

T-BONE SLIM

DISCUSSES

IN MEMORIAM

I presume you know what IDEAS are. Germs of THOUGHT! Embryonic (pronounced "hamburger") thought. Embryonic, in turn, means eggs—Eggs of Thought? Now we're getting to where we can handle our subject or start a new one:

Unfortunately, we signed articles to sail on one of these so-called "barges" that ply the waving grain, the bounding main, the surging plain, of the mighty state of Kansas, the land of great-eyed freckled females, sandstorms, puffed rice, puffed and shredded wheat, cornflakes, tin cans (the breakfast table, with six cartons of imitation foods on it, looks like a cross section of a delicatessen store—the boss has stomach trouble) and we proceeded around and around the fields taking on cargo, our good ship pounding the bottom, jolting the crew until their Patent Howard A-A1 garters and other rigging would break under the strain—I mean—under the overalls. Imagine what all that shaking and jolting does to them germs of thought; those embryonic notions; those "eggs;" (ideas about to be hatched out) and to the "stuff of imagination" in general, imagine this.

And consider then that you are paid \$5 per—perhaps—for the jarring, jolting and shaking—and nothing for your work—nothing for other travail, such as: parboiled feet, cooked soles, sunroast and wind scorch, and, last but not least, being cut to pieces by bearded grain which same has gone far to respectablize the guiltiest scratching, done furtively, as well as the pure, virtuous and wholesome scratching done frankly and openly, vigorously.

People think nothing of a man "digging" himself on the streets and in the plaza, and other places more in harmony with his immediate structure. "Ah, says the town financier, "he is one of the men that help to make my living; outfits my cortege and furnish accessories for my baby blue sport car—let him scratch."

But them IDEAS? Those eggs of THOUGHT?—

Knocking together in the jolting, and in the head.—Is it a wonder if some of them become cracked and the rest become smashed—unhatched—an indefinite mass—a mess. Like a bunch of henfruit in the fantail of a Ford—and, if Henry is blocked by a crippled freight train, the price of eggs would have dropped so that it wouldn't pay two men to dicker on them, anyway.

Well, that's what happens to the boys that harvest the grain, and I would suggest that every railroad be compelled to haul solid trains of empty oil tanks for the convenience of the workers—so that they may harden themselves to the jarring and jolting-to-come in the header-barge. Reduced gang-rates and plush cushions is going to cause the undoing of the Agricultural worker even as the fire-spitting "combine" will bankrupt the farmer, come a hail year.

The combine is a gamble "that it will not hail in the ten days that intervene between the time when grain is "fit" to cut and the time when it is dead ripe. It will substitute insurance for labor and create waste—terrific waste. Visualize 4,500,000 bushels of wheat gone to a frozen hell in 15 minutes of hail—maybe next summer.—And then visualize \$2,500,000 worth of "combines" rubbing elbows with a pile of rusty sauerkraut cans, here and there a pineapple can to lend dignity to the grangers' collection.

Kansas crop approximately 160,000,000 bushels of wheat.

Meade Co. 2 1-2 million.

Ford Co. 4 1-2 million, etc.

Barton Co. running 45 bushels per acre, high.

Now as to the idea.

We stood before the statue of the grand army of the republic in a park at Great Bend and naturally we began to wonder . . . our jaw dropped and our friend Bill, who is quite abrupt in his ways asked us to close our mouths and concentrate on "looking with thine eyes." Half consciously we obeyed and, then, suddenly one of those ideas, that was not cracked, hatched and formed into thought.

"Bill," says I, "you're pretty dandy with all kinds of senseless advice so, now, I'm going to ask you for a point of REAL information. I've traveled this state from end to apex; I've saddled in through one gateway, sagged around, vanishing in the mists of the heat waves in the lowest foothills of the rockies; I've wriggled my way through the

uncut, moisture preserving, weeds (around shade trees), and I despair of finding a place I have not seen—in which I have not looked—of which I have not drank with mine eyes.—The Leavenworth "spring" and I are old chums; Wichita, Minnescah, The "Dodge" and Pawnee Rock (the Rock since has been misplaced, been thrown away at harvest hands on the Santa Fe); now, why is it Bill, that nowhere in all this state do I find a statue of a Harvest Hand, the warrior of the pitchfork, the Knight of the Overall—fifty years ago, week before last, the grasshoppers took the crop; forty-nine years ago the hoppers again tried to take it, but the farmers vibrated the air so violently with their prayers that the hoppers got cold feet and flew "northwest" (an insinuation that Wyoming is not religious) and since then, year after year we, harvest hands, have rushed in here and practically wrested the crops from the hungry maws of grasshoppers—year after year, mind you, and Kansas has forgotten how to pray—having no occasion so long as our strength holds out.

"Yet, not a single monument to the harvest hand rears its form in all the sunbaked sordidness of La Flor De Sol Commonwealth. I say, Bill, wouldn't it be appropriate to have a statue for this hard working saviour—have him dressed in a 69-cent shirt, a pair of overalls, a flapping straw hat and a pitchfork, in one hand—place him in a leaning attitude, scratching his shins with his free hand and free will ?"

"Well," says Bill, "I think the best thing we can do it take the Mob to Scott City and go North on that jerkwater."—Which proves that Bill had listened to me attentively.—T. B. S.

BANGOR SECRETARY

Fellow Worker George Crocker has been elected branch secretary of Lumber Workers' Industrial Union No. 120 of the I. W. W. at Bangor, Me.