

THE CIVILIAN

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CRITICISM OF THE INCREASE.

In our last issue we published a letter from a French correspondent, "X," which was devoted to criticism of the proposed cost of living increase. We published it primarily as a good example of the kind of ingenuity in finding fault which ought not to be engaging the civil service mind at the present moment, and which, we believe, as a matter of fact, is not so engaging it. But it may serve as text for a word or two of analysis and explanation.

In the first place, no one in casting up the benefits which the new Act confers is entitled to consider it solely by itself. It is not an independent piece

of legislation, but is wholly and frankly a complement or supplement of the Act of 1908. Criticism, therefore, upon the ground that the new act does not grant a permanent increase because a clerk will reach his maximum anyway, is, in the final resort, criticism not of the act, but of the principle of dividing the service into classes having a maximum reached by a series of advances.

This will be made clear by an example :

A clerk at present at \$900 goes at once by the new act to \$1,050. He thence proceeds by stages of \$50 to \$1,200. For four successive years he is accordingly better off by \$150. For the fifth year he is \$100 to the good, for the sixth \$50, and thereafter he receives the same as if the act had never been. Altogether he has received \$750 over and above what he would have received had the act never been passed. On the other hand, a clerk at \$1,000 by the same process of reasoning profits for only four years and to the extent of only \$450, while a clerk at \$1,100 profits for only two years and to the extent of only \$150. And at once the exclamation is: what inequality!

But is the above common sense? We think not. As well blame the oxygen of the air because one cannot wash one's hands in it, though it is a constituent of water. The common sense view of the past year's salary changes in the civil service is simply this, (and it requires no lengthier statement): that everybody (i.e., 98% of the service) gets a permanent increase of at least \$100, while a number get an increase of \$150 for the two, three or four years which must pass until they reach their maximum and share the general rate of advance. There is here no great inequality, surely every one will ad-