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INDIA OFFICE;
London, the 24th February 1876.

Public.
No. 19.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable the Governor General of India in Council.

MY LORD,—I have received your despatch of the 30th September 1875, No. 57, with reference to the selection and training of candidates for the Indian Civil Service. I have carefully considered the valuable reports which you have transmitted to me, together with your own comments and those of your colleagues in Council thereupon.

2. With respect to the principle of competition itself, the evidence you have collected sufficiently shows that it cannot be disturbed without injury to the public service. The expressions of opinion which I have received from competent judges in England lead me to the same conclusion. Of its success as a mode of selecting persons fit to serve in the Indian Civil Service there seems to be no reasonable doubt. The ability which it collects is not the same in kind as that which distinguished the Service appointed under the previous system, and there may be truth in the allegation for which some of your officers contend, that under it instances of the most conspicuous ability are more rare. But this difference, so far as it exists, may be reasonably attributed to a different cause. Great powers are developed by great occasions; and these have been of very rare occurrence since the present limits of the Indian Empire have been reached. On the other hand, it is generally admitted that, if exceptional powers are rarer than in older times, exceptions of an opposite kind have almost disappeared.

3. Some writers speak in their reports to the physical inferiority of the candidates selected under the new system. On this point a conflict of testimony exists. While the evidence of actual observers, supported by the comparative sick leave statistics, appear to incline to the less favourable view, there are distinguished medical witnesses in England upon the other side. The question appears to require further examination. It is possible that sufficient weight in the competition has not been given to physical qualifications; but this charge, if true, would not be an objection to the principle of competition, but rather to the mode in which it is applied. On the whole, your Excellency's personal testimony, based on a wide experience of the public service, and the prevalent opinion among the officers whom you have consulted, sufficiently establish that selection by competition has been successful in furnishing an efficient Indian Service, and that whatever defects may be noted are not such as to justify any fundamental change of system.

4. While it is generally agreed that the selection by competition should be upheld, there is a large preponderance of opinion in favour of material changes in the treatment of candidates after the selection has been made. The competition is almost, if not entirely, limited to subjects which are generally taught in English public schools. The wise aim of those who founded the system was to obtain as large a field of choice as possible, and at the same time to secure that the candidates, up to the time of their being chosen, should have received the common education of English gentlemen. This was not in itself enough. Special acquirements in language, law, and some other subjects were necessary before a Civil Servant could enter upon an appointment in India; but it was decided, when Haileybury was abolished, that these should be obtained after and not before the competition. During the first ten years of the new system, the selected candidates were sent to study law and languages at the Presidency towns. This plan was abandoned in 1864 for very conclusive reasons, and arrangements were made for enabling the selected candidates to complete their special studies in England. The highest age at which a man could compete was fixed at 21, his Indian career was to commence at 23, and

the intervening two years or more were to be spent in the special studies, in which his advancing proficiency was to be tested by four half-yearly examinations.

5. This is the system which prevails at present, and there is, as your Excellency shows, a preponderating opinion both in weight and authority against its continuance. The arrangement is such as almost to preclude a candidate from receiving a University education. The age at which he must compete is so fixed that he cannot, according to ordinary arrangements, receive his University education either before or after the competition. The consequence is that, as a rule, the selected candidates spend their two years of preparation studying by themselves in lodgings in London. This is the feature of the existing system which has been generally condemned in India. The nature and extent of that prevalence of opinion is best described in the figures in which you have analysed the reports.

6. The opinions of officers who entered the Service from Haileybury and by competition are as follows:—

	Haileybury Men.	Competition Men.	Total.
For the present system	2	18	20
For association after competition	24	51	75
Out of whom—			
(a.) For the Universities	22	39	61
(b.) For a special College	2	12	14

7. It is obvious that, if the theory upon which Lord Macaulay and others founded the competition is right, the exclusion of University education cannot be defended. If the object be to obtain Civil Servants who have received the ordinary education of English gentlemen, it is not reasonable to omit the part of that education which is most peculiarly English, and which exerts the most powerful influence in the formation of character. But the absence of it in this case has evils of a special kind. The peculiarity of a civilian's career, during all its earlier years, is its isolation. As far as European society is concerned, there is scarcely any seclusion more complete than that of an up-country station, to which a young civilian is usually appointed; and it is a seclusion which often lasts till he has reached to middle age. It is to him therefore more important than to the members of other professions that his education should not be solitary, but that, in the company of others of his own class, he should receive the invaluable training which consists in the knowledge of the thoughts and characters of other men. If he does not obtain it at that time, he has not the chance which is open to others of repairing the omission later. The older civilians received this training in common at Haileybury, and their unanimity in extolling it deserves to be carefully noted. Individuals may err in estimating the circumstances which have furthered or have hindered their success in life; but such an error can hardly be attributed to a whole class of able and experienced men.

8. The eulogies which the older civilians bestow upon the Haileybury education depends, no doubt, in some degree upon a feeling which the Universities may not be able so completely to satisfy. The close friendships formed there, which softened the rivalries of after-life, and secured devoted instead of perfunctory co-operation in those who were, far apart, working together for the same cause, were an important advantage of that education. The Universities being many, and each containing many Colleges, will not necessarily bring the future civilians into the same close daily contact. It is probable, however, that the candidates will be naturally thrown together without any formal arrangement for that purpose. A certain competition in Indian teaching will be set up in the Universities; special excellence will be attained in particular Colleges, and to them it will probably become the habit for Indian candidates

to resort. The opportunity of forming close acquaintance with future colleagues, if not so constant as it was at Haileybury, will be far greater than that which the present system affords.

9. On these grounds, and in view of the strong preponderance of Indian opinions, Her Majesty's Government confidently agree with your Excellency in the opinion that the candidates should be encouraged to receive a University education.

10. The detailed arrangements by which this result is to be effected have been the subject of some controversy. The Dean of Christ Church, carrying with him the opinion of the University of Oxford, and apparently that of Cambridge, is of opinion that the University education should be given after the competitive examination, and not before; and as it is admitted on all hands that a young civilian must not leave for India later than he does now, it will be necessary for this purpose to reduce the maximum age of competition to 19. The Master of Balliol, on the other hand, would wish the University education to precede the competition, and, therefore, would raise the limit of age to 22. Your Excellency is in favour of Dr. Jowett's scheme; while Indian opinion generally is divided upon the point. Your own view is followed by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab. On the other hand, the Governors of Madras and Bombay and the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal prefer the plan which has found favour with the two Universities. In your Excellency's Council, Mr. Eden is in favour of raising the maximum limit of age, Sir W. Muir, Sir A. Arbuthnot, and Sir A. Clarke desire to lower it. Among those of the Service generally who have touched upon the subject the proportion is somewhat reversed,—33 being in favour of raising the age, 27 in favour of lowering it.

11. It is obvious that, on a question on which opinions are so divided, there is much to be said on both sides. After careful examination of the various opinions and arguments that have been recorded, Her Majesty's Government have come to the conclusion that the view recommended by the Universities is to be preferred.

12. The most cogent argument for taking this course is, that a University education cannot be ensured for the candidates by any other. Much has been said against the system of special training under which most of the selected candidates have been prepared. In itself, it is undoubtedly an incomplete and partial form of education; but, such as it is, it is an inseparable accompaniment of selection by competition, especially when the competition is severe. The candidates can spare neither time nor energy for any other subjects of instruction than those which will tell upon the examination. Every hour spent upon irrelevant learning is an advantage gratuitously presented to a rival. Teachers, therefore, whose mode of instruction is exclusively designed to obtain success in the examination, and who recognize no other object of endeavour, must necessarily be preferred to those who have a larger aim. The University course, which must provide for other pupils besides the candidates in the Indian competition, can never be so perfect an instrument for gaining marks at that examination as the instruction of the special teachers. Candidates, therefore, before selection will not willingly resort to it. No such difficulty hinders a residence at the University after selection. The further examinations through which the candidates have to pass will not be competitive; the special subjects are such as can be studied there with peculiar advantage; and a powerful encouragement can be offered to a University residence, by restricting to those selected candidates who frequent the University the subsistence allowance given by the Government. It would obviously be impossible to offer any similar inducement to the whole mass of candidates previous to the competition.

13. A lower limit of age is recommended by another consideration of importance. Out of the number who present themselves for competition, it is certain that four-fifths must fail, because the candidates are usually more than five times as many as the vacancies; and no prudent parent, in selecting a

profession for his son will leave this certainty out of consideration. Some professions are absolutely closed, others are almost impossible, to a man who thinks for the first time of entering them at the age of 22. A man, therefore, who competes for the Indian Civil Service at that age, undoubtedly strives for a valuable prize, but does it at a formidable risk. He stakes, in a measure, his chance of self-support upon the result of a competition in which it is certain that four-fifths must fail. It is more than probable that such a risk must weigh strongly with parents, and diminish the field of competition, especially among the professional class. But no such apprehension will be possible if the limit of age is fixed at 19.

14. The minimum of age will remain at 17, as before.

15. The first competition at which the maximum limit of 19 will be enforced will be held in July 1878. This delay in bringing the new arrangement into operation is necessary in order that the requisite preparation may be made, and that those whose age will then exceed the required limit may present themselves at the previous competition.

16. The selected candidates will be required, as heretofore, to become probationers for at least two years, and to pass periodical examinations in special subjects of study to be prescribed to them. Attendance at Law Courts will still be required, and probationers will be examined in respect to that attendance; but I propose, in conformity with an opinion expressed by your Excellency, and by many of those whose reports are before me, to introduce modifications into the arrangements which are now in force.

17. The probationers, having passed the necessary examinations, will be required to report themselves to their Government in India, not later than the close of the 4th December after their selection. This arrangement will make the age of twenty-two and a half the latest at which a young civilian can commence his Indian service. In most cases he is likely to commence it younger. An allowance of £150 will be given during each of the two years of their probation to all candidates selected in July 1878, or later, who pass their probation at some University (to be approved beforehand by the Secretary of State), at which moral responsibility for the conduct of the students is undertaken and rules of discipline are enforced.

18. These are the principal changes in the existing system which it appears to Her Majesty's Government expedient to sanction. Some alterations of subordinate importance in the studies pursued by the probationers may be desirable, but upon these it is not necessary that I should trouble you at present.

19. I desire that your Excellency in Council will furnish the Governments of Madras and Bombay with a copy of this despatch.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient, humble Servant,

SALISBURY.

No. 18/891

Copy forwarded to the Government of Madras for information, with reference to their letter No. 998, dated 7th August 1876.

By Order of the Governor General of India in Council,

HOME DEPARTMENT,

PUBLIC;

SIMLA,

The 17 May 1876.

Offg. Under Secretary to the Govt. of India.

Exd.—J. N. M.

Order in the Public Dept. of Cotacamund
31st May 1876. No 609.

Communicated to the Revenue Department.

(True extract)

[Signature]

Chief Secretary

To The Revenue Department

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