

a work on the anatomy of the grasses has been prepared and should, it is hoped, be ready for the press before the end of 1957; and anatomical studies of other monocotyledons have been published or are in progress. The routine work of the Laboratory is concerned with the very diverse, and sometimes diverting, materials submitted for examination: in 1956 a piece of wood from Herod's palace at Jerusalem was found to be *Juniperus oxycedrus*.

The report also deals comprehensively with the work in progress in the Gardens, including its several sections from the Arboretum to the Tropical House. It concludes with a record of the papers published during the year together with a staff list.

C. W. WARDLAW

THE CIVIL SERVICE

REPORT FOR 1956-57

THE ninety-first report of H.M. Civil Service Commissioners, covering the period April 1, 1956-March 31, 1957*, again notes a decrease in the number of candidates for the open competitions of the administrative class. Although the number of entries was the lowest since 1949 and only thirty-three out of the fifty vacancies allotted to this competition were filled, the entry for the 1957 competitions appears to be somewhat stronger both in number and in quality than that of 1956. To fill vacancies left by the 1955 open competition, a supplementary competition for the administrative class was held in the summer of 1956 to offer an opportunity to those who had remained at the universities for research, or had taken up other employment and had outstanding intellectual ability. Of the twenty-one candidates, the five who were successful had been engaged in research or in university teaching since graduating. The limited competition for the administrative class was somewhat more successful than in the previous year, and the results of the innovations tried seem encouraging. Recruitment to the statistician class remained difficult and the number competing for the special departmental class declined further. The open competitions for the executive class produced enough recruits to fill the vacancies notified, but it was only the adoption of a new competition based on the General Certificate of Education that maintained the level of recruitment among young people. The growing proportion of women candidates in some competitions, particularly those for the executive and clerical classes, suggests that the achievement of equal pay by 1961 is increasing the attractiveness for a woman of a career in the Civil Service. The method of continuous open competition was used for all scientific classes, and the results of the senior scientific officer/scientific officer competitions were relatively satisfactory, especially in the senior grade, for which recruitment appears to be easier than that of scientific officers of the quality and in the numbers required by departments. The greatest deficiency was in filling posts for scientific assistants, though a fair number of the vacancies are being filled by temporary people who are gaining the two years experience required to qualify them for the competitions.

* Report of Her Majesty's Civil Service Commissioners for the period 1st April, 1956, to 31st March, 1957. Pp. 40. (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1957.) 2s. 3d. net.

The quality of candidates attracted by the research fellowship competition remains high, and the departments concerned appear to have been impressed very favourably by the work of those in the past. Of the twenty-seven fellowships offered this year, nine senior and thirteen junior fellowships have been awarded. Although the competition for patent examiners took a slight turn for the better, the number of vacancies is so large, and the problem of recruitment so difficult, that for a limited period candidates are being considered who hold honours degrees in non-scientific subjects. It remains as difficult as ever to recruit candidates with technical qualifications for the factory inspectorate. The information work of the Commission increased both in volume and in complexity and an information officer was appointed to organize and develop it. The arrangement made in 1955 whereby younger members of the administrative class act as links between the Civil Service and their own colleges or universities appears to fulfil a real need, and the arrangement made in December 1956 for sixty undergraduates, representing most of the British universities, to spend a week visiting Government departments also appeared to be a success.

ACCIDENTS IN CHILDHOOD

A YEAR ago the European Regional Office of the World Health Organization asked a group of experts from many countries to consider how accidents in childhood could be prevented. In most countries in Europe infant and child mortality has been steadily decreasing in recent years, and in many places has reached significantly low figures. Deaths due to infections and nutritional disturbances have fallen to a level considered unattainable only a few years ago. Against this, the death-rate due to accidents remains high and for many types of accidents has increased. As disease becomes more effectively controlled, accidents are assuming a proportionately greater importance. In some countries they have become the chief cause of death in childhood and adolescence and account for 30-40 per cent of all deaths in the age-group 1-19 years. Among certain groups of children, greater numbers are killed by accidents than by all other causes combined. This unenviable prominence of accidents in child mortality throughout Europe is due to the new and dangerous hazards introduced into many homes and countries by modern technological progress. The spread of electrification, especially in rural areas, the introduction of highly potent insecticides, the increasing numbers of motor-cars and bicycles on roads designed for thirteenth- to fifteenth-century traffic, may be cited as examples.

It is not only as a cause of death that accidents in childhood are important. The number of non-fatal accidents is very much larger—100-200 times greater and by some estimates even more.

In a preliminary survey the advisory group examined the main causes of accidents and at what ages they occurred*. These showed that mortality from accidents is highest at the pre-school age, lowest among school children, and again somewhat higher in adolescence. Since the beginning of this century,

* World Health Organization. Technical Report Series, No. 118: Accidents in Childhood: Facts as a Basis for Prevention. Report of an Advisory Group. Pp. 40. (Geneva: World Health Organization; London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1957.) 1 Swiss franc; 1s. 9d.; 0.30 dollars.