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## \* Patronage in the Service of Great Britain and Ireland

BY A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT.

The Average Civil Servant is Disgusted to find that, no Matter how Capable and Industrious he may be, the Door to the best Appointments is Banged in his Face. Why? Simply because the "Plums" of the Service are Reserved for men with friends in High Places, Irrespective of Ability. A Royal Commission is Enquiring—with the haste for which Royal Commissions are noted—into the methods by which the best Civil Service posts are filled, and will Report in a year or two. Meanwhile, "The London Magazine" has conducted an enquiry of its own, with the Result Printed Below.

The late John Bright once said that the public service was a gigantic system of outdoor relief for the sons of the aristocracy. Sixty years ago the scandal of filling the superior posts in the public service by the incompetent sons of people with political influence, and the lower posts with the sons of butlers and gamekeepers, had become so grave, and the inefficiency of the service had become so serious, that an enquiry was instituted into the whole internal conditions of the State Departments.

This committee reported that the system of patronage by which the posts in the public service had up to that time been universally filled had resulted in filling the government offices with unambitious, indolent and incapable men, who had been put there because they had not the ability to succeed in the open professions where they would have to encounter the competition of their contemporaries, or because they were too indolent of temperament for active exertion. The system of patronage was used to put such men into well-paid government posts, where they obtained a comfortable

livelihood with very little labour and with no risk.

The outcome of this enquiry was the partial adoption of the system of open competition, which has been gradually extended until to-day the majority of the posts in the public service are filled as the result of competitive examinations at which all persons within certain limits of age may sit. But privilege is hard to kill, and the privileged classes have been loth to part with the privilege of putting their friends into snug government berths.

### "Open Competition" a Mere Farce

Though the majority of the posts in the Civil Service are now filled by open competition, it is not the fact, by any means, that the public service has become a democratic institution, and that merit and good work are the qualities which ensure success and advancement. Those

\*The *Civilian* has dealt in previous articles with "Patronage" in the Canadian and United States services. As indicated in the last number, some of the conditions in the service of Great Britain and Ireland are herewith presented to *Civilian* readers. Hereafter the Editors will deal with the whole question editorially.