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Lord Haldane on Educational Tests.

The question as to whether a high educational qualification or even any educational qualification is desirable in the Canadian service is often debated by its members. Lord Haldane, on the occasion of his being installed Chancellor of Bristol University, touched on this question. The address was published in the London Times, from which the following is excerpted. — (Editors.)

“It is felt, and felt rightly, that the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge have had an undue advantage in the higher civil service. They continue to fill a very large proportion of the vacancies. The fact that this is so, is because Oxford and Cambridge until now have proved to be the best training places for the candidates is not altogether an answer to the complaint. Education quite as good for the purpose might be given elsewhere. But such education, to be sufficient, must be of a high order. After a good deal of observation, both while I was at the bar and while I was in charge of an administrative department, I have come to the conclusion that as a general rule the most stimulating and useful preparation for the general work of the higher civil service is a literary training, and that of this a classical education is for most men the best form, though not exclusively so. No doubt men vary, and science or modern literature may develop the mind, in the case of those who have aptitude for them, better than Latin or Greek literature. But, as Goethe said long ago, the object of education ought to be rather to form tastes than simply to communicate knowledge. The pedant is not of much use in the conduct of public affairs. For the formation of tastes and of the intellectual habits and aptitudes

which the love of learning produces the atmosphere of a highly organized university life is a tremendous power, and we cannot do without it. And therefore, while I am not without sympathy with the complaint of democracy that the entrance to the higher positions in the civil service is by far too much the monopoly of a class, I reply that a highly educated clerk is essential for a particular kind of work which the state needs. The remedy must not be to displace the class which furnishes the supply. Democracy is apt in its earlier stages to be unduly jealous, and to try to drag things down to a level which, because it is the general level, is in danger of being too low to provide the highest talent. The remedy for what is a real grievance appears to me to be that democracy should add a new plank to its platform, and insist on equality of opportunity in education as something that should be within the reach of every youth and maiden. That more than a comparatively small minority will prove capable of taking advantage of the highest education is unlikely. We are not all born with the same capacity. But that many will seize on a new opportunity who are at present shut out is to my mind certain. And if democracy will abandon the suggestion that the highest work can be done without the highest educational preparation for it, I