

his own jokes and fell backward into the next yard and was heard no more that night.

Squareface continued his questioning:

"What is the civil service?" he asked of an ink bottle on his left.

"Now you have come to the right shop," answered the ink bottle. "I was in the civil service myself until I was half empty."

"What do they do in the civil service?" asked Squareface.

"They use ink," replied I. B. The civil service is a huge inkwell, around which the flies, called civil servants, gather every morning at nine. They are each supposed to dip his feet in the ink, and then crawl over sheets of paper which are placed on desks until five at night."

"What for?" asked Squareface.

"To use up the ink," replied I.B.

"But what do they do with the papers they crawl over?" queried Squareface.

"How do I know?" said I. B. impatiently.

"You said you were the right shop for information about the civil service," replied Squareface.

"I may have called myself a shop, but I'm not a free lunch, or a Royal Commission, or a Toronto newspaper, or——" but here I. B. came to a pause, for he could not think of any higher authorities on civil service affairs.

Squareface was not discouraged, however. He turned his stream of inquiry to his right hand friend, who bore the name of Vigora on his front.

"What do you know about this civil service?" he asked.

"Nothing," replied Vigora. "I spent my time in a drugstore after I left Quackville."

"But you must have heard something about it in the house there."

"Let me think," said Vigora. "I have been shaken so often before using that I am not the same bottle I was once. Oh, yes, I remember hearing the woman inside there tell the

wooden leg that the service was no place for him. He should have been a real estate man, and made money."

"What did the wooden leg say?"

"He said that after two more bottles of Vigora, he thought he would be in condition to leave the service and go to work."

"But he never left the service, did he?" Squareface inquired.

"No," replied Vigora, "he stopped taking the only guaranteed health restorer and balm of immortality when the druggist refused him credit, and he has been living for this while back on the hopes of a flat increase."

"And what is a flat increase?" asked the inquisitive Squareface.

"A flat increase!" broke in a black fellow with three stars on his chest. "I remember the flat increase of 1908. I came home with Wegg that day, and Jones and Simpson and Burke called to see my new friend the same evening. How they did pat old Flat Increase on the back. He was the Jolly-goodfellow for fair. And Jones and Simpson and Burke wouldn't go home till morning, and old Wegg broke the electric light bulb when he tried to kick a fly off the doorknob. I have been kept on the shelf in the kitchen ever since that, and whenever Wegg talks of having one of those chaps in the house, Mrs. Wegg takes him by the collar and leads him off to take a look at me. 'Now, Silas,' she says, 'look at those three stars, and then let me hear you mention the name of Burke or Simpson or Jones again.' That will give you an idea of what a flat increase is, my boy."

"You shouldn't forget though," said a stout little fellow, Bovril by name, "that you helped Wegg spend only a few dollars of that flat increase. His landlord cabbaged the big slice, and the milkman and the baker and the butcher—alas, my poor brother!—helped themselves to their shares too. It was called a flat increase, you know, because you couldn't see it when it was spread out over the community."