

# Slipper's Soliloquies



1-86

By Fred Slipper

Ray Jordan is an old-timer in our area who now lives in the Mount Vernon. Like myself, Ray likes to write, and many of his stories have been published in book form. However, he had a few "leftovers," and graciously gave them to me, allowing me to use them in my column now and then. For this I thank him. - Fred Slipper.

## This Changing World

Like it or not, this old world upon which we make tracks every day is switching customs and techniques so fast that it is difficult for old heads to keep up.

One of the most notable changes we observe is in the use of the English language, namely, the employment of what one writer aptly terms "bafflegab." Nothing seems wholly white, or black, any more.

For example, taxes are never "raised" nowadays; the tax base is merely "broadened." Politicians save millions for the taxpayers every year, but taxes continue an upward trend. The cost of saving so much surely is expensive.

In our youth we were more or less proficient in a gibberish called Pig Latin, used among kids on occasion just for amusement. Though we've worked at it some in a casual manner, the second language used by the younger generation of today baffles us nearly as much as the windy pages of bureaucratese, using many words and saying nothing.

The kid dialect we think is rather cute, and harmless, but our opinion of bureaucratic idiom used to cover the real meaning would melt the type. No wonder our First Americans did, and still, complain of officials speaking with a "forked tongue."

No wonder some people were startled at the Swivel-Eyed

Swede's words coming straight down the middle of the alley, with no detours, no double-meaning ten dollar words, no loopholes in late paragraphs to weasel out of something said before. Sure you don't want to run for president, fella?

Stored away in our cobwebby upper files are the remembrances of a few items now gone into the limbo of almost forgotten things, for better or worse, such as:

Firemen pitching horseshoes to relieve the monotony . . . kid bands using combs wrapped in paper for musical instruments . . . splitting on hands before a fight . . . cinching up mother's corset strings . . . beating on tin pans to settle bees.

Kids used to "coon" fences; now they just climb over . . . bib aprons and sunbonnets . . . long baby dresses . . . kerosene lamps, everlastingly cleaning chimneys, trimming wicks and filling with kerosene . . . hot rock or brick foot warmers in beds and buggies.

Cars without heaters or windshield swipes, plus fake tires . . . when female school teachers had to stay single to hold their jobs . . . popping corn and telling riddles . . . before most stale jokes were copyrighted by millionaire, unfunny comedians.

When side door Pullmans were popular . . . bindle stiffes . . . when boots were boots and shoes were shoes . . . when weekends were just plain Sunday . . . news butchers on trains . . . hipshot horses . . . horses that weighed a ton or more . . .

Gypsy camps . . . the thrilling aires of the old steam calliopes . . . riding the rear end of wagon reaches . . . ever go to an old-fashioned sing, or a cockfight? . . . what became of the whittlers? . . . when you had to skin everything before you ate it, cellophane.

Quick now, how many nails in a horseshoe? . . . finger rings made from horseshoe nails . . . horses scared of autos . . . haven't had a glimpse in years of those fancy female wedding garters until lately, when TV Station 2 came up with a pair and the history thereof of such discreet finery.

Modesty and economy are still in the dictionary, but not much used any more. The mention of horse sense brings a horse laugh.

By now you've probably guessed that we started dragging 70 ill-spent years behind us awhile back. Then maybe getting up on the wrong side of the bunk some mornings influences our frame of mind, but we're going to stick around as long as go-grease pills will give us mileage, enjoying the pursuit of the singular things people have done, now do, and what makes them tick.