

Asiatic despotism, while their servants exult in irresponsibility, and fight the most desperate financial contests with the pleasant consciousness that, whoever may win, their withers are unwrung. They are deaf to the startling admonitions of Judge Cooley, to the benevolent suggestions of the Commerce Commission, and to the warnings of experts upon the railroad question, and they are blind to the threatening attitude of the State Legislatures. They are willing to be as lavish with their stockholders' money as Artemus Ward was with the blood of his wife's relatives, and plunge them into a railroad war with as light a heart as M. Ollivier's over the declaration of war in 1870.

We are accustomed to smile at the folly of the Hindus, who, when unable to obtain justice, starve themselves to death upon the doorsteps of their oppressors; but our railroad directors seem to think that this policy is dictated by the profoundest sagacity. Whenever a railroad attempts to do business at a loss, its rivals are excited to the most frantic emulation. They proceed to punish the offender by showing it how much more severely they can injure themselves than any one else can injure them, and they have kept this up until several fine properties have been brought to the brink of ruin. During the intervals when they are not employed in cutting rates, they devote themselves to building parallel roads as a preparation for renewed rate-wars on their completion. Their methods have a curious resemblance to those of the territorial magnates of Europe during the Middle Ages, when the chief business of rulers was to enlarge their possessions regardless of the sufferings of their subjects. To do them justice, it must be said that they have the same excuse, the temptation to seize on a rich province being as great to a railroad man as to a prince; but some regard ought to be paid to the lessons of history.

Speaking broadly, the lesson of European history is that wars of conquest have seldom been very successful. Territory acquired in this way is generally held by an uncertain tenure. It may be held for a long time, as Alsace and Lorraine were held by France; but so long as there are other Powers which feel that it is wrongfully held, there is always danger of retaliation. No considerable Power can placidly behold the advance of another into provinces that are naturally connected with the former—provinces which, if not actually tributary, are at least in the possession of friendly Powers of moderate strength and circumscribed ambition. It was a great mistake for France to extend her control to Tunis. She gained little or nothing, but she incurred the lasting enmity of Italy, and converted a friendly and grateful nation into a dangerous foe. It is by no means impossible that she may eventually lose Nice and Savoy as a punishment for her disregard of those feelings of quasi proprietorship which Italy naturally has in African territory so closely approaching her own. Geographical and racial distinctions cannot be arrogantly overridden. In the acquisition of territory, compromise is almost invariably more profitable to all parties than competition.

Our railroads, it is true, need pay no attention to distinctions of race, but they cannot ignore geography. Every great road regards certain territory as naturally belonging or tributary to it: it is territory which already it fully supplies with transportation, or which it can reach, by extending its branches, with greater facility than other roads. If a rival road undertakes to build in this territory, it is sure to excite retaliation, and it will probably lose more by arousing this competition than it can gain by attempting to annex territory to which there are existing claims. The consequences are frequently disadvantageous to the communities that suppose themselves to be benefited by the competition. Unless the amount of transportation is very large, it can be done at less expense by one road than by two, and in the long run increased expense must fall upon those who use the road. Railroads may be built by foreign capital, but they must always be operated with their own earnings, and the greater the expense of transportation, the higher the charges.

To determine what territory naturally belongs to a certain road is often, of course, a matter of difficulty; but to fight over the question is not the only way of determining it. Men in charge of great trusts ought to be able in most cases to come to some agreement or compromise, and when they cannot, they ought to seek the help of arbitration. What stockholders need is some advisory board to which they can apply when they become convinced that their property is mismanaged. As it is, they are the victims of their tyrannical rulers. They elect them, it is true, but they are incompetent to displace them, or even to criticise them; they have not the necessary knowledge, and they are disunited. They know that their property suffers, but they seldom know just why, and they cannot tell what to do about it. It should be the duty of such a board to inform itself as to the merits of railroad disputes, and, if its advice was not followed, to point out to stockholders the errors of their rulers, thus enabling them, if they chose, to insist upon their correction. It would not be necessary to confer upon this body power to dictate policies or to compel action, and it would be undesirable, even if it were practicable, to have it established by Government. The railroad president who persisted in fighting after a properly constituted board had proposed reasonable terms of peace, would probably soon find that his resignation would be acceptable.

The prohibition of pooling by the Commerce Act is probably unwise, but no one believes that it would really prevent the railroads from maintaining fair rates if they were all managed by honest and reasonable men. The trouble is, that some managers have a very low conception of their powers and responsibilities. Their views as to obtaining business seem to be those of the ordinary commercial traveller, and they have not sufficient breadth of mind to appreciate the advantages of honorable management. They make rates for the public and grant rebates in private; they con-

nive at the cutting of rates by their agents when they have entered into agreements to maintain them; and they have created a dangerous public prejudice against railroads by their duplicity and arrogance. Most men do not demand special privileges and rebates on their own account, but because they are afraid that other people are getting them. Most railroads grant them, not because they prefer to, but because they are afraid that other roads will grant them. The prohibition of pooling makes it harder to remove these suspicions, but it does not necessitate the present reckless competition. The example of the coal companies shows that fairly satisfactory results can be obtained by a tacit understanding that is apparently not obnoxious to the statute.

The settlement of our Eastern railroad wars by the agency of a leading firm of bankers shows that the plan which has been suggested is not an impracticable one. If men of this standing could be induced, by the action of railroad stockholders as a class, to serve as disinterested advisers and peace-makers, doubtless railroad directors as a class would be glad in most cases to appeal to them. Certainly the stockholders in the Western roads have suffered enough, owing to the causes which we have indicated, to lead them to take measures for self-preservation. When a road has been ruined, the bondholders generally unite and appoint a committee to protect their interests. There is no conclusive reason why stockholders should not unite for a like purpose before their roads have been ruined. Unless they can bring themselves to adopt some such means of checking the follies of their trustees, they are likely to suffer quite as severely in the future as in the past.

#### COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS.

THE protest against the abuse of examinations in England, to which we referred last week, touches indirectly on the effect of competitive examinations for admission to the public service; and Prof. Max Müller doubts whether they have not been injurious to the Government service in India, where he was one of the most strenuous advocates of their introduction, and Mr. Frederic Harrison makes the somewhat foolish remark that, under them, "Arthur Wellesley would not have got into the army and Burke would have received low marks." The protestants suggest no substitute for the competitive system, but mention, in a faint-hearted way, that somebody else has suggested a pass examination, to be followed by a term of probation, which, as the *Economist* points out, would result in practice in the restoration of the old system of favoritism under a very thin disguise.

The fact is, that the competitive system in England is what its enemies in this country used to say ours was—an examination in a variety of subjects, with no direct bearing on the work the successful candidates were to do, and which only college graduates could pass. In England these examinations are so severe, and cover so much ground, literary, historical, and scientific, that not only are college graduates as such unable to pass

them, but every college graduate who wants to get into the army or the civil service, in all but the lowest grades, has to be prepared by an elaborate system of cramming, which takes from six months to a year of time, and costs a good deal of money. The "coaches" or crammers who prepare men for the examinations are now a large and influential body, some members of which, who make a reputation by the success of their pupils, earn as large incomes as all but the leading lawyers.

Of course, the influence of this is greatly felt in all the schools and colleges, and under it, naturally enough, the state of things has arisen of which the protestants complain, and in which both teachers and pupils, professors and students, all over the country, have come to look on education as simply preparation for some examination through which they will get a salary and entrance on a career. The more vigorously the candidates get themselves up on subjects, of course the higher the tests have to be; so that for some years back a sort of competition has been going on between the examiners and the crammers very like that which has been going on between the makers of guns and of armor plating. Every time the gun-makers increase the power of the projectile, the shipbuilders have to thicken or harden the plating. So, also, the more thoroughly prepared the crammers make the candidates, the more rigorous the requirements of the examiners become. The remedy would seem to be to cut down greatly the literary and scientific exactions, and give a good deal more weight to character, physical condition, and knowledge bearing directly on the duties to be performed; or, in other words, to assimilate the examinations more nearly to those in use in this country. The notion that there is any choice between competitive examinations and the old system of patronage finds no acceptance anywhere. It may be true that Wellington could not have got into the army under the present system; but who can tell how many Wellingtons were kept out of the army by want of influence or aristocratic connections? Wellingtons did not abound in the British service in Wellington's day. His immediate predecessor in the Peninsula, whom he had great difficulty in superseding, was a wretched dolt.

The weakness of the protestants' position, in so far as their animadversions are directed against the use of examinations as tests of proficiency on the part of teachers and pupils in schools, is that their remedy—in so far as they suggest a remedy—calls for a very large body of teachers of a kind which does not exist, or exists only in very small numbers. In this they remind us a little of the Socialists, all whose plans for reorganizing society always assume the existence of an immense and now unemployed stock of administrative talent, which can be readily called into play. Where this talent is, nobody knows. All employers, all corporations, all governments are hunting for it night and day, and tempting it by high pay

and great honor; but they do not get it. So also the enemies of examinations as tests of the teacher's capacity and the pupil's progress seem to assume the existence of an immense body of teaching talent, which will develop the minds and morals of children by mere force of character and example, so that there will be no need to test their work by mechanical processes like inspectorial questioning. We hope there is such a body of teaching talent somewhere, but there are as yet very few signs of its existence. As far as one can see at present, the number of born teachers—that is, of men or women who possess in a marked degree the teaching talent, and are capable of becoming a dominating influence to a roomful of children or youths, and of carrying on their work for years without loss of vigor, freshness, or interest—is exceedingly small. In fact, we should say that such teachers were almost as scarce as great generals or great statesmen. The great bulk of teachers, as the world is now constituted, will and must be people who teach from necessity and not from choice, who find the occupation monotonous and wearing to the nerves, and whose work would infallibly fall off if it were not constantly tested by the simple and, we admit, commonplace process of question and answer.

#### THE COLONIAL POLICY OF FRANCE.

WHEN the philosophical historian comes to write the definitive account of the passion for colonization which possesses all the leading countries of Europe, he will undoubtedly rank it as one of the incidents of the modern industrial development and competition. Colonies are planted and civilization is engrafted on barbarism in order that the home market may be eased of its glut. That is the main motive, and the subsidiary ones are but grouped about it. In the case of France, the traditional thirst of Frenchmen for *gloire* probably enters into her schemes for extending her colonial possessions next in importance after the commercial reason. Certain it is that since 1870, as formerly after 1815, France has sought in Algeria and China that military glory which was denied her on European battlefields.

The modern colonial policy of France has been subjected to thorough criticism by M. de Lanessan, in a series of articles in the *Revue Scientifique*. He maintains that the experience of a hundred years has established three main rules for the planting of colonies among barbarous peoples. The first rule is to respect native religious practices; the second, to regard native social institutions; the third, to make use of the existing system of local administration as far as possible. All these rules, says M. de Lanessan, are steadily violated by France.

Taking up the last specification first, the French administration of the affairs of Cochin China appears to have been badly directed for the past seven years. For nearly a score of years before 1881, Cochin China escaped a rigorous application of the French administrative system. It was a period of

general prosperity. Natural resources were steadily developed, the revenues increased easily even with light taxes, and great public works were entered upon. But in 1881 the country was put under the "régime civil." Essentially the same prefectorial machinery as that of France was introduced; the number of French officials was quadrupled; naturally enough, taxes were doubled. Costly buildings for the public service now absorb the funds before devoted to improving the means of communication and transport. A pronounced dissatisfaction with French rule has sprung up where before there was, at the worst, indifference to it.

"I cannot insist too much," says M. de Lanessan, "upon the mistake we have made in forcing our civil code upon the natives of Cochin China." As it is easy to see, this flies in the face of all native ideas of the family, of inheritance, rights of husband and wife, parents and child, etc. To endeavor to set aside completely and at a stroke conceptions passed on by tradition for thousands of years, seems indeed the height of folly. How the natives regard the French code may be inferred from a recent occurrence in Algeria. It was proposed to the Mussulmans of a certain district that they should become "naturalized." Their leaders deliberated over the question, perceiving the political advantages which would come to them by acquiescing, but finally returned answer that the thing was impossible, that it would involve a complete social revolution, the consequences of which they could not pretend to foresee.

The articles to which we refer lay much stress upon the way in which the French colonial authorities ride rough-shod over the religious prejudices of the natives under their rule. "Everywhere in Anam and Tonkin," says the writer, "I have seen pagodas occupied, often needlessly, by our troops, to the great scandal of the inhabitants; our soldiers looting the most sacred and venerated objects, and, too often, the civil authorities shutting their ears to the just complaints made on this account by the natives. . . . To a considerable degree, the characteristic of our present colonial policy is the offensive tendency of our colonial officials to favor openly and officially the propaganda, often more zealous than prudent, of the missionaries."

In the last sentence a matter is touched upon which is deserving of special notice. It is highly curious and instructive to see how France, while becoming more intensely anti-clerical in her domestic policy, poses as the great champion and protector of Catholic missions abroad. In fact, the Association for the Propagation of the Faith is largely a French society; its two councils sit, the one at Lyons, the other at Paris. The diplomatic, often the military, activity of France in China has taken directions which can never be understood until its Catholic coloring, and the reason for it, have been observed. As long ago as 1862 the French Minister of State, M. Billault, declared in the Senate, in regard to the then recent expedition to China: "We went into the far East, and shed the blood of France there, to represent the spirit of re-