

from which in our own belief the ultimate results will be as fruitful. If the latter object has heretofore been given greater prominence than the former, a condition which may continue for a while yet, the reason will be apparent. The whole is greater than its part; the transition of the entire service into its new atmosphere has seemed more interesting as a spectacle than its familiar departmental aspects. While the driving belt has been undergoing repairs it has seemed pardonable to neglect the machine.

THE CIVIL SERVICE JOKE.

We have always been intensely interested in the civil service joke. By the civil service joke we mean that good old rule among the newspapers—harmless as it is venerable—that whenever they mention the service they simply *must* be playful. If it takes a leg, the average editor *must* get funny when he writes about the civil service. Sometimes it is an awful strain: you can almost see his eyes bulging and the veins swelling in his neck; but he usually gets it off all right. And why shouldn't he? We remember the last time we took our little boy to see the circus they had an elephant and a giraffe dancing an Irish jig together. Now the civil service joke is a far more conventional and hard-and-fast affair than any jig. It can be learned in half the time, whether by elephant or editor. The civil service joke, technically speaking, falls rigidly under one or other of two headings: (a) either it is a pun or a quip upon the word "civil," especially as attaching to a "servant," or (b) it leaves words and comes down to facts with a picture of the sleek overpaid rascal munching at the public crib and making a few slow mo-

tions in imitation of work while he winks the other eye or puts on airs. It will be observed that class (a) approximates to wit; whereas class (b) is more in the way of humour. Of course there are a few variations under class (b). To be exact there are precisely three. We have caught and classified every specimen of the civil service joke escaping from the Canadian press during the past two years, so we know what we are talking about. We would publish our sub-classification right here and now, were it not that we are preparing a little treatise on the whole subject, strictly scientific, which we do not wish to forestall: "Civilian Civilities—a monotonous monograph."

From the standpoint of the historian and the student of such phenomena as the dancing mania of the middle ages, the passing of the high-heeled shoe during the French Revolution, etc., the present is a most important phase in the evolution of the civil service joke. As a matter of fact, the civil service joke stands a mighty fair chance of petering out. It will have a run for its money at any rate. Anyone can see with half an eye that the new act reforming the civil service knocks the pins almost completely from under it. How can you crack a joke about a reformed civil service? Impossible, plainly,—at least in so far as the old-time joke is concerned. Why, it is as bad as if the lawyers were all turned honest—by act of Parliament. The civil service joke like everything else must keep up with the times. If it can't adapt itself, then it has to go—that's all.

Of course that ultimate pass hasn't arrived quite yet, and in the meantime all kinds of amusement are left for those who cherish this good old friend in its primeval form. Just at the moment, the depression (to use