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“Dead Ends in the Civil Service.”

Under the title of “We Who May Not Work,” a Civil Servant contributes the following interesting article to the February “World’s Work,” referring to the Service in the United Kingdom, but with a general significance for readers of *The Civilian*:

“The findings of the Civil Service Commission, all of them important, and many of them satisfactory to Civil Servants as a whole,” says the writer, “leave yet a great field of interest to myself and most of my fellow Civil Servants almost unexplored. It is that of the labour of the Civil Servant, and the question is not of the labourer being worthy of his hire, but of the labour being worthy of the labourer.

“The whole matter needs far more drastic treatment than was suggested by the Commission, with their vague recommendations of differentiation between grades. For I know well that most of my colleagues think, as I do myself, that we have got into a blind alley as regards use and development.

“My complaint is to be somewhat unique, as it does not touch the question of money, except in so far as the amount of my salary is justified by the work I do. In common with thousands of my class, what I feel most in regard to existence in the Civil Service is that my possibilities have been wasted, my initiative sapped, my energies checked, my knowledge and abilities frittered away in a meaningless round of ill-arranged and often unnecessary labour. The result of six years’ officialdom is that I have not merely stagnated—in many

important matters I have retrograded.

“I can truly say that only once since my first six months has any part of my somewhat rigorous early training been justified in the slightest degree. For the rest, it has been assumed that I possess a vacuity so amiable as to render me a contented sorter and numberer of papers, a maker of obvious comments about unimportant matters on routine papers—and these have had to be countersigned by chiefs—an adder-up of figures, and a mere copyist; in short, a performer of drudgery which a boy of fifteen could achieve in a better handwriting.

“All through I have needed less initiative than a bootblack, since he, at any rate, has the choice of blacking and the personal interest of attracting customers in the first place.

“So far from being unique my case follows the general rule. I have discovered men of forty acknowledging letters by means of cards, work usually given to freshly arrived office-boys in outside firms, work which, of course, could not compare with some I had done in my first year, and for which they were receiving well over £200 a year. Looked at from the obvious standpoint of waste of men, the position is appalling. Some outsiders, doing routine work for a low wage, may say that these men were lucky to get such an easy job, but no business man, who takes pride in thinking for himself, will support that view.

“THE ‘CAREER.’

“Let us consider the matter from the ‘career’ standpoint, which means