

## Political Partisanship in the Civil Service.

never negligently shirked a public duty or timorously shrunk from grappling with the most formidable dangers. She has never been as clay in the hands of her Ministers. She has always had her own views of home politics and of foreign policy, and if she has at times been forced to accept unpalatable advice, she has frequently been able to have her own way even in the face of the strenuous opposition of her advisers. The ablest Prime Minister she has ever had, Mr. Gladstone, in his own graphic way described the Sovereign's rôle in the British system :

"He is entitled on all subjects coming before the Ministry, to knowledge and opportunities of discussion, unlimited save by the iron necessities of business. Though decisions must ultimately conform to the sense of those who are to be responsible for them, yet their business is to inform and persuade the Sovereign, not to over-rule him. Were it possible for him to enter actively into all public transactions, he would be fully entitled to do so. In the discussion of them the Monarch has more than one advantage over his advisers. He is permanent, they are fugitive; he speaks from the vantage ground of a station unapproachably higher; he takes a calm and leisurely survey, while they are worried with preparatory stages, and their force is often impaired by the pressure of countless detail. He may be, therefore, a weighty factor in all deliberations of State. Every discovery of a blot, that the studies of the Sovereign in the domain of business enable him to make, strengthens his hands and enhances his authority. It is plain, then, that there is abundant scope for mental activity to be at work under the gorgeous robes of Royalty."

Probably the highest claim to distinction which the future historian will see in Queen Victoria, is her commanding influence in the world's counsels in favour of the maintenance of peace. Two noted instances may be cited here as examples. During a critical period of the Civil War in the United States the French Government earnestly desired to recognize the independence of the Southern Confederacy, and proposed to the Government of Great Britain joint action in the matter. How far Her Majesty's personal influence served to prevent such a disaster to civilization may never be known, but it is known that she peremptorily refused to sanction the proposal, and the United States was allowed time to secure the complete ascendancy of the National Government. Quite recently Prince Bismarck has given to the world the text of a personal letter written in 1870 to the late Emperor of Germany, William I., in which she appealed to him to prevent the utter destruction of France to which Bismarck was then inclined. The motive which prompted the publication of the letter appears to have been personal dislike of the Queen, but no device more likely to enhance her popularity with her own people, or to increase the respect in which she is held by all civilized nations, could have been adopted. It is at once a tribute to her power and a proof of her humanity.

Queen Victoria's reign must in the natural course of events soon terminate. She has outlived all her early Ministers of State and most of those who acted as her advisers in middle life. But she can never be separated even in thought from the current time, in which she shows an interest that is unabated. Be the remainder of her eventful and momentous reign long or short, all her subjects everywhere will unite in the wish that it may continue to be happy and glorious.

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A suit of armour has been discovered in the old Chateau di la Tour de Pinon, which is thought to be the one ordered for Joan of Arc by Charles VII. during the siege of Orleans, and presented to her at Bourges. It is said to correspond exactly to the descriptions handed down and was made for a woman five feet three inches in height.

THE debate on this question which occupied the attention of the House of Commons on 18th September, should receive most serious consideration throughout the country.

The report of the proceedings is not calculated to raise our respect for those who spoke, and must certainly tend to lessen our expectation of obtaining clean and honest government from the present Administration. With one notable exception—that of Mr. John Ross Robertson, whose speech deserves the highest commendation—the speakers appear to have discussed the matter from a purely partisan standpoint, and to have devoted the greater part of the time to the telling of harrowing tales of the horrible iniquities of the gentlemen on the other side of the House. Even the Ministers were no better than the rest. In view of the importance of the principle at stake, this is most disappointing.

Now, considering the way in which the Civil Service has been managed of late years, it is impossible to give the Opposition leaders any credit for a burning desire to do in this matter the thing which is right. Their record is against them. But at the same time it must be admitted that in the main their position is sound. For the principles which should govern dismissals for partisanship, as enunciated by the Government, cannot fail to prove detrimental to the best interests of the country. In the past, as we all know, civil servants have been permitted, if not encouraged, to take an active part in politics, and the fact that the Civil Service has been used to reward party workers has added very much to the evil. Nothing need here be said as to the scandal involved in such a state of things; it is now fully admitted.

The new Government has announced its intention of introducing a most salutary rule—that political neutrality is the price which must be paid for any position in the Civil Service. This regulation should meet with unanimous approval, and it is to be hoped that in the future it will be as rigidly enforced against the friends of the Government of the day as we may be sure it will be against their opponents. But it is most unfortunate that it should have been decided to make its application retroactive; nothing could more surely prevent the attainment of any good results. As it was well put by Mr. Robertson: "This reform in the Civil Service cannot be carried out by the dismissal of one set of offensive partisans of one political colour, and the appointing to their places of another set of offensive partisans of a different political colour." For we may be perfectly certain that under the present evil system of filling Government positions, the great majority of the men who would be appointed to the posts thus thrown open would be even more thoroughly partisan than those dismissed.

It will no doubt be said that from the time they receive their positions, the new men will cease to be partisans. Possibly they will: that remains to be seen; but could not the former occupants of the posts also cease to be partisans? If the neutrality rule can be enforced against the friends of the Government, surely those who have been its political opponents can also be made to respect it. Let a definite rule be promulgated throughout the service, strictly prohibiting any political activity on the part of employees, and let any future offender meet with instant dismissal. But no notice should be taken of political partisanship in the past.

If a Government employee has broken the law, if he has assisted in distributing bribes, or has offended against the ordinary rules of morality, by all means get rid of him. But if he has done no more than any honest man who was