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THE GROUCH

Like the poor and the plumber, the grouch is always with us; and like the painter he is hard to get rid of. We are all "grouches"; it is just a question of degree, perhaps just a question of taste, and maybe palate!

It is natural for man to "kick", it is by this means he gets what he wants, but he has to have others with him in order to attain his end; and, however contradictory it may seem, it is by kicking that his ends are often defeated. In other words the kick must be timely and well directed in order to gain that popularity necessary to give it the impetus whereby satisfactory results are obtained.

It is easy for us now, with our present parliamentary system—(which, by the way is only a product of the "grouch" as we will go on to show)—and press facilities to attain many of our ends. And what may be termed the modern grouch is to some extent a product of the press. The chief difficulty is to distinguish between the malcontent and the "grouch".

Frequently we can differentiate between the two by the depth of popular feeling. The malcontent is shunned on account of his pertinacity towards his "pet aversion",—his vapourings being directed by his own petty selfishness. On the other hand the "grouch" or "kicker" has a healthier and wider outlook and by far a more magnanimous viewpoint;—having, as his objective, the righting of a wrong which he has in common with others, and from which he and others have suffered. So that after all the "grouch" is more or less a healthy individual whose failings may "lean to virtue's side"!

We are not without grouches in the E. T. D. Our malcontents are, we thank God, few and far between; and we could wish they were fewer still: although we could easily dispense with the insidious malcontent we are ready at all times to entertain the "grouch". For it seems to us if there was no "grouch" there would be neither progress nor conditions tending towards progress. The writings of Carlyle, that greatest of all grouches, were after all one of the most potent influences for moral reform in the nineteenth century.

Magna-Charta, the first great charter of English liberty and subsequent reform, was obtained by the great Barons' grouch which resulted in the battle of Runnymede and which may be said to be the foundation of our present democracy,—whose principles the Allies are now engaged in defending over half a world.

RUSSIA.

Much is written nowadays about the "DOWNFALL of Russia", whereas the events from which the writings emanate may merely portend the birth of a REJUVENATED Russia.

No doubt the situation, from the viewpoint of the Allies, is

anything but satisfactory; yet for Russia it may be natural and even salutary. No deep rut has ever been ploughed on the road of progress (by means of revolutions) without the passage of blood-stained wheels to and fro upon its crimson surface; so it is to be with Russia.

We have been looking upon a mighty task as finished which has not yet begun;—so looking, in spite of all the lessons of the past staring us blankly in the face as if worn to silence at length by their unavailing cries for sensible interpretation.

The lessons taught and learnt by the American war of Independence, the mighty spirit of democracy begotten of the French Revolution, or by the great civil wars of England which established Cromwell as overlord and protector, munificently surrounded by a wisdom and might which but few Kings of any country have ever displayed:—these lessons are lost to us if we believe that the Russian revolution can be accomplished without a greater and further internal struggle.

Of the spirit of democracy the Russian people know naught. The feudal system in its most primitive form (as introduced into England by William the Conqueror) was a broad-minded and liberal policy of land-tenure compared with that in vogue in Russia, and only abolished there about the middle of the last century, the declining days of which are within the lives of those in the depot today.

The emancipation of the Russian serf was no act of voluntary magnanimity on the part of Russian autocracy, but rather the realisation that the autocrats were to be the beneficiaries from the fact that whereas the land held idly was unproductive, by a system of settlement giving semblance of independence to the settlers, there was created for the same an economic value.

Time eventually found a highly educated middle class imbued with democratic feelings, gained from neighbouring continental democracies and perhaps particularly from the cradle of democracy, England herself; and creeping on gradually, touched and later permeated a considerable section of the highly educated autocracy.

Today we find these two elements to a very great extent fused together fighting against the forces reacted from the archaic system of the now overturned Russian empire and the lawlessness, anarchy and ignorance begotten of it.

Alas, we find Russia today struggling with all the great questions that have agitated democracies for centuries, and she has to settle them with perhaps the shedding of her best blood; flanked by an enemy, the most daring, cunning, ruthless, and relentless any country has ever had to confront, and from whom, either as vanquished or victor, she can gain nothing worth having in a lasting democracy in either ideals or institutions, and whose lust for blood and territory is yet unsatiated, and perhaps insatiable.

We trust that the awful picture presented by Campbell in his "Pleasures of Hope" may not be again reproduced in Russia:

"Ah, bloodiest picture in the book of time!
Sarmatia fell unwept, without a crime.
Found not a generous friend, a pitying foe,
Strength in her arm, nor mercy in her woe!"

—and although we fear the worst, she has our sympathies and we believe that the freedom which fell with Kusciosko may again be Russia's; and all the shrieking, horrible turmoil of the present may be for her the precursor of many happy days and nights serene.

CONGRATULATIONS.

"Knots and Lashings" extends its hearty congratulations to—
Act. Sgt. F. M. Freeman.
Act. Sgt. C. Stokes.
Corpl. J. S. G. Laing.
Corpl. S. B. MacFarlane.
Corpl. G. H. Cherrington.
2nd Corpl. W. Jones.
Lance Corpl. J. W. Olver.

WE WANT TO KNOW.

Who that guy is with initials R. W. who is responsible for fining us and advertises the fact on daily orders, part two.

LAST WEEK'S COMPETITION.

A Disappointment.

Only five telegrams were received in answer to our prize offer. None of them were humorous; two were questionable; and two inane. No prize will be awarded in this instance.—(Ed.)

Obey that impulse and get an extra copy of "Knots and Lashings" to send to the folks back home. You may be sure they will be glad to get it. The postage is one cent.