

"Yes, John, yes; I promised you."

"When I come back from this voyage?"

"Yes, John, when you will," I said; and with one long hand-pressure we parted, and I went back to wait for another month, and then I was his happy little wife.

And there seemed no change, for I was once more on the river, or out at sea, leaning upon the tiller, and gazing straight before me, with the gulls wailing as they wheeled, and dipped, and skimmed, or settled upon

the water; while the soft wind gently stirred the print hood that was lightly tied over my wind-ruffled hair. Only a bargeman's young wife living on the tide, but very happy; for John often points to the great ships that pass us, with their captains in their gold-laced caps, and as he does so he whispers—

"Not with the best among them, Prue, not with the best; I wouldn't even change places with a king."

"And if he is as happy as I, dear John is right."

GEO. MANVILLE FENN.

CLERKSHIPS IN THE CUSTOMS.

IN the desperate and constantly renewed struggles between king and Parliament for the power of the purse, that portion of the revenue which was derived from the duties levied upon merchandise exported and imported was claimed for the king on several grounds. The king, it was said, gave leave to his subject to leave his dominions, and take his merchandise with him; upon the king devolved the duty of maintaining the ports and harbours, and suppressing piracy; and, finally, at a later period, it was said that he had inherited these imposts by immemorial usage and the common law, and they were termed the hereditary *Customs* of the crown. They have even been traced back to Ethelred the Unready, who levied tolls at Billingsgate on all ships entering the Port of London; but whether the bad language proverbially attributed to that locality is in any way connected with the arrangement, I do not know; it does not seem improbable. So entirely were the Customs assumed at one time to be the sole property of the reigning sovereign that he used sometimes to mortgage them, at others to farm them out; but this system was finally abolished, and Commissioners for the collection of import duties appointed in 1671. After the power of Parliament over this branch of taxation had been fully established, it still retained its old name of Customs Duties. The term now applies solely to the tax levied on imported commodities, all other branches of the national income coming under the head of Inland Revenue.

In 1671 Commissioners were appointed for the collection of Customs Duties; but the reign of Charles II. was not a favourable period for the establishment of new Government Offices. The king set the example of an utter and cynical indifference to the first principles of honesty where the manipulation of public money was concerned, and the heads of Departments did not see any necessity for being more particular than the sovereign, the fountain of honour himself. The first Commissioners were mere sycophants, who exacted large fees for doing nothing, while the official duties were really performed by deputies and clerks; and so firm a root do abuses strike, that this one was not plucked up for nearly a century and a half, when at length in 1812 all patent offices were abolished, fixed salaries were substituted for payments by fees, and Commissioners who actually did their

work were appointed. But there was still plenty of room for reform, and in 1825 Mr. Hume put his shoulder to the wheel. His task was no light one, for no fewer than 443 Acts of Parliament were repealed and consolidated into eleven.

The Custom House, like all other Government Offices just now, is in a transition state, so far as the organisation of its staff is concerned. Up to 1870, a young man who wished to be employed upon it had to get a nomination from the Secretary of the Treasury, who gave these nominations to Members of Parliament who supported his party, and the Members of Parliament in turn gave them to those electors who took a prominent part in securing their return. This system, though sufficiently open to satirical comment, was not calculated to act badly. The local magnates who busy themselves about political matters are generally the most active and energetic persons in the place, and as their children are likely to inherit their industrious qualities, the country had a good chance of being well served. We have changed all that, however, and the clerkships are now thrown open to public competition, but since this has been the case a variety of schemes have been proposed and partially tried, and we seem to be far from the final adjustment yet.

As this paper is intended principally to afford information to those who are thinking of entering the Customs, it will be better to commence with a statement of what offices there are in that branch of the Public Service, making no apology for the dryness of the details. First of all, then, comes the—

SUPERINTENDING ESTABLISHMENT.

THE BOARD.

| | | | |
|----------------------------|-----|--------|----------------|
| 1 Chairman, at a salary of | ... | ... | £2,000 a year. |
| 1 Deputy Chairman | " | ... | 1,500 " |
| 2 Commissioners | " | (each) | 1,200 " |

SECRETARY'S OFFICE.

1 Secretary, £1,200. After 5 years' service, £1,400.

| | Annual | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|------------|----------|-----|--------|
| | Minimum. | Increment. | Maximum. | | |
| 1 Assistant Secretary..... | £800 | ... | £25 | ... | £1,000 |
| 3 Committee Clerks (each)..... | 600 | ... | 25 | ... | 700 |
| 4 Principal Clerks | 420 | ... | 20 | ... | 550 |

CLERKS FOR GENERAL DUTY.

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----------|
| 6 1st class (each) | | £280 | ... | £15 | ... | £400 |
| 8 2nd class " | | 100 | ... | 10 | ... | 270 |
| 3 Writers " | | 5s. a day | ... | ... | ... | 8s. a day |

(A Principal Clerk is paid £120 a year as Assessor of Income Tax, and a Clerk of the 1st class is paid £50 a year for assisting the Assessor.)

| | Minimum. | Annual Increment. | Maximum. |
|----------------------------------|----------|---|----------|
| 1 Housekeeper and Storekeeper... | ... | ... | £200 |
| 2 Doorkeepers (each)..... | ... | ... | 100 |
| 1 House Porter | ... | ... | 80 |
| 2 Surveyors-General (each) | 800 | 25 | 1,000 |
| 1 Surveyor for Buildings..... | 400 | £50 after 5 years' and £100 after 10 years' service | |

DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTANT AND CONTROLLER-GENERAL.

| | | | |
|--|-----------|-----|---------------|
| 1 Accountant and Controller-General ... | ... | ... | £1,000 |
| 1 Assistant ditto ditto | 600 | 25 | 700 |
| 3 Principal Clerks, 1st sect. (each) | 470 | 20 | 550 |
| 3 " " 2nd " " | 380 | 15 | 450 |
| 10 Clerks, 1st class (each) | 250 | 15 | 350 |
| 24 " 2nd " " | 80 | 10 | 240 |
| 27 Writers (each) | 5s. a day | ... | 8s. 6d. a day |

An annual sum of £50 is also distributed among the clerks who are engaged in the collection of the Income Tax.

STATISTICAL DEPARTMENT.

| | | | |
|--|-----------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1 Principal..... | £800 | £25 | £900 |
| 1 Assistant Principal | 550 | 20 | 650 |
| 2 Principal Clerks, 1st sect. (each) | 450 | 20 | 530 |
| " " 2nd " " | 380 | 15 | 440 |
| 18 Clerks, 1st class (each) | 250 | 10 | 340 |
| 38 " 2nd " " | 80 | By £5 for 2 years, afterwards by £10 | 190 |
| 20 Writers (each) | 5s. a day | ... | 8s. 6d. a day |

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PORT OF LONDON.

LONG ROOM.

| | | | |
|--|-----------|-----|---------------|
| 1 Collector..... | ... | ... | £1,000 |
| 1 Assistant..... | 600 | 25 | 700 |
| 3 Principal Clerks, 1st sect. (each) | 470 | 20 | 550 |
| 6 " " 2nd " " | 380 | 15 | 450 |
| 13 Clerks, 1st class (each) | 250 | 15 | 350 |
| 27 " 2nd " " | 80 | 10 | 240 |
| 10 Writers (each) | 5s. a day | ... | 8s. 6d. a day |

DEPARTMENT OF PRINCIPAL SEARCHER AND JERQUER.

| | | | |
|---|-----------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1 Principal Searcher | £550 | £20 | £650 |
| 1 Principal Clerk, 1st sect. | 450 | 20 | 530 |
| 2 " " 2nd " (each) | 380 | 15 | 440 |
| 13 Clerks, 1st class (each) | 250 | 10 | 340 |
| 26 " 2nd " " | 80 | By £5 for 2 years, afterwards by £10 | 240 |
| 5 Extra Clerks (each)..... | ... | ... | ... |
| 11 Writers | 5s. a day | ... | 8s. 6d. a day |
| 7 Writers for jerquing Free Goods in Registrar's Offices... | ... | ... | ... |

WAREHOUSING DEPARTMENT—CENTRAL OFFICE.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1 Controller of Accounts | £550 | £20 | £650 |
| 1 Assistant ditto | 450 | 20 | 530 |
| 1 Principal Clerk, 1st sect..... | 450 | 20 | 530 |
| 5 " " 2nd " (each) | 380 | 15 | 440 |
| 27 Clerks, 1st class (each) | 250 | 10 | 340 |
| 53 " 2nd " " | 80 | By £5 for 2 years, afterwards by £10 | 240 |
| 5 Extra Clerks (each)..... | ... | ... | ... |
| 22 Writers | 5s. a day | ... | 8s. 6d. a day |

OFFICE FOR WET GOODS, LONDON DOCKS.

| | | | |
|--|-----------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1 Controller of Accounts..... | £550 | £20 | £650 |
| 1 Assistant Controller of Accounts | 450 | 20 | 530 |
| 4 Principal Clerks, 2nd sect. (each) | 380 | 15 | 440 |
| 18 Clerks, 1st class (each)..... | 250 | 10 | 340 |
| 34 " 2nd " " | 80 | By £5 for 2 years, afterwards by £10 | 240 |
| 1 Extra Clerk | ... | ... | ... |
| 20 Writers (each) | 5s. a day | ... | 8s. 6d. a day |

OFFICE FOR TEA.

| | | | |
|--|-----------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1 Controller of Accounts..... | £550 | £20 | £650 |
| 1 Assistant Controller of Accounts | 450 | 20 | 530 |
| 4 Principal Clerks, 2nd sect. (each) | 380 | 15 | 440 |
| 18 Clerks, 1st class (each) | 250 | 10 | 340 |
| 34 " 2nd " " | 80 | By £5 for 2 years, afterwards by £10 | 240 |
| 1 Extra Clerk..... | ... | ... | ... |
| 20 Writers (each) | 5s. a day | ... | 8s. 6d. a day |

The establishment of the Port of Liverpool is of the next importance to that of the Port of London, the number of employes there being 770, the pay of the clerks averaging about £10 a year less than that of those holding corresponding situations at the central establishment. Of establishments other than London and Liverpool, there are 130 ports and creeks, employing 2,147 officers. Of these, Glasgow, Hull, Southampton, Belfast, Bristol, have about the largest staffs. There are also four inland bonding towns, Manchester finding occupation for eleven officials, Bradford and Leeds for five each, and Halifax for three.

A Custom-house official is entitled to retire on a superannuation allowance at the age of sixty; if he wishes to retire under that age he must prove himself medically unfit. Then, if he is recommended, the Treasury grants him a retiring allowance after the following rate:—after ten years' service, ten-sixtieths of his salary; after eleven years, eleven-sixtieths, and so on up to forty years, but no advance on forty-sixtieths. A clerk who is temporarily disabled from attending to his duties must send in a medical certificate every week. If his illness extends to six months he is put on half-pay. At the end of a year he is called on to retire on superannuation allowance. The official hours are from ten to four; on Saturdays, ten to two in the Secretary's Department. Thirty-two days' leave of absence is granted in the course of the year. Christmas Day, Good Friday, and the Queen's birthday are fixed holidays.

Thus you see there are a good many berths in the Customs, some of them pretty comfortable; the question remains, How are you to secure one of them? Simply by going in for a public examination, and getting enough marks to make you a successful candidate.

How are you to find out when and where this examination takes place? By applying to the Civil Service Commissioners, Cannon Row, Westminster. Either call at the office in person or write.

I wish I could tell proposing candidates something more definite than I can about the Examinations, but the earnest inquirer is met by this answer:—

"NOTE.—The Scheme of Examination for Clerks, Class I., in the Civil Service, and the Schemes for Men Clerks and Boy Clerks of the Lower Division, are now in force; but the retention or alteration of all other Schemes of Examination for Clerks must depend upon the extent to which the provisions of the Order in Council of February 15th, 1876, are carried out in the several Departments."

Now, the Scheme of Examination for Clerks, Class I. of the Higher Division, lies before me, but it would only be confusing to give it here, for it is not, at present at least, of practical application to the Customs Service. The Lower Division Examinations apply to certain branches, and will be treated of presently; but the information which would be most useful to us is the Scheme for Class II. of the Higher Division, which is not at present settled.

The clearest way will be to designate the various Departments in the Customs, and give that information which is to be had about them.

I. Clerks in the Solicitor's Office. Age, 20 and 30.

SUBJECTS OF EXAMINATION.

OBLIGATORY.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Handwriting. | ings before Justices of the Peace. |
| 2. Orthography. | 6. Law of Evidence. |
| 3. Arithmetic (including vulgar and decimal fractions). | 7. Common Law Procedure and Practice. |
| 4. English Composition. | 8. Elements of Conveyancing. |
| 5. Criminal Law, and Proceed- | |
| | OPTIONAL. |
| 9. Geography. | 14. Equity, and Practice of the Courts. |
| 10. English History. | 15. Bankruptcy, and Practice of the Courts. |
| 11. Latin. | |
| 12. French or German. | |
| 13. Mercantile Bookkeeping. | |

II. Other Clerks, *i.e.*, all those before enumerated as working in the Secretary's and other Departments. These are included in Class II., and the Scheme with regard to them has not yet been finally decided upon, Application must be made to the Civil Service Commissioners for information as to the steps to be taken for the Competitive Examination that will admit to them. Clerks of the Lower Division have received appointments in this Department, but that is an exception and not a rule. The limits of age in Class I. are 18 and 24, and the same rule might probably apply to Class II., but this is only a suggestion.

III. Draughtsmen for Tonnage. Scheme not yet arranged.

IV. Out-door Officers. Limit of age, 19 and 25.

SUBJECTS OF EXAMINATION.

| | Marks. | | Marks. |
|----------------|---------|---|---------|
| 1. Handwriting | ... 200 | 3. Arithmetic (to vulgar and decimal fractions) | ... 300 |
| 2. Orthography | ... 200 | 4. English Composition | ... 200 |

Fee to be paid, 15s.

V. Messengers: limit of age, 20 and 35. Housekeepers: 25 and 45.

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|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Reading. | 3. Arithmetic (the first four rules). |
| 2. Writing. | |

VI. Watermen, Boatmen, Watchmen, House Porters at Dublin, and Quarantine Mariners: limitation of age, 20 and 30. Quarantine Boys: 14 and 16.

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|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Reading. | 2. Writing. |
|-------------|-------------|

We now come to the Open Competitive Examinations for Men Clerkships of the Lower Division in the Civil Service. Limit of age, 17 and 20.

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION.

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|-----------------|--|
| 1. Handwriting. | 3. Arithmetic (to vulgar and decimal fractions). |
| 2. Orthography. | |
- Fee, 15s.

COMPETITION.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Handwriting. | 7. Copying MS. (to test accuracy). |
| 2. Orthography. | 8. English History. |
| 3. Arithmetic. | 9. English Composition. |
| 4. Geography. | 10. Bookkeeping. |
| 5. Indexing or Docketing. | |
| 6. Digesting Returns into Summaries. | |
- Fee, 5s.

There is also an Open Competitive Examination for Boy Clerkships in the Lower Division. Limit of age, 15 and 17.

SUBJECTS OF EXAMINATION.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Handwriting. | 4. Copying MS. (to test accuracy). |
| 2. Orthography. | 5. English Composition. |
| 3. Arithmetic (including fractions). | 6. Geography. |
- Fee, 10s.

No candidate will be eligible who does not satisfy the Civil Service Commissioners of his competency in subjects 1, 2, and 3.

Temporary Men Copyists. Age, over 18.

SUBJECTS OF EXAMINATION.

OBLIGATORY.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. Handwriting. | 4. Copying figures and tabular statements. |
| 2. Orthography. | |
| 3. Copying MS. | |

OPTIONAL.

5. Arithmetic.
Fee, 5s.

Temporary Boy Copyists. Age, 14 to 18.

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Handwriting. | 3. Elementary Arithmetic. |
| 2. Orthography. | |
- Fee, 2s. 6d.

Temporary Men Messengers are examined in Reading and Writing, and pay a fee of 2s. 6d. They must be over 20, and must have served in the Army or Navy, or Royal Irish Constabulary, or London Metropolitan Police, and must be in receipt of a pension for life.

Temporary Boy Messengers are examined in Reading and Writing, and pay a fee of 1s.

From the above list of examinations, a detail of the one which would directly affect the majority of those who seek information on the subject is necessarily absent, as has been explained. But the General Regulations with regard to it are still in force, and had better be appended.

"1. Competitive examinations of candidates for various situations or classes of situations, in the different public Departments, will be held from time to time at such places as may be deemed expedient. Before every such examination, Special Regulations will be issued, in which the particular conditions of the competition will be specified. At each examination such a number of candidates will be selected as may be necessary to fill the situations which may have been reported to the Civil Service Commissioners as vacant up to the date at which the result of the examination is declared.

"2. These examinations will be open, with such exceptions and under such conditions as may be laid down, to all natural-born subjects of Her Majesty, being of good health and character.

"3. Persons actually serving in the Army or Navy will not be admitted to compete for situations in the Civil Service.

"4. Engineer Students in Her Majesty's Dockyards will not be eligible to compete, unless they obtain the express consent of the Lords of the Admiralty to their presenting themselves as candidates.

"5. Members of the Royal Irish Constabulary, of less than 12 years' service, will not be admitted to any open competition until they have resigned their appointments in that force, unless the Inspector-General of Constabulary shall otherwise recommend.

"6. Persons who have commuted any pension other than Naval retired pay, either alone or in conjunction with a pension for wounds, or a pension for wounds alone, either in the Naval or Military Service, will not be admitted to compete for situations in the Civil Service.

"7. Any person who, after succeeding in any examination held under these Regulations, may have declined to accept the situation offered him in accordance with their provisions, or who may have accepted such a situation, and passed into actual employment in the Civil Service, will be disqualified for admission to any subsequent competition for the same situation or class of situations.

"8. Persons already in the Public Service will not be eligible unless they shall have produced to the Civil Service Commissioners, at least one week before the competitive examination, the written permission of the authorities of the Department in which they are serving to attend the examination.

"9. Candidates who have served as pupil-teachers or schoolmasters in schools under inspection by the Committee of Council on Education, England, or by the Commissioners of National Education, Ireland, will be reported specially to those Departments; and such of them as have been trained in normal schools, at the public expense, will not be qualified to receive appointments in the Civil Service until the

consent of those Departments, given in conformity with rules sanctioned by the Lords of the Treasury, has been notified to the Civil Service Commissioners.

"10. In reckoning age for competition, the following allowances will be made, viz.—(1) Members of the Military and Naval Services (whether commissioned or non-commissioned) may deduct from their actual age any time during which they have served. (2) Persons who have served for two full consecutive years (a) in any Civil situation to which they were admitted with the Certificate of the Civil Service Commissioners, (b) in the Royal Irish Constabulary, or (c) as Registered Writers in connection with the Civil Service, may deduct from their actual age any time not exceeding five years which they may have spent in such service.

"11. If at any examination two or more situations—whether in the same or in different Departments—shall be offered for competition, the successful candidates will be permitted to choose in their order as determined by the competitive examination among the situations offered for competition. If there be a vacant situation for which no one of the selected candidates is duly qualified, the Civil Service Commissioners may offer it to the candidate highest at the time on the list of selected candidates, subject to his passing a qualifying examination within such period as they may determine; or they may reserve it to be filled by a subsequent open competition, or otherwise, as they may see fit."

These Regulations, which apply to the Second Class of the Higher Division, are, as has been said, liable to alteration at any time. But the Regulations respecting competitive examinations for clerkships in the Lower Division of the Civil Service are fixed by an Order in Council of February 12th, 1876.

So far as regards the eligibility or non-eligibility of candidates, they coincide with the Regulations given above; but there are other items of information contained in them, applying solely to the Lower Division Examinations, which it may be useful to specify.

It has been stated, in the detail of the subjects of examination, that no candidate can be admitted to the competition who has not previously satisfied the Civil Service Commissioners that he possesses the requisite amount of proficiency in Handwriting, Orthography, and Arithmetic. With this view, Preliminary Examinations in these subjects will be held at such times and places as the Commissioners may appoint. Application for permission to attend one of these Preliminary Examinations must be made, in the writing of the candidate, at such times and in such manner as may be fixed by the Commissioners.

The number of persons to be selected at each examination will be published as part of the notice of every such examination. A list of the competitors will be made out in the order of merit, up to this published number, if so many are found by the examination to be qualified for appointments in the Civil Service.

Each competitor thus named in a list will remain thereon until he attains the age of twenty-five years, unless in the meantime he has been appointed to a situation in some public office; on completing his twenty-fifth year, or on receiving an appointment, he will be removed from the list.

From these lists the Civil Service Commissioners, on the application of Departments having vacancies, will supply, on probation, the requisite clerks, whether for permanent or temporary duty. Selections will, as a general rule, be made by the Civil Service Commissioners according to the order of the names on the

lists; but the Civil Service Commissioners may select any clerk who, in his examination, has shown special qualifications in any particular subject, if special application for such a clerk be made by any Department.

No clerk will remain more than one year in any Department, unless at the end of that time the Head of the Department shall signify in writing to the Civil Service Commissioners that the clerk is accepted by the Department. If he is not accepted, the Department will report to the said Commissioners the reasons for not accepting him; and such Commissioners will thereon supply another clerk in his room, and will decide whether the name of the rejected clerk shall be struck off the lists, as unfit for the Service generally, or whether he shall be allowed a trial in another Department.

The salaries of men clerks in the Lower Division commence at £80, and rise by triennial increments of £15 to £200: provided that in any office in which a regular attendance of seven hours a day is required, the commencing salary may be £90, and the maximum salary £250.

The triennial increments of salary will not be allowed in full without a certificate from the immediate superior of each clerk, countersigned by the Head of the Department, to the effect that the clerk's conduct has been satisfactory. In case of demerit, a part or the whole of the increment may be withheld.

Extra pay, not exceeding £100 per annum, may be attached to certain situations open to clerks of the Lower Division. Situations carrying extra pay will be conferred strictly according to positive merit, and not according to seniority.

Promotion from the Lower to the Higher Division of the Service will not be made without a special certificate from the Civil Service Commissioners, to be granted exceptionally, after not less than ten years' service, upon a special recommendation from the Head of the Department, and with the assent of the Treasury.

However the examination for Class II. of the Higher Division may be finally determined, it is of course certain to require a far superior education to that which would be necessary to compete in any of the examinations the subjects of which have been detailed, with the exception perhaps of that for clerkships in the Solicitor's Office.

Another method of entering the Customs Service, as out-door officer namely, seems to demand a little further notice. Out-door officers of the Customs receive salaries varying according to the port at which they may be employed. The lowest rate of pay is £55 per annum. They are eligible for promotion to higher situations after a period of approved service, either by a further competitive examination or by selection on account of merit and good conduct. An open competition for thirty-five situations of out-door officer was held in London, Edinburgh, Dublin, Liverpool, Bristol, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Hull, Leeds, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Cork, Belfast, and Limerick, on October 26th, 1877.