

silk, and when the grits succeed to office that their friends shall succeed at the bar, and, all events, we have an intelligible system. But, if merit is to be the ground, who is to award the prize? It is safe to say that the Governor General and his Council are seldom, if ever, personally aware of the respective abilities of those who are in daily competition at the bar, and yet they are those who decide the question. If the matter were as easy of decision as a horse-race, by all means let there be an annual contest, and let the best man get his reward. But, in so doubtful a matter as legal ability, who can decide? What is the criterion? Is it success? That comes sometimes without learning. Is it learning? That may exist without success. Is it both learning and success? Then what degree of each? Twenty briefs at an assizes, with fifteen wins to five losses? There is no gauge, and from the leaders to the duffers the gradation is so insensible that there must always be great difference of opinion as to the proper order of merit. It will not do to let the judges make the selection—although they are the most competent to do it—for they must keep themselves free from the suspicion of favoritism. It would disturb the harmonious relations of the bar to place the matter in the hands of practitioners, or the Law Society. Practically, those with influence at Ottawa, dispense the patronage, and usually the list is absurd and indefensible.

We object to the system because it gives one barrister a factitious importance and dignity over his fellows. If nature has endowed him with greater ability or industry, that is no reason why the Government should add to his advantages, and, if his inclinations are political rather than professional, he should look for political and not professional rewards.

We object to the system also, because it is carried out at the expense of jealousy, ill-feeling, and heart-burning, and because it subserves no useful purpose. What propriety is there in exalting one man and, in consequence, relatively depressing another? Till nature changes, favored elevation will turn conceit into superciliousness, and slights will discourage and dishearten all but the most indomitable.