



T-BONE SLIM

DISCUSSES

SAMPLE CAMPS

On the whole, the conditions in the woods of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan are so bad that the "push" seldom gets a chance to fire a man. He is gone . . .

The conditions are so bad that if I describe them "the editor will refuse to print it"—thinking that I am lying, so as to get him in bad . . . In the best camps the conditions are bad. We call them "best" because we compare them to camps that have no conditions at all—not even rotten conditions. For, remember, conditions don't begin until a certain amount of comfort is established—sleep is not enough, we can do that standing up when sufficiently tired.

Yes, if I said that the best camp in Wisconsin has only four windows from which 160 men look at the glorious landscape on Sabbath morning—on the day when Jacks should be (?) praising the Lord instead of cussing the company—the editor would say, "Darn that Slim anyway, he's taken to lying, on top of all his other vices."

If I said that 414 pairs of damp sox are drying in this bedroom; if I said 831 single sox are hung around the stove in this bunkhouse the editor would be laying for me in the Proviso Yards when I go back to Chicago. He wouldn't believe it, and he wouldn't print it—and if he did, the G. E. B. would fire him.

If I said that 320 pairs of mitts, in addition to all those sox, are drying in this bunk-chamber the editor would start plotting my downfall right away; he would prevail upon a few strong men to come out here to Pine Lake to find out what's the matter with me.

If I said that in addition to all these sox and mitts there are 98 pairs of rubbers, 150 pairs of insoles, 12 jumpers, 9 suits of underwear, 37 pairs of overalls and 4 pairs of shoes drying in the same place, at the same time he would gasp—wilt in his chair, and be past all human or other help in a minute or two—dead.

If I said that the bunks are muzzle-loaders with room on the deacon-bench for only half the crew and that the other half has to get in bed to be out of way, the editor would say, "It's too bad, Slim was just getting good; it's a pity he lost his mind." Yes. He would think I was crazy. He couldn't believe it possible.

If I said that the lamps are arranged with "devilish ingenuity" so that you can't read; that you have to move a dozen pair of sox before the lamps pale yellow gleam falls on the paper, he would grow sorrowful and say that Slim has been overworked; he should be given a vacation in a house of detention—if I said that you can't sit in under the lamp, and see to read, because the products of T-Pot Done in the lamp prevent light filtering through and if I said that farther along, on the deacon seat, the light is too weak and that the heads, shoulders and whiskers of those sitting next to you would throw ghostly shadows on your paper, the editor would turn sick to his stomach, pack his clothes in the dead of the night and steal forth into the cruel world to be a wanderer on the face of the globe forever—maybe go as far as Cudahy, Wis.

So you see, I can't go ahead and describe these things for that reason and because I ain't got anything against the man, I can't go ahead and say that I picked up an Industrial Solidarity that everyone had been reading and that there on the front page I found a great big crumb, alive and well, whiling away the time looking over the headlines, waiting for some one to turn the page so that it could read T-Bone Slim's great article. I can't go ahead and make such wild statements. If I did the editor would look hard at the business manager and say: "How 'bout this—reports are coming in from the field that our 'Mealy Press' is lousy." He, you know, is in no position to know that these aristocratic lumber jacks, that send their laundry to town to be washed, are too tight to do it every week, with the result that they manage to keep the camp lousy all winter long. I can't say these things no matter how true they are. About all I can say is: **the best camps are bad.** I don't want the business manager to go to the expense of fumigating the press.

If I said that the Wisconsin lumber barons had never heard of "toilet soap" or "bed-sheets—"

If I hinted that common yellow laundry soap was used to wash faces

with and if I stated that 160 men wipe on ten towels—as slick as I am—if I "worked it into the record" that Castile soap was not being used—the editor would jump up: "That settles it," he would swear and bring his fist down on the ink-well; cripple his hand for six months and cripple the ink-well for life—he'd have to dictate, after that, his editorials and I, possibly, would be the innocent cause of discouraging him in his literary labors, whatever they be. For remember, a man can't do his best work when he thinks a former reliable man-of-letters is trying to impose upon his credulity.

If I said that two men sleep in each of these muzzle-loaders; (and that beans are the important part of the diet, not to be sneezed at) that the blankets are dirty; that there is no way to wash them; that a man is lucky if can wash his shirt and sox to say nothing about blankets.—If I came right out and said there is no wash room, no bath room and no dry room, the editor would grab my article, rush to the G. E. B., slam the paper in front of the Board and say, "there's the evidence". He would demand that the Board set aside a young fortune for the purpose of building a headquarter-camp for irresponsible writers.

If I went further, if I undertook to use argument in order to remedy this filthy condition; if I said, I have seen one man asleep in the gutter; that I have never seen two men asleep in the same gutter.—If I horn in with a statement that no two men can agree on the same gutter but that two men get along fine and dandy in a bunk, the editor would—words fail me—me T-Bone Slim.

He knows that if the men will organize—oh if they would only organize—that conditions can be bettered, he knows this, so how can we reasonably expect him to believe, that **the best camps are bad. We can't.**

There are a few SAMPLE CAMPS, electric lights and all that stuff, for advertising purposes—sample camps—single beds, etc.—and I know one camp (with electric lights) where kerosene is used for illumination. The bulbs are too dusty for ornamental purposes and the dynamo has been dead two years.

In closing I wish to warn all writers not to describe the worst camps. Stick to the best—maybe I, too, will one day write an article on them—it's a chance.

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