

At the Sign of the Wooden Leg

By "Silas Wegg."

Snow Shovelling.

The problem of snow shovelling is one that I have been planning to attack for some time—ever since the last snowfall in fact. Mrs. Wegg says, in tones of wondrous pity, that the poor milkman will get pneumonia ploughing a path through the drifts to our backdoor. I tell her that he runs no greater risk from our snow than we do from his milk. As to the grocer he makes his own weigh.

The problem may be approached in two ways, subjectively or objectively, as any average problem approacher knows. You approach it subjectively with the mind, objectively with a shovel. I prefer the former method. It is more in my line, and the rest of the family need exercise.

There are duties that rise from the earth—lawn-mowing for instance—and duties that fall from the sky, of which snow-shovelling is one. There are duties, also, that have their source within ourselves, such as considering how to get rid of other duties and how best to bring them to the attention of our neighbours. The last named are the popular duties and no Customs Department is required to see that they are enforced. While Jones may advocate the passage of an anti-dumping clause to restrain too free a distribution of Brown's duties in Jones' neighbourhood, and Brown may advocate a similar measure, *mutatis mutandis*, both Jones and Brown are well content to do their own share of duties of the third class without help from outside. I stand with Jones and Brown though the heavens fall.

Though the heavens fall! That brings me back to snow-shovelling, and I think I must qualify somewhat the statement of my adhesion to the Jones-Brown party. There is ever a fly in the ointment when there is not a nigger in the fence. It is so easy to dispose of the problem of snow-shovelling when the green grass grows all around, just as, on this occasion, were I not a person of great moral courage, it would be more pleasant to treat of lawn-mowing or the best methods of exterminating potato bugs. But here we are face to face and knee deep in a special problem, and I for one will not shirk the consideration of it.

Snow-shovelling, like civil service reform, must be treated in a broad and general way. This is fundamental. Otherwise one might have to buy a shovel and take off one's overcoat. Let us be clear on that point as far as snow-shovelling is concerned anyway. I must warn you, by the way, not to apply anything I may say as to this special subject too closely to the civil service situation. It is always wise to trust to Broad and General Principles—in the case of snow-shovelling. The sun will return to the sign of Taurus in June.

Treating the subject broadly and generally, therefore, let us first consider the snowflake; *Ex pede Herculem*, which means that you don't have to know much to establish a theory. What are snowflakes? I quote: "Aqueous particles congealed in their descent through the atmosphere into separate crystals, some of which appear as rhombohedral or hexagonal prisms, and others as dodecahedral