

Measuring the American Order with Common Practices of the Past

The Chronic Faultfinders Who Blame Our Political, Economic and Social Order for Every Wrong of the Present Day and are Laudatory in their Praise of the "Good Old" Days, will Reverse their Opinion if they Check up on Some of the Relative Facts that are Abundantly Recorded on the Pages of History. Incidentally they May Become Better Citizens

Some interesting observations by Harry Dickson, in "The Elks Magazine"

ON ANY dismal morning when a fellow's corns hurt, when bills are piling up and the coal-pile's disappearing, when the market has stampeded in a disastrous direction, when he remembers how some shark at the club last night contrived to beat his ace-full—that's when human institutions seem going to the devil. Across the breakfast table his wife pesters him for a new limousine as he scans the optimistic headlines:

"NO CHANCE FOR TAX REDUCTION."
"PRETTY MRS. SMITH AND LOVER
SLAY HUSBAND."
"WAR BREWING IN BALKANS."
"WHEAT FARMS SOLD UNDER
MORTGAGE."
"MYSTERIOUS PAJAMA MURDER IN
HOLLYWOOD."
"STRIKERS CLASH WITH TROOPS."
"SIX HANGED IN LOUISIANA."
"WASHINGTON CITY A GOMORRAH
OF GRAFT AND IMMORALITY."

That's the dose he gulps down with his coffee, all the compressed meanness of mankind, muckraked, sifted, and stewed into a fine pizen. It puts a dark brown taste in his mouth. Things look bad, very bad, rotten. Through blue spectacles he peers at the road ahead, dreading its crime and calamity, battle and murder, bankruptcy and sudden death. No wonder his breakfast feels sickish.

At such a bilious crisis the normally sane American is liable to become a grouch; in fact, he may become Mr. Bilious Q. Grouch himself, who turns his jaundiced eye toward the past and deplores the good old days that are gone.

According to Bill Grouch those were happy days of peace and justice, of obedient sons, of non-flapper daughters and home-keeping wives. Men were brave and women virtuous. In those days our home team always won, fish bit more generously, and the right candidates were elected. A villain then had no more chance to thrive than he now has in the movies. As Bill Grouch remembers most distinctly, we then had nothing but patriots and statesmen in public office, none of these cheap little grafters that hold out their hands, de-

manding bribes from every malefactor of great wealth. So Bill contends that dishonesty has been adopted as our national policy, and that the stripes on our flag ought to be convict stripes.

Full of gloomy predictions Bill hangs around the drug store, or huddles in his Mourner's Corner at the club, and bewails this modern degeneracy, since all kindness, all prosperity, and all honorable intent have vanished from the world. He has contracted a permanent crick in his neck from gazing over his shoulder at the smooth and shady road we used to travel, where there were no ruts, no broken bridges, no sharp turns where his father's ox-wagon had to run in second gear. As far as Bill can see the sunshine casts no shadows on the past.

A spattering of melancholy folk agree with Bill, and nobody ventures to dispute him when he gets his head sot. None of the Grouch family can be persuaded to look forward; to catch their point of view we must turn round and look back along the road. Then perhaps we can show to Bill a few of

long, long distance since Eve bit a chunk out of the apple and we began traveling. Upon the whole our path has been upward, steadily upward. The march has encountered many obstacles, and periods of chaos during which we seemed to lose our footing. At times we missed the road, and groped blindly through a wilderness. Yet ever, when the smoke of strife has blown aside, we find the cause of man a little bit advanced, and that the rights we've gained have been more strongly fortified.

"We have lighted fires of freedom on a million altar stones

With the fagots we have gathered at the blaze of burning thrones."

Such poetical bunk concerning freedom, Mr. Bilious Q. Grouch dismisses with a snort of contempt. There's no such animal as liberty; and for a thousand years our progress has been of the crawling kind. Naturally Bill lives in the middle of Missouri, and you've got to show him. Therefore it might be illuminating if we only could deal with

Mr. Bilious Q. Grouch as Mark Twain once treated "A Connecticut Yankee," by taking him to King Arthur's Court. Suppose we transport Mr. Grouch backward, where he wants to be, just drop him off the automobile, and let him fall where he may. Not in malice, but for educational purposes; and whether we deposited Bill a generation ago, or left him at the crossroads of some medieval century, he would soon discover for himself that all was not beer and skittles, even in the good old days.

First and loudest Bill growls about his taxes. Everybody does. No citizen can pay his taxes with a grin, any more than he can have his leg sawed off with a grin. Bill's special abomination is this rubber tariff, these inheritance taxes, the surtax, and other impositions so thick that a fellow can't step out of bed without getting into a tangle. Those are the outrages that Bill wants to get

away from, and go back to good old methods when the world was young.

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From the comic supplements Bill sees Congress frittering its time in probes

AMERICANS by birth, adoption or in the making may have many good reasons for complaining about the many imperfections in our American fabric of political, economic and social order, but if we were a bit more altruistic in our individual conduct in citizenship, with an eye to our own shortcomings as well as to the shortcomings of others and if we at the same time were willing to make correct comparisons, past and present, we might become more tolerant and fair and willing to concede that despite our imperfections, entirely due to individual dishonesty, we have, in America, attained a state of perfection in our conduct of government, in our economic relations and in our social order that is so far ahead of anything that the world has ever known that we would readily agree that the dreams of human deliverance, dreamt by our forefathers some three to four hundred years ago, have been realized far beyond their imagination. The so-called disillusioned members of our American family who see nothing in America any more that is worth praising might give the matter a second thought after they have read the following contribution on the subject from Harry Dickson, an overseas veteran, who presented his views on Bill Grouch in a most extraordinary fashion in the November issue of "The Elks Magazine." Dickson's article is colorful and saturated with wholesome humor. His logic is sound and his comparisons are built on facts indelibly printed on the pages of history.—The Editor.

the mud-holes from which our ancestors pulled themselves, a few of the hardships and oppressions that our sturdy forebears have destroyed.

This human caravan has traveled a