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Civil Service Government by Commission

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(Final Instalment).

The first article of this series appeared in *The Civilian* of Dec. 12, the second on Jan. 9, the third on Jan. 23. The present article concludes the series, under the following sub-headings:—Section 8, Third Division, Quarterly Reports, Section 33, Section 21, and Special Competitive Examinations.

Section 8.

Messrs. Adam Shortt and Michel G. LaRochelle became a power in the civil service on the 1st Sept., 1908, with joint and equal status and jurisdiction. As has been already mentioned, neither of these gentlemen had been connected with the special business they had been called upon to administer. Nevertheless, the Commissioners were not lacking in intelligence. Therefore it is natural to surmise what might have been the first proposition to suggest itself as being essential to a logical beginning of their task. Even as indifferent observers, for many years, from the outside, they must have become cognizant of the conglomerate condition of the system. For forty-one years the civil service had had a career of "go as you please," each department a little kingdom conducted without due regard to duplication of work or the anomalous overlapping of duties. Three courses were open:—1st, stipulate for an immediate re-adjustment of duties and salaries, etc.; 2nd, spread the re-adjustment over a term of years, doing a little re-modelling from day to day; 3rd, accept the system unconditionally as it stood, with all its imperfections and inequalities.

Animated by the first alternative as

above, the Commissioners would open communication with the government; reminding them that re-organization as well as re-classification was intended by section 8 according to Mr. Fisher, the father of the bill. They would quote section 8 of the Act to the following effect:

"As soon as practicable after the coming into force of the Act, the head of each department shall cause the organization of his department to be determined and defined by order-in-council, due regard being had to the status of each officer or clerk as the case may be."

Clause 2 of this section refers to "duties, titles and salaries thereafter to pertain thereto."

They would clearly point out the difficulty of making a smooth running machine out of the collection of clanking wheels, engines without a governor, bolts without nuts, sledges used as tack hammers, and vice versa. But instead of presenting this view, the third alternative, the easiest way, was adopted, and the inequalities are still with us. No investigation was made of men or of work; few visits were made to the departments to learn at first hand of the actual conditions in the rank and file of the service.

Did the government decline to permit re-organization? Were the Com-