

Correspondence.

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Private Secretaries.

To the Editors of *The Civilian*:

I have read with interest the letter in a recent issue of *The Civilian*, by "An Old Timer," on the vexed question of Ministers Private Secretaries; but while the solution of the problem which he offers is an interesting one, I doubt if it would, as he claims, be "satisfactory to all concerned," for the reason that it does not, to my mind at least, go to the root of the difficulty. If I understand the question rightly, the chief cause of complaint is based upon the fact that these secretaries are nearly always promoted into the higher grades of the service upon the retirement of the minister employing them; which promotions, especially in the case of a small department, where a change of minister might occur comparatively frequently would palpably work to the great disadvantage of the regular officials in the lower grades of the department.

Now what is the principal reason for such promotion being given to private secretaries? Is it not for the purpose of compensating them, wholly or in part, for the loss of the \$600 per annum which they receive in addition to their regular salary, so long as they are discharging the duties of private secretary? That additional payment of \$600 is, to my mind the root of the whole trouble. Naturally no man wants to lose \$50 per month from his salary; and if he happens to be a married man, and has served for some time as a pri-

vate secretary, and has become used to living up to the maximum of his salary, as most Civil Servants have to do, the financial loss to him is a very serious one; the knowledge of this undoubtedly appeals strongly to the sympathies of the outgoing minister, and he does what he can to meet the difficulty, and so applies the only remedy available, which is to promote his secretary to the higher grade. Do away with this additional payment of \$600, and the necessity (or at least the prime reason) for such promotion at once disappears; the ex-secretary would suffer no financial loss on the retirement of his minister, but would remain in the department at the same salary which he received as private secretary, with the usual statutory increments, if he were not already at the maximum of his grade; under such circumstances there would be nothing in his case to specially appeal to the sympathy of his minister, and therefore there would be no good reason for the latter recommending his promotion to the higher grade.

Whatever its merits may be in other respects, the objection to "an Old Timer's" plan is that it perpetuates the present system, as regards the suggested Departmental Secretary, that is he is to "receive an addition to his salary, while acting as private secretary," and when he ceases to so act "he would revert to his ordinary work, and his regular salary." Result, precisely as at present — sympathy with the ex-secretary for his prospective loss of salary, with promotion as the remedy. Under the circumstances "an Old Timer's" plan hardly commends itself as a practical solution of the problem.

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