

"I'll do it," he said.

Forthwith he went to the office of the Minister's private secretary, and after a brief interval secured an interview with the chief of his department, whom he had never before even seen. As has been said, the new Minister had the reputation of being actuated by a desire to treat the service, without distinction of rank, on an equitable basis. Notwithstanding this, during his brief tenure of office, he had been so beset by unworthy appeals from every quarter that he had become almost sick at heart. However, he received Grey in a quiet, almost genial, manner.

Without wasting any time, Harvey launched into his subject. He recited the injustices to which he had been subjected during his eighteen years of service; the number of officials of the department who had been promoted over his head, as well as the numerous cases of appointments of outsiders at a higher class. He recounted the many assurances he had received of preferment when the next vacancy occurred. He ended with the information—manfully given—of his long engagement to Edith, and which he now felt in honour bound must be cancelled.

The Minister gave him an attentive hearing throughout. At the conclusion he took up a bound copy of the list which lay on his desk and scanned it for some minutes in silence. Then he rang for the Deputy. The latter entered, looking from one man to the other, somewhat nervously.

"Mr. Burwell," said the Minister, "I should like to learn from you why Mr. Grey has been permitted to remain so long in his present position, without promotion. I see by the list that, in point of service, he is the senior of every man in the department—including yourself. Can you tell me why this is so? Has not his work been satisfactory?"

"Perfectly, sir," Burwell answered in some confusion.

"Then why has he been passed over by all these men? For instance, why were you promoted over him?"

"Well, sir," the Deputy stammered, "you know that I was a nephew of the former Minister, your predecessor."

"What has that got to do with it?" the Minister demanded, shortly, and then went on:

"What about Macdonald?"

"Macdonald was the son-in-law of the Governor of _____"

"And Lamonte," the Minister continued, as though ignoring the reply.

"He was a defeated candidate."

The Minister rose from his seat and went toward the window, from which he gazed for several minutes in silence. Then he turned and said:—

"Mr. Burwell, you will please prepare a memo. to the effect that Mr. Harvey Grey is to be promoted to the chief clerkship rendered vacant by the death of Mr. Arnold, and that he is to receive back salary as from the first of April last."

"But, sir," began Burwell, "you are aware that the position has been practically promised to Sir William's wife's nephew"—

"Never mind Sir William's wife's nephew," answered the Minister, quickly. "Prepare the minute to Council." The Deputy left the room in confusion.

The Minister turned to Grey and held out his hand.

"Mr. Grey," he said, "it gives me much pleasure to do this little service for you. It is not a favour, but a matter of right. So long as I am at the head of this department I trust that it will never be said that 'pull' will avail against length of service and efficiency. I wish you good day, and a Merry Christmas."