

## At the Sign of the Wooden Leg

By "Silas Wegg."

Gilpin, who has a pleasant wit and loves a timely joke, met me on the street last Saturday. His moustache was frosted white. Keep that point in mind: "Well, Gilp.," said I, "it is cold." And, without warning, Gilpin asked me what was the difference between his moustache just then and his furnace. I gave it up of course. "Well, my moustache," he said, "is cold down and my furnace is coaled up." Pretty good that for Gilpin, wasn't it?

I tell this little story to remind you that winter is here at last and it becomes us all to find some form of vigorous exercise. Gilpin goes in for condundrums but he is a man of a strong constitution. We cannot all stand the strain of that diversion, invigorating as it is. I purpose dealing with some of the other kinds of sport that are suitable to civil servants during the season when the thermometer hovers around the price of eggs in the golden days of 1878. Some of these sports are prescribed by the authorities and must be engaged in whether the players are willing or not. By recognizing the advantages of these as amusements instead of complaining of them as regulations we can improve both our bodies and our sports.

The first game I would mention is called Forfeits, or Drawing the Line. It is of the nature of an obstacle race. Any number of players can take part. One is chosen as Ruler. He is not, on that account, the Governor General or the Prime Minister even. His title signifies only that he is the one who draws the line. He is at a central point in one

of the departmental buildings and has a book laid on a desk before him and a clock. The other players are scattered over the city in their beds. Some are provided with alarm clocks, which are set at various hours. This variety of settings constitutes one of the handicaps. At 7.30 a.m.—according to each alarm clock—the players enter the race. Some are further handicapped by wives, children and furnaces. Some have to strop razors and make lather or hook up dresses in the back. All are supposed to halt for at least ten minutes at a hurdle called the breakfast table, but each is free to use his discretion on points like this.

The object of the game is to sign the book at the central point before 9.15 — by the central clock — at which time the Ruler—draws the line. The forfeits claimed for failure to sign above the line may be either of an immediate or a deferred nature. This is left to the judgment of the Ruler. Immediate forfeits are in the form of additional hours of labour as a rule. Deferred forfeits may take any form from the withholding of a statutory increase to dismissal from the game. The Ruler may, if he wishes, smite any player who loses over the head with his ferule. This counts as one strike. He may also excuse players who give reasons for their failure to sign above the line. Anchor ice scores heavily for a player. Oversleeping gets no allowance now, except the player has been at a Rideau Hall dance the night before. He is then given a base on balls.