



Within my province—or transmogrification of the Erstwhile. The ubiquitous yes-men of the seduced press inform us, in good faith and induced eclat, that great progress has been made in this cruel world in the past thirty years—automobiles, hysterine, airships, boyish-bob, radios, corn-flakes, submarines, short-skirts, movie-tone-squawking pictures, bell-bottom pants and black bottom, electric locomotives, rubber-tired eyeglasses and absentee beer glasses and presentee jackasses, five and ten cent stores, monkey glands, appendicitis, neuritis, 606, flu, insulin, pellegra, high blood pressure . . .

Quite right, my learned co-scribblers, all those are within the progress but, unfortunately, you cannot eat any of those except possibly, corn-flakes, jackasses and monkey glands.

But I do not wish to chide you for the list you have made—progress is there—and I hereby absolve you of all blame save the neglect to mention that progress was not general, that it played favorites, that it broke out only in few isolated cases—all of which can be recorded in less than 200 words, including the luscious aspirin.

Thirty years ago today the great American workingman ate hamburger, in great chunks—my mouth waters yet.

The good house wife would toss a large beefstek (unrefrigerated) into a large wooden bowl, pick up her lignum-vitae maul and proceed to pound the steak, pound and pound it, turn it over and over, and pound it—ah, what I mean to say, that was chopped meat! And, gentlemen of the press, as I bit into it, some of it would quite naturally fall into my ears.

Thirty minutes ago today, still carrying the taste, I hied myself to a restaurant and ordered hamburger, as a matter of fact.

*It came! It stunk! It conquered!*

What was it made of?

Three quarters stale bread and quarter ancient beef—probably part of the same cow I ate thirty years ago.

Not much progress there, is there?

Time was when the miner found six chunks of boiled beef, as big as a lady's fist, in his dinner bucket (rations for eight hours) . . . What do you see there now?

Half an orange, four crackers, one bread and jelly sandwich, and an orphan sardine.

Not much progress there, is there?

True, we get meat 365 days a year—But O, how little!

How thin they slice it—more meat is shaved off by the barber—and if we were not getting our beef-shavings or pork-flakes regularly, day by day, soon the barber would have an edge on us . . . How thin we are shrinking!

Not much progress there, is there?

Thirty years ago today I could average between six and seven dollars a day (when I worked)—others did the same.

I was a mere kid—too young to understand the iniquities of our "best" people.

I now average between four and five dollars a day and what I mean to say I WORK—or walk.

Not much progress there, is there?

Thirty years ago today, hardly big enough to wear overalls, I could buy that noble uniform for fifty cents—good for two years.

Now I can buy the same, at a bargain, for two dollars—good for nine months, and no more.

Not much progress there, is there?

Thirty years ago today I could buy "Hub-Gore-Congress" work shoes for two dollars and twenty-five cents—good for two years without half-soling.

Now I must pay four dollars and ninety eight cents for a similar shoe—similar in looks only—they, with good luck, last me three weeks—or one day after the first rain, I am kept busy half-soling them and have no time to make my fortune.

Not much progress there, is there?

Thirty years ago today a twenty-five cent cap was built to stand the rigors of time up to and during forever—if you didn't lose it while under the influence Overholt's seductive concoctions.

A two dollar and fifty cent cap today cannot survive one April shower.

Not much progress there, is there?

Thirty years ago today men would snatch forty winks in an alley covered by a blanket of snow—two feet thick—and still be strong enough, and wet enough, in the morning to argue the bartender out of an eye-opener.

Today, like a dying calf, they curl up with heart trouble.

Not much progress there, is there?

Thirty years ago today unionism was not so strong—that is, in the sense of stench. But, the boys did have their union halls, worthy presidents and faithful secretaries—and any old time they didn't like the brand of tobacco the boss chewed, they could hold a meeting (and did) call a strike (and did) and make the boss like it.

What have we now?

A bunch of 'em down in Washington, D. C., hollering for beer—to go with their pretzels.

Others are supinely laying on the flat of their backs waiting for Gabriel to blow his saxophone.

Still others are playing for "hickeys."

Not much progress there, is there?

*I should say not!*

I want to go ahead—and, when I say "ahead," I mean in that general direction; not sideways, as at present—for verily I do believe it is better to faint than feint.

T-B S.