

Omar Khayyam in the Excise.

A poet of the British *Civilian* has caught the same infection as our own Silas Wegg, whose "Rubaiyat of a Civil Servant" of some weeks ago was one of the best things we have ever published. The British poet has evidently been an excise man — like Bobby Burns — which accounts for the realistic epicureanism of the following :—

Oh, Plagued no more with Pensions and Excise
To-Morrow's Programme let itself devise:
The Problems that the Morning Light shall bring
Shall solve Themselves as They Themselves arise.

Whether at Haig and Haig or Jamieson,
Whether the Worms with Pot or Patent run,
The Sample Pipes keep oozing Drop by Drop
The Wash Degrees keep falling One by One.

But leave the Wise to prophesy, and be
Resigned to Old Age Pension work, like me,
And in your corner of the Office crouch't
Make Hash of that which makes as much of Thee

Why, all our Service Prophets who did shirk
Their Proper Jobs to try to pierce the mirk
Through which our future loomed, have found
Discredit, and their mouths are stopped with Work.

Then Fill the flask! Why should we be dismayed
If for Three Weeks we've lived on Lemonade!
Though Broke To-morrow and Broke Yesterday,
Why fret about it if To-day we're Paid!

So, when the Smiling Warehouseman shall say,
"Here's Luck!" and toss the Beaded Blend away,
Do you, Official Warehouseman, likewise—
It's all allowed for in your monthly pay.

Aud This I know, whether it serve to Aid,
Or serve my Future Being to Degrade,
One Nip of it within the Warehouse caught,
Better than in the Tavern Duty-Paid.

What, without asking, hither hurried Whence!
And, spite of asking, never hurried hence!
Another and another Pipe to drug
The Memory of this Impertinence!

The Pipe that can, with Birdseye in the Bowl,
Bestow sweet Comfort on the troubled Soul,
And brighten Life's dull Progress as it grows
Fouler and sweeter as the ages roll.

The pipe beneath whose subtle witchery
The Two-and-Seventy License Laws agree,
Whose subtle magic makes me wonder at
The Old Age-Pensions Act's simplicity.

Myself, when Young did eagerly consent
To learn to smoke, in spite of argument
About it and about, though at the first
The Smoke did not Come out where in it went.

And thus the Seed of Wisdom did I sow
In spite of warning that I'd cease to grow,
And this of Life I gathered in the Clouds;
I burn like Birdseye and like Shag I go.