

the service were swept from office, and he felt that his case was hopeless. A new Minister assumed control of the department. Rumour had it that he was imbued with high ideals as to the reform of the service. During his days in opposition he had even secured the adoption of a resolution which took the service out of politics, and aimed at promotion by merit alone. But the Government of the day declined to introduce any legislation to this end.

At this stage one of the most valued officials of Grey's department, old Arnold, the chief clerk, died. Grey knew that the vacancy belonged to him, automatically. Nevertheless, in order to reassure himself, he interviewed Burwell, who was now Deputy Minister. Burwell had always been outwardly friendly toward him; too much so, Grey had often thought. On this occasion he received him as cordially as ever, and invited him to a chair. After Harvey had explained his mission, Burwell said:—

"My dear Grey, you know that I have always done everything in my power for you. I recommended you for this position as soon as the vacancy occurred. But what can I do? Sir William has demanded it for his wife's nephew, a young man in England, who has just finished his course at Oxford and for whom a place has to be found."

"But have I not a right to expect it?" asked Grey, bitterly. "The last time I had to stand aside for a Minister's brother; the time before that for the son-in-law of a Governor, and before that, for a broken down political hack. How long is this thing going to last?"

Burwell replied apologetically. "Quite so, my dear chap; but you must be aware that the exigencies of party politics constitute a force against which merit alone has no chance whatever."

Poor Grey left the room utterly crushed. As he passed down the hall he met Edith Hartley.

Edith had entered the service nearly eight years before, as an expert stenographer, and had made such rapid progress that she was now private secretary to the Deputy Minister, and was in receipt of a salary almost equal to Grey's. They had been engaged for three years. How could he ask her to give up the comparative luxury she enjoyed for the privations which were inevitable, unless he secured promotion? She had been much sought after by men occupying high positions, yet with that strange incongruity which makes woman so inscrutably dear to man, she had ignored all these attentions and accepted Grey. He told her of his interview with the Deputy, of his failure, and ended by offering to release her from her engagement. Instead of acquiescing in this view of the matter, she took a totally different stand.

"Why do you talk like this, Harvey?" she asked. "You know that the vacancy has existed for over six months, and who has a better right to it than you? If the Deputy will not help you, can you not see your proper course?"

"What other course can there be?" Harvey asked, dejectedly. "No promotion can be made without the recommendation of the Deputy; so what can be done? No; it's useless, dear; the only thing to do is to break it off."

But Edith Hartley, notwithstanding her gentle disposition, was made of stronger fibre than this, and would not, inertly, yield to what she felt was a manifest injustice.

With flashing eye she confronted Harvey.

"Is there, then, no one higher than the Deputy Minister?" she asked. "Go straight to the Minister and lay the whole matter before him—and do it at once."

Her words seemed to put fresh courage into Grey.