

rogatives, which enticed a perpetual scramble for his job, with mobs of eager applicants, and a restless waiting-list.

After having made the grand tour of foreign courts in the good old days, even Bill Grouch might confess that public morals seem to be growing less flagrant. Certain it is that modern nations have got comparatively rid of an evil from which the United States has never suffered—the whims of rulers' mistresses, the recognized Pompadours and du Barrys and Nell Gwynnes, holding their royal levees, making war and peace and history.

Seeing is believing, and though Bill Grouch may be convinced against his will on the moral proposition, he stoutly maintains that we now have in America what is known as "practical politics," a modern invention without patriotism, or sentiment, or prejudice. Sure. A practical politician goes after the votes, and gets them; your vote and mine. But he is no gimcrack of to-day. The demagogue was already a graybeard, and reeking with trickery, when Coriolanus displayed his wounds in the Forum. Alluding to this classical episode, an American orator once said, "When Marc Antony trice offered the imperial crown to Cæsar, I'll bet dollars to doughnuts that Marc had a deal with Julius for the post-office."

Politicians of those times could give cards and spades to Tammany, and make our party leaders sit like children at the feet of the master. With no Australian ballot to hamper the boss, he did pretty much as he pleased. And how beautifully simple was their procedure. What a mess of bother they saved. All of the nerve-racking suspense and frenzied jockeying of our National Conventions might be avoided by the straightforward Roman method. We could cut out a fighting Democratic Convention in New York, eliminate a cut-and-dried Republican assembly at Cleveland, and the Third Party's meeting. Under management of a Roman boss, such talkfests would become as futile as a Presidential Primary that serves the same purpose as a gladiatorial game—to divert the populace. Instead of this tomfoolery, we might hark back with Bill to the good old Roman way. Let the Democratic Boss, the Republican Boss and the Third Party Boss advise together, privately, and parcel out these United States. Democratus takes the South, Republicanus rules the North, and Tripartus reserves what's left. That's fine, and consumes no valuable time of the citizen by dragging him to the polls. Business goes on as usual, without disturbance. Yet there were bolters and insurgents, even in those happy days. So the three bosses considered that to prevent this arrangement from being upset, certain malcontents must be hushed. Each of the three submits a list of enemies, each naming the fathers, mothers, brothers and dearest friends of his two colleagues. Now here's where Bill Grouch might point a moral: Did these noble Romans object? Did they set their private feelings above the welfare of

the State? Not they. Such paltry selfishness belongs to our degenerate times. Democratus consents to the death of his father; Republicanus makes no protest against the assassination of his mother, and Tripartus gives utterance to the patriotic exclamation, "Let my whole family perish in order that Rome may live!" Off went the insurgent heads, and the Triumvirate lived happily for a while.

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When Bill Grouch has gone a little deeper into the past, he may convince himself that demagoguery did not reach this planet on the same birthday as radio and relativity. The ancient art was epidemic in Athens, where the dignified Acropolis resounded with their wranglings. To squelch such noisy noises, the Athenians had enacted a law prescribing that when rival politicians grew so rabid as to threaten public harmony, the people would take a vote of ostracism, and elect one of the disputants to leave town. Which smothered a lot of jowling. At that period Aristides the Just was a very celebrated lawgiver, while the slick-tongued Themistocles has left behind him the reputation of being a smooth talker. A man of adroit abilities, Themistocles practised every craft of the spellbinder against the more honest but far less showy Aristides. No up-to-date demagogue has excelled his brilliancy in appealing to the dear people. By instinct he knew how to stir up a rabble, and play upon their prejudices as on a flute. He gave bribes and received bigger ones, finally closing his glorious career in exile and infamy. It soon became notoriously impossible for two such rivals to dwell at peace in one small town. Their followers locked horns. And when Greek locks horns with Greek, there is a merry tussle. Lively times were had by all. Up and down those B. C. streets they squabbled until the Athenian, who loves his siesta, called "A plague on both your bosses" and ordered an election of ostracism.

Voting machines had not yet come into commercial use. The voter cast his ballot by writing on a shell the name of the objectionable person who ought to be exported, and depositing that shell in an urn. A country yap presented himself at the Acropolis Precinct, a yokel so densely ignorant that he did not even know Aristides by sight.

"Friend," said the yokel to the lawgiver, "I am a man of no learning. Will you scribe the name on my shell?"

"Certainly." Aristides took out his stylus. What name?"

"Write 'Aristides,'" said the yokel, and the upright judge assisted to vote for his own outlawry.

"Now my friend," he inquired, "what wrong has Aristides done to you, or to his native city, that you desire to banish him?"

"He ain't done nothin' to me," the yokel answered. "Only I'm gettin' darn tired of hearin' everybody call him 'The Just.'"

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This happened twenty-five hundred

years ago in the golden age of Greece—midway between their heroic victories at Marathon and Sea-girt Salamis—and indicates that practical politics were little different from now, while the same sort of prejudice influenced ignorant voters.

Another muddleheaded mess that Bill declaims against is the labor situation. What he stands for is not clear. Bill is against. Whether on the side of employee or employer, Bill always cusses when he discusses labor.

"I love to cuss the Octopus, the Plutocrats condemn;
But if I could, you bet, I would love to be one of them."

Bill contends that in olden times they had a far simpler recipe for handling labor. Of course they did; for instance: A Certain Great Personage desires to build a palace, and needs men. Does he advertise for carpenters and bricklayers? Does he entice men from the cotton fields? Oh dear no, he merely orders the men to come, conscripts them for his service. And the labor arrives, not a minute late. They leave the factories and desert the crops, to erect that Palace for the Personage. Is any hullabaloo raised about the wages? Or the hours? Or whether it be open shop? Not a whimper. Everything moves right along, serenely as Bill Grouch says it used to do in the good old days. Laborers swarm to their task, thousands of them, fetching their own tools and their own provisions. They house themselves, they feed themselves, and nobody suggests an arbitration. If any kicker should even whisper the word "arbitration," the Personage saw to it that he never made another whisper. Laborers had no choice about their coming. And they toiled for the Personage until the Personage chose to let them go. No strikes, no rioting; the system was beautifully simple, and many men are now alive who worked under it.

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The very reddest rag to Bill's bull is these pestiferous police, poking their noses into his affairs, until no citizen has any privacy. Sometimes Bill contemplates moving out of the country, just to get away from their meddling.

Maybe the American police are waking up a bit. And yet, suppose we had dropped Bill, not in Turkey or Siberia, but in law-abiding England, and within the memory of living men. Then suppose again that Bill had blundered into this adventure:

Near a certain midnight, Bilious Q. Grouch, Esq., on a strictly personal mission, gallops like mad to a little tavern fronting the seashore, springs from his horse and after a hurried supper is shown to a room. There are two beds, one of which he finds already occupied by a snoring stranger. Next morning, while it is yet dark, B. Grouch Esq., bolts his breakfast, throws a shilling to the hostler, mounts and rides as if the fiend were pursuing.

Two days later Bill is arrested and brought back, charged with murdering