

THE CIVILIAN

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Ottawa, June 19th, 1908

NEMO SIBI VIVIT.

If ever there was a time in the history of the civil service that calls for broad-mindedness of outlook on the part of all concerned, it is the present. "There is a tide in the affairs of men"—we know the rest, as Byron says. Beginning a year ago in a somewhat mild impression on the part of the government, that civil service conditions might possibly require adjustment to the altered scale and expenses of living, the tide has continuously risen since until the full flood of complete re-organization and reform is now upon us. It is the greatest opportunity in the history of the service. Correspondingly great are the responsibilities involved.

To speak of opportunity and responsibility is at once to suggest the question: for whom? The obvious answer in the present case is,

of course, for Parliament — for the representatives of the people led by the government whose interests in the capacity of employers are those most vitally concerned. But we believe that the service, too, handicapped though it is by the adverse conditions under which it has grown into being, must no less try to rise to the occasion. Let us develop both these points of view a very little.

To the government the problem or the hour is of the most practical. It must fashion an instrument to carry on the business of the country in the very best way that shall be possible. The supreme test of the civil service must be its efficiency. But the service is not a machine, amenable to only one kind of motive power. It is a sharply differentiated body of men, of highly specialized duties, and though the country's claims are paramount in the present issue, it is not to be thought that the service as it stands has no rights that must be taken into account. The government, however, will do its duty to the service no less than to the country if it bears in mind throughout the work of reconstruction the high calling that, rightly considered, belongs to the civil servant. If work be honest and honourable everywhere, let it be thought to have some added virtue when it is done for our country. We see something of this in the case of the soldier. Perhaps no better example of how differently the civil servant is regarded could be cited than the frequent holding up of the business world as a model to which apparently the government should be satisfied to bow the knee. Is the potency of "pull" complained of? At once we are told that in a bank the clerk who has an uncle on the directorate gets his managership more easily than another. But how unhappy is the pass to which we are come when the service can be thought sufficient if it measures up to the standards of the business world. The business world has a safety valve in the pressure of competition that the