

Success to some
appointment he
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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Success in life is too distant an object to influence powerfully young schoolboys, so that in their case desire of the reputation to be gained in competitive examinations is a much stronger motive. When they grow older and approach the time when they will have to make their own way in the world, the necessity of study as a preparation for success in life becomes more apparent; but, to the very last the prospect of success in competitive examinations is a great encouragement to hard study.

Even when the student has no reason to expect that a high place in the list will be a recommendation to some appointment he wishes to obtain. Thus competitive examinations do good service in the encouragement of study. They are not, however, without their accompanying disadvantages. In some cases competition is such an excessively powerful stimulus that it leads to over-work and the ruin of the physical health of too ambitious students.

There is also a serious danger of harm to the moral character. In a competitive examination the successful candidate gains honour at the expense of his defeated rival. Owing to this fact unrestricted competition is apt to encourage selfishness, and extinguish the kindly feeling which ought to exist between young students at school and college. In such struggles for success the competitors are tempted to stoop to actual dishonesty, and it too often happens that they yield to the temptation.

These are grave dangers, against which it is the duty of the teacher to do his best to defend his pupils; but in spite of their gravity the competitive system is so necessary for efficient education that it could not be abandoned without ruinous results. As a means of testing fitness for government service, com-

petitive examinations are also on the whole most serviceable. It is objected against the Indian Civil Service and other such examinations, that those who take a high place in the list are often mere bookworms, destitute of energy and practical ability.

This may be admitted to be true in certain number of cases, but the admission merely amounts to this, that the system of selection by competitive examinations is, like almost everything else in the world, imperfect; that it sometimes admits the worse and rejects the better man among the candidates. It is, however, quite certain that a large majority of the successful candidates in a competitive examination are superior to those who have failed. Cleverness in mastering languages, literature, and sciences is, as a rule, associated with general ability, and the accurate knowledge of difficult books is a proof either of great intellectual ability or else of determined industry, which is as useful a qualification in a government servant as intellectual ability. Thus, on the whole, the best men come to the front in competitive examinations; and, until a better system of selection is devised, the competitive system should be retained. At present the only alternative seems to be selection by patronage, which is far more likely to admit incapable men into the public service, and is open to other serious objections.