

evolve a grievance at any time between morning and night. There is only one side to his bed—the wrong side—and he gets out of it daily.

I met Blank on the street last Saturday. You remember what sort of day it was, a cold, blustering day. Well, that was to his liking, for it was the chunk of turf thrown into his crater. The way he ruminated and regurgitated that weather, cursed the snow and the thermometer, and the Dominion Observatory, blamed Columbus for discovering America and Col. By for building the canal, swore at the shoemen for selling non-water-proof rubbers, and the tailors for not putting a button on his coat somewhere between his nose and his eyes—the way he did these things made me thankful that Mrs. Wegg had her calm Silas and not John Blank as a husband.

We got rid of the weather at last, one ebullition more vicious than its predecessors sending it beyond the reach of gravitation, but the geyserette was not quieted. Blank is a Civil Servant, and, although no word had been said of Civil Service affairs, and no occasion had been given by bulletin board or passer-by for an eruption, he began, as soon as the weather had been coughed up, to fume about affairs on the Hill. I learned that the Government had made a steady practice, during twenty years, of working John Blank to a shadow, of robbing him of his promotions, of confiscating three per cent. of his salary for superannuation and of preferring all manner of inferior men for places of trust and emolument in his place. I left him at the corner of Bank and Sparks streets and the last words he said were, "Good day, Wegg. This has been a pleasant walk." He enjoyed it.

Some men fume because they think that they could not do their work properly without fuming. It is strange how the idea has found currency in some quarters that a tart

temper is synonymous with executive ability. Henry the First of England is known to most of us as the man who never smiled again. I wonder if it was he who began the schooling of that class of public officials that has its representatives among us even to this day, the class of officials who believe that a kind word to a subordinate will lead to presumption on the latter's part, but that a severe kick now and again, with or without a frown, is the best inducement there can be offered the said subordinate to do efficient service.

James Asterisk is one who fumes from a sense of duty. He may like to fume. I will not say he does not enjoy the exercise, but his fuming has enough deliberateness in it, not deliberation, mind you, to make me think that it is a permanent policy and not the emergency of the moment that must be taken into account when we consider his case. The motto which hangs over Asterisk's desk—he is not aware that I see it when I enter his room—is, *Keep them in their places*. He does not know how to be firm; he does not even know how to be stiff. He does the best he can and blusters. In doing this, let us give all devils and deputy-devils their dues: He thinks he is doing his country's service, being a sort of Saul of Tarsus on a slow train to Damascus.

There was a fellow like Asterisk who used to live in my old home town by the sea, in the days when the steamboats had some mechanism on deck that see-sawed up and down with the pulsations of the engine. I am no good at describing these contrivances, but it is enough to say that it looked to us small boys like a man trying to balance himself on a tight rope. Well, there was one person in town, the village ninny, who practised this see-saw motion continually, and who went at it with especial vigor whenever he saw the steamboat coming up the harbour. Some one asked him why he was so engaged. His