

**THE CIVIL SERVICE OF
THE CROWN. ITS RISE
AND ITS CONSTITUTION**

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The Civil Service of the Crown. Its Rise and Its Constitution by William Charles Bryant

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BY

WILLIAM CHARLES BRYANT

(WAR OFFICE).



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P R E F A C E.

THE history of the rise of imperial administration in Great Britain, and the analysis of its constitution, which will be found in the following pages, originally appeared in the *Westminster Review* in two articles, intituled "The Civil Service," which were written as a Commentary on the Reports of The Civil Service Inquiry Commission, 1875.

These articles are reproduced, with material additions, in the shape of a text-book of public administration; a work which, it is hoped, will prove of interest not only to persons within the official pale, and to the politicians who, as the

reward of a political career, are intrusted for a brief period in turn with the supreme control of administration, but, likewise, to all who, by the exercise of the suffrage, take a part in the conduct of public business, and are responsible for the efficiency of its discharge to the country and to posterity.

LONDON,
July, 1876.

THE
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I.

"THE STATE" has been defined, by an eminent political writer* of our day, to be "the collective action of the nation." The correctness of Mr. Greg's definition of the term, under the conditions of modern life, has been verified with such startling

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1. First, Second, and Third Reports of the Civil Service Inquiry Commission, 1875.
 2. Orders in Council, 27th February and 15th April 1795, 23rd January 1799, 18th February 1801, 12th October 1803, 10th May 1809, 24th July 1817, 27th March 1822, 21st May 1855, 26th April 1862, 4th June 1870, 12th February 1876.
 3. Calendars of State Papers, . Privy Council Proceedings, Parliamentary Returns.
 4. Parliamentary Estimates: Army, Navy, Civil Services and Revenue Departments, 1850, 1856, and 1876.

* "Social and Literary Judgments." W. R. Greg.

reality by the events of recent years in neighbouring countries, that his words suggest a text for inviting attention to the machinery by means of which "the collective action of the nation" is placed in operation in the United Kingdom.

The business of a community is the business of the units of the community collectively. The conduct of that business is a matter in which every unit has a direct and a personal interest. For the expenses of its administration, to apply the *argumentum ad hominem* that rarely fails to quicken the attention of Englishmen, a portion of the earnings or of the income of each is annually exacted. The efficiency of its administration is, accordingly, a matter to which the nation is bound to look, as the discharge of public business is the stewardship of the affairs of the community, and we have to pay for it in hard cash.

But, strong as its claims upon public attention may be, in the interests of the community, the time and attention of the units are too absorbed by matters with a stronger claim upon individual attention, as touching immediate interests, to allow of much

thought being given by the public generally to the subject. Political thinkers are, in general, too taken up with schemes for the nation's regeneration to devote much consideration to the administration of the country's business, and, in contemplating the ends, overlook the means.

The public system under which we live is a machinery so complicated that its details can only be mastered after a long apprenticeship to the work of the State. A superficial glance is the utmost that the generality of us are able, possibly willing, to give to the subject. And yet a recognition of the fact that public administration is the practical application of the wisdom of the Legislature, and the carrying out of the fiat of the country, may awaken a feeling of surprise that so little is generally known of the machinery by means of which we apply "the collective action of the nation."

The proud boast of freedom, that submission to authority is "obedience flowing from opinion," is indelibly imprinted on English life. Our statesmen have adopted the axiom that crime is only ignorance. Mr. Mill taught his age that the correct principle of

government is the concentration of all information, and the utmost possible diffusion of it from the centre. If these postulates be conceded, it follows that authority exists in our midst for the maintenance of order by dispelling ignorance ; and, consequently, that the first duty of government is the enlightenment of the community.

But government, though vested in the Sovereign, is practically applied by the Legislature through the Ministry to which Parliament may, for the time being, intrust power. Authority, exercised in the name of the Sovereign, is practically vested in the executive staff of the nation.

With the Estates lies the high mission of framing laws for the conduct of the community. Upon the executive devolves the work of their application to the units. The country intrusts to Parliament the sacred privilege of opening the national purse ; it assigns to the executive the responsible duty of raising and disbursing the moneys which Parliament may award each year to the Sovereign for meeting the requirements of the Empire.

Such a machinery of government is a system of