

THE REVISION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE
EXAMINATIONS.

THE committee appointed by the Lords Commissioners of H.M. Treasury to consider and report upon the scheme of examination for Class I. of the Civil Service has reported under date June 20, 1917 [Cd. 8657]. It gives, in the first place, an historical summary showing the variations in the scheme first adopted when the principle of open competition came into effect in May, 1855. With its apologia for the predominance given to classics we need not concern ourselves in view of the amendments it proposes.

The revised scheme which it outlines provides for examination in two sets of the subjects. First, a compulsory set, including an essay, and papers on English, contemporary questions, general scientific principles and methods, and translation from one modern language (or from Latin, if desired by modern language students); to each of these 100 marks is assigned. There is also a compulsory *vivâ voce* examination to test alertness and intelligence; to this 300 marks are assigned. All this seems very reasonable.

The second set of subjects is optional; candidates may offer (a) languages; (b) history; (c) economics, law, etc.; (d) mathematics and science; and (e) an additional translation paper in a modern language.

For the first time the modern languages are placed on a par with Latin and Greek, 200 marks being assigned for translation, etc., and 200 for the history and literature of the country in each case.

Mathematics gets its proper place; 800 marks are assigned to the subject—400 for lower and higher mathematics respectively. Science also is similarly treated, the marks, *e.g.*, for physics being equal to those obtainable for Latin, *viz.* 400. Engineering is, for the first time, brought within the scope of the examination and may also earn 400 marks. Another important new subject is statistics, which is valued at 100 marks.

Candidates offering science subjects are very rightly required to produce evidence that they have received laboratory training in an institution of university rank; but there is, of course, to be no laboratory test in the examination itself.

On the whole the scheme may be regarded as quite satisfactory; it provides opportunities for men trained efficiently on varied lines to gain access to the important posts to which these examinations ultimately lead; and it will now be the fault of the provincial universities if their *alumni* are not found among those who serve the State in this way. And after the scheme has been in operation for some years there should be in the higher ranks a fair proportion of men who have had a good scientific training, while the remainder will not suffer from that complete ignorance of scientific principles and methods which characterises most of our existing mandarins.

Of course, the new scheme will not alter the deplorable system by which service in those departments of the public service not open to public

competition are chosen so very largely from the ranks of classical scholars. It may still be possible, *e.g.*, for an authority on medieval English literature to be primarily responsible for technical education and for there to be no representative of scientific knowledge, training, and education among the highest officials of the Board of Education or among the chief administrators of the funds devoted to scientific and industrial research.

In an appendix to the report specimen papers are set forth. The one in general science (for *all* candidates) is interesting and on the right lines; it asks for just that amount of general scientific knowledge likely to benefit all public servants; and a wide choice is to be allowed. Quality in the answers is to be sufficient, and accuracy of statement and clearness of expression are to be essentials.

The compulsory paper on social, political, and economic subjects is also on the right lines; it requires a candidate to have some clear ideas as to the way we are governed and as to the questions underlying the proper conduct and development of our trade and commerce.

The age limits for candidates remain as at present—twenty-two to twenty-four. This will prejudice candidates from the provincial universities; but if it helps to lead to a later age of entry and to make the requirement of a four years' course for an honours degree more general, it will have done useful work. The provincial universities would do well to combine to fix their minimum age of entry at eighteen, with a standard of educational efficiency equal to that required from present candidates for the intermediate examination for the initial degrees.

The committee has done valuable work, and we may be sure that the experience and advice of the two fellows of the Royal Society who were members of it—Sir Alfred Ewing and Sir Henry Miers—have contributed in no small degree to the wise decisions which have been taken.

J. WERTHEIMER.

THE NEW EDUCATION BILL.

MR. FISHER introduced the long-expected Education Bill in the House of Commons on August 10, and it was read a first time. The reforms which the Bill outlines have long been overdue, but they have been delayed by the exigencies of our system of government, with the importance it has attached to the claims of the different political parties, which have year after year placed at the head of the Board of Education Ministers with no knowledge of the educational needs of the country, little appreciation of the intimate connection between educational efficiency and industrial and mercantile supremacy, and chiefly concerned with securing advantages for the party to which they owed their position. But in Mr. Fisher we have a Minister of Education who is an educationist conversant with every grade of our educational system and dominated by the idea that "education is one of