

INTERCHANGEABILITY OF
OFFICE DUTIES.

A contributory cause for the seeming necessity in some instances of appointments and promotions over the heads of old and faithful officials in the service is not far to seek. It is a long standing custom for Deputy Heads of departments to place the newly arrived junior in a certain chair at a certain desk to perform day after day one certain piece of work. There are clerks who have performed for twenty or more years the same identical work in departments where it is quite feasible to make a transference of duties from one clerk to another. The tendency is for the clerk thus placed in a never-ending groove to rust, unless he is endowed with special mental activity coupled with ambition and push and indulges these activities in private studies.

Meanwhile in the outside world, in banks for instance, clerks are moved from post to post and perform duties in respect of collections, the ledgers, telling, discounts, accounting, all in regular sequence, and finally those showing the greatest diligence and capacity for affairs reaching the managerial chair. In commercial houses the same system and opportunities obtain. In the civil service it may be more difficult to move clerks from post to post than in the institutions referred to above. But the right of a man to have the opportunity to prove his worthiness to achieve the highest rank in his chosen vocation should be inalienable. Then if he fails and an outsider is placed above him, he must accept his fate with the best equanimity at his command. THE CIVILIAN respectfully recommends to Deputy Heads and the heads of branches some consideration of their clerks in the way of interchangeability of routine office duties in so far as this may be possible in the various branches of the service.

A DEPARTMENTAL CLEARING-
HOUSE.

We desire to direct attention to the article in another column from the pen of Mr. Fred. W. Babington. The suggestions made are valuable; the case needs only to be presented to convince everyone of the good effects which would follow, and we sincerely hope that some action will result.

No one who is familiar with our service can fail to have observed a certain ponderousness in departmental working. To a certain extent, the departments are like the water-tight compartments of battleships; each stands independent of its neighbor, and is prone to regard itself as a separate entity, moving in mysterious ways its wonders to perform. There is often as much difficulty placed in the way of one department securing the assistance and co-operation of another department, occupying adjoining offices perhaps, as if there were no connection between the ultimate objects of the work performed by both. This is due to inertia and the growth of a bad practice rather than to any conscious discourtesy or antagonism. But surely it is altogether deplorable and wrong, and calls loudly for amendment.

The suggestions made by our contributor are too useful to be ignored. They are, however, only one phase of a wide field. There is, in very truth, need of some authority which will unify our departmental system, provide the necessary element of co-relation between departments, prevent duplication of work, and see to it that there is due and proper furtherance of the objects of the Government as a whole. The present notion is that each department is a sort of *imperium in imperio*; a sovereign state in its own right. Often, information is refused because a department stands upon its dignity, or wishes to avoid a little additional labor; more often still, it is not absolutely denied, so much as ignored or delayed.