting, instead of that now used, under which each party prints its own tickets at enormous expense. An influence which makes against all change still more strongly than the singular reverence of the