

the better of two years' service, so that to the twenty-two you could add two more for the men who come afterwards, and I consider the average of twenty-five years at the present time is a fair one, and for this reason also; that if you take the tenth grade (£200 per annum), the men now in order for promotion at the top of that grade—the men who joined as cadets—their service is a good criterion to go on, and they have got nineteen years' service. All being well, I think they should have been promoted since the 1st April last, so that to allow six years in that grade is not overmuch, as I will show presently. In asking that the ninth grade be eliminated, the whole position will perhaps be made more clear if dealt with under the following headings: Past promotion from the ninth grade—During the six years ended 1st April, 1910, the average number of members promoted from the ninth to the eighth grade was 21 each year. On this basis it will take a period of thirteen years to promote the total number (278) now in the former grade. The largest number of members promoted from the ninth to the eighth grade in any one year since these grades were formed in 1901 was 40 on 1st April, 1908 (the date of the present Classification Act), and if that number is promoted each year it will be seven years from now before the 278 members in the grade receive the minimum salary of £240 provided for in the eighth grade. In connection with this, it is well to remember that, of the 278 members already referred to, 28 have now served seven years in the grade, 52 have served six years, 53 have served five years, 57 have served four years. The last member of the latter number promoted is now No. 195 in the grade, and, assuming that 40 are promoted each year, it will be at least four years yet before his turn comes for promotion. For him this will mean a service of eight years in the ninth grade alone. Therefore, taking it on the very lowest estimate, the members who entered the ninth grade on 1st April, 1910, will require to serve ten years in that grade. Those men who have already been five years in the grade are going to be great sufferers in this grade, because the typical cases are between Nos. 120 and 150 on D.-3. They will have to serve another five years, and that will make them ten years in that grade. It is very essential to note here that the promotion of 40 on 1st April, 1908, which was exceptionally liberal, was due to the present Classification Act coming into force on that date. Furthermore, of the members who entered the ninth grade on 1st April, 1904, and on the dates of subsequent issues of the D.-3. lists, not more than six (very exceptional cases of men filling technical positions) had been promoted to the eighth grade up to 1st April, 1910. So that of those who entered that grade seven years ago none have been promoted excepting six purely technical officers. It may be stated that that has been the case in the other grades above, but it has not been. It has not been the case in the grade (eighth) next above, for of the seventeen members who were promoted thereto on 1st April, 1904, and the nine members on 1st April, 1905, all but five have been promoted to the seventh grade, and are now in receipt of a salary of £300 per annum. So much for the prospects by way of promotion from the ninth grade. So that from every point of view the ninth grade, I consider, has a grievance. I will now deal with the question of ages of members in the ninth grade. As the majority of members in the ninth grade joined the service as cadets, it is a simple matter to arrive at their ages, which would average thirty-six years. Those who were promoted to the ninth grade on 1st April, 1910, are typical cases. They would be at least thirty-four years of age then, and, allowing for their having to serve ten years in the grade, will bring them to forty-four years of age when promoted to the eighth grade, at a salary of £240, at the end of twenty-eight years' service. That I consider is the very best reckoning to work on, as it is on the basis of past promotions. Sufficient has been said to show that their chances of receiving a salary of £300 per annum by the time they retire on superannuation are very remote indeed. It must be borne in mind that the men referred to all joined as cadets, and, as they have been trained from boyhood to railway work, they are all well fitted to take up advanced positions. The fact that, as already stated, only six (purely technical positions) of the members who joined the ninth grade seven years ago and since that date have been promoted from £220 to £240 per annum shows that it is not the cases of the "duffers" or the men who have been left behind that is being taken up. The statements made herein give a genuine illustration of the rate of progress in the second-lowest grade of Division I. We consider that men at forty years of age are doing their best, and that the Department should in their own interests treat them fairly. We consider these men will be forty-four years of age before they receive a salary of £240, taking the Department's promotions in the past as a guide. Eighty-seven members in the ninth grade, who fill such positions as Locomotive Foremen, Inspectors of Permanent-way, Shop Foremen, Car and Wagon Inspectors, &c., were recruited from Division II, and their ages would average anything from forty-seven years to fifty years. One of these (a Locomotive Foreman) has thirty-six years' service, and his position was filled three years ago by an officer at £255 per annum. Inspectors of Permanent-way are now performing duties at £220, for which their predecessors were paid a salary of £300. The argument that they must gradually work up to that salary does not hold good, for the reason that four Inspectors (now in the ninth grade) have already served seven years therein. No benefits from the present Classification Act! The members of the ninth grade have not benefited in any way under the present Classification Act. One hundred and ninety of them served under the old scale of pay, and were in the grade before the Act came into force on the 1st April, 1908. Neither did they benefit under the Act of 1901, for they served three years at £140 before the scale of pay was altered at that time. I am speaking of the men who have not benefited certainly by the last Classification Act or even by the previous one because there was a wait of three years at a salary of £140 before the Act of 1901 was passed, although we can say that the Act has certainly benefited the boys joining the service. We admit that, and we give the Department every credit for having done the fair thing by those members. There are 573 cadets and 740 members from £120 to £200 who benefited under the last Act; and provided, as I say, that the men at the top of the £200 grade now are not kept unduly long at that salary—provided they get promotion within a reasonable time into the ninth grade, there should be no cause for complaint. There are 1,881 members altogether, and what we are asking for is that something should now be done for the remainder, viz., 500. The statistics that have been quoted show that only the cadets and the tenth grade