

## At the Sign of the Wooden Leg

By "Silas Wegg."

### The Rainbow Library.

When Mrs. Wegg asked me the other day to look Simpkins up in the Blue Book—Simpkins has been calling on the elder Miss Wegg—young Silas wished to know how many colours of books there are. I spanked young Silas on general principles and other-where, this being the common procedure on the part of parents, or on the parts of children if you will, when the latter ask questions which the former cannot answer. Then I set out to consider his question with the next issue of *The Civilian* in mind. I soon saw that the number of colours which books have is infinite. So also is the number of the colours in the rainbow. However, by common consent, we give special names to seven of the rainbow hues, calling them the primary colours. Likewise I intend for the purposes of this study to consider the number of book colours as seven, the same seven which are ascribed to the rainbow, although there are many books of intermediate tints which some may place under one colour and some under another. The colours of books, therefore, shall be regarded as violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red.

The violet books are those written by minor poets and other persons of sedentary habits. Most of them contain Odes to Spring. The rest are called "The Reveries of a Retired ———," the blank being filled in by the writer for any calling or condition coming between Aristocrat and Zoologist. These are the mild and melancholy books, the cigarettes

of literature. They may not be of much solace to those "crazed with care,"—fresh air is what such need,—but they are eagerly consumed by those "crossed in hopeless love." You will find them (the books) on any well-regulated centre-table along with the truncated spheroid within which the mortuary wax flowers are kept. The production of this class of books reached its highest point in the days of the hoop-skirt, but a fair output is still maintained through the influence of advertising and the Chatauqua courses. The works of the major poets are not of the violet shade. In fact it is hard to give a name to their colour, for the mysteries of genius cannot be detected by the ordinary spectroscope which is powerless to analyze "the light that never was on sea or land."

Indigo books are written by melancholy people, but with malice prepense. We designated the violet books as mild and melancholy, or as the cigarettes of literature. This second class we may call the wild and melancholy and may liken them to old pipes in which imperfectly cured homegrown tobacco has been smoked for a decade. They give off a heavy and depressing odor. Bernard Shaw has a full battery of books of this type. The thesis of them all is that there is no truth to be found outside them. The author takes credit because he has grown in his own backyard the tobacco which he smokes, and some credit is due on that score, but a man who persists in curing his tobacco in the heat of a fetid stable instead of in the sunshine should do his smoking in strict