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## The Adaptability of the Merit System

*Extracts from a Paper Read by Hon. Lewis H. Van Dusen, Philadelphia, Civil Service Commissioner, Before the Baltimore City Club on February 14, 1914.*

*(Concluded from Last Issue.)*

Let us take an examination of a slightly different type, though non-assembled. There is in the city of Philadelphia the position of city architect. The incumbent is charged with the planning and supervising of the erection or repair of all buildings undertaken by the city. The salary is \$4,000 per annum. The position became vacant a short time ago, and a competitive examination was ordered by the Civil Service Commission. From among names submitted upon request by the Philadelphia Chapter of American Institute of Architects, a board of two members was selected by the Commission to act in conjunction with its chief examiner. They carried out that examination as follows: The applicants were not assembled. Each applicant submitted with his application a detailed statement of his training and experience, together with plans, photographs and specifications of his best executed work; also a list of references. This material was placed before the board of examiners and the candidates found to be worth 70% were then summoned to meet the examining board singly for an oral interview. This completed the examination. It is manifest that it is necessary that the position of city architect be filled by a man not only of great capacity, but of excellent professional standing. It is also a fact that, as a rule, professional men

are skeptical about entering competitive examinations. They are very jealous of their professional reputations, but we are glad to report that when the plan of this examination was announced, nineteen architects submitted their statements of training and experience and a bountiful supply of plans, photographs and specifications of their executed work. This material was gone over carefully by the examining board, and six men were selected for the oral examination. Each one of the six men was before the board for one-half hour or more. The result was that five eligibles were secured, two of whom tied for first place. One of these, who was appointed, is an architect who has built several important buildings for the Federal Government, and is a member of a well-known firm of architects in Philadelphia. The other is the architect who drew the plans for the great terminal of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad at Chicago. The city now has a most capable city architect, and it was again demonstrated that the merit system of examinations will rise to meet the occasion when properly administered.

There is another class of positions, for which we give an entirely different examination. Take, for example, the position of dentist. In the first place, a local dentist of first class reputation is requested to con-