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The New Era

A Review With Comments of the New Civil Service Measure.

For many weeks the minds of all have been on the tip-toe of expectation over the re-organization of the public service, which everyone sees to be inevitable. But events have moved slowly. Despite the official announcement that the Bill would be brought down early last week, day has succeeded day without the long-wished result. A decided fillip, however, was added by the recent publication in the city newspapers of an alleged account of the Bill. The prevailing opinion is that this information, although seemingly unofficial, is mainly authentic. Under the circumstances, of course, anything like a comprehensive review of the measure is impossible, and even were the Bill itself available it could not properly be treated of within the limits of space afforded by a single issue. To attempt a review at the present stage may lay one open to the risk of being classed with those who "see a little, presume a great deal, and so rush to the conclusion." It is proposed, nevertheless, to use the published accounts as a basis for review. After all, the various topics touched upon below are of perennial interest. Let it be clearly understood that this re-organization of the civil service will determine its destiny as a service for a long future period.

In judging of the merits of any constructive measure, we must never for a moment lose sight of the defects intended to be cured thereby. What then are the chief evils, putative or real, now existing in the service? (1) Patronage, both in appointments and

promotions; (2) defective entrance requirements and, apart from condition one, a bad system of promotion; (3) an outworn system of classification, restrictive and artificial in the highest degree; (4) inadequate remuneration—both generally with reference to changed economic conditions, and specifically as regards individuals whose duties are onerous and responsible. To sum up all of these defects in a single one, it may be said that under the present system merit is not encouraged, and that mediocrity flourishes like the green bay tree.

Now the new measure proposes to cure the first two evils by giving jurisdiction over appointments and promotions to two permanent commissioners. Whether it is the intention to reserve to the government of the day the power of making direct appointments in any great number of cases does not appear. It may, however, be predicted with confidence that if the spirit of regulation by commission is adhered to—such regulation being founded upon a judicious examination system—a new order of things will gradually but surely supervene. Concerning examinations, a few words will be said under that sub-head. But at this point we desire to emphasize the need of having commissioners who will not be figureheads, but men of their hands, with an eye single to the good of the service; forceful, workful men, maintaining themselves free of improper influences, political, official or social, able to sift and re-sift,