

At the Sign of the Wooden Leg.

As I sit "taking mine ease in mine inn," and using my knees as a desk, thinking the while, all in an easy way, what message I have for *Civilian* readers this turn, I am surprised at the meagreness of the fund of thought that a fortnight's experience has yielded. This will sustain the conclusion of the writer in the last *Civilian* who said that Wegg's philosophy appeared to be derived from other sources than trial or experience. His observation is no doubt true, and, after all, trial and experience give us only hints of possible causes for events, from which we accept one and let our philosophy go at that. We see a segment of what appears to be a circle, although a fuller knowledge may suggest that it is a part of a parabola whose limits are lost in the grayness of space.

Yet each day should deliver up to us some truth, be it a fact or a feeling, that will help us do our next day's work with a little more confidence, or, at least, a little more cheerfulness. Books yield us truth predigested and ready for the table; the truths of experience must go between the millstones of reflection before they can be of service either to us or to others. And this is why my fortnight has been barren, and why so many years are barren for all of us. We have experiences enough, for we are in touch with things, the meanest of which have the cosmic qualities of the poet's flower in the crannied wall.

"If I could understand
What you are, root and all, and
all in all,
I should know what God and man
is."

We do not try to know. There are times indeed when we cannot help being taught. We pass then, as it were, through the tail of a comet, and whether we wish it or not we

breathe the new gases of which it is formed. They may be death-bearing gases, they may be the basis of the elixir of life, but we must inhale them. These are the exceptional times. Ordinarily we must climb the high hills to breathe the ozone; at any rate we must open our windows, and some require much prying.

Now this sounds as if I were dealing with subjects very remote from the plain business of life in which we are engaged, but I am trying to be practical. We are told that the same forces that keep Jupiter from crashing into Saturn, and Saturn from colliding with Uranus, also keep our chairs from soaring through the roofs of our houses. And so, when we speak of deriving profit from experience, we may find that the same laws hold good in regard to the saving of our pennies as to the saving of our souls. Thus, to plunge deeper still into this commonsense mysticism, we come to see what Carlyle meant when he said: "The thing a man does practically lay to heart and know for certain concerning his vital relations to this mysterious universe, and his duty and destiny there, that is in all cases the primary thing for him and creatively determines all the rest. That is his *religion*."

We are at the end of another fiscal year. What have we to show for it? Yes, there is the statutory increase of fifty or a hundred dollars that comes every year without our prayer or thought, as the grass comes in the springtime; and there is the special hundred-and-fifty dropped like a meteoric diamond into our hat out of the head of a comet whose periodicity we cannot yet determine. Some also have received, after great or little importunity, advances from II to I, or from B to A. Add now a little casual revenue from odd jobs on the side and we can close the cash book without need of any violent adjustments. Let us examine our stock account.