

T-BONE SLIM

DISCUSSES

A WIDE ESCAPE—

(To be read grindingly)

MINNEWAUKAN, N. D.—A neat sign decorates the "butcher's" window:

SPECIAL

—This Week—

ARMY

BACON—

—Feed That Crew Right—

This bacon is special for threshers, and would indicate desertions from the army are increasing. And so, as I stood admiring the sign, and the belated patriotism of the butcher, a dirt-farmer's voice matriculated in my ear: "I'm one man short," he says, "one of the boys got a letter from home and had to go . . ." etc. And so, being deeply touched by the loyalty to home folks displayed by "one of the boys," I volunteered to take his place, and do my best to fill his shoes and rack—or perish in the attempt.

And so, about 10 a. m. we arrived on the field and I went to work . . . I'm not building a labor record—I'm familiar with work.—That night, 8:15 p. m., while waiting supper, I casually remarked to another one of the boys that it seems strange that a man can come on the job at almost any time of the day and still get ten or twelve hours in.—"By Hek, that's so—I never thought of that before," my *tete-a-tete* confessed.

(I got in eight hours first day).

(You're welcome to any part of it).

(No use saving it!)

And so, bright and early next morning (I'm first up) we're out in the great open spaces bayoneting bundles—one rack short on OUR side: In my effort to put the burden of proof (for the missing rack) on the man following me I rolls up to the machine at 7:57 a. m.—(a. m., I said)—with my third load. In the heat of battle all other tactics were forgotten.

But along about 9 a. m., I, too, gets a letter from home—from mother, although she's been dead these several and sorrowful years. (A little thing, like death in the family does not interfere with my correspondence; in this I am something like Sir Oliver Lodge and Conan Doyle, sir):

"My Darling Boy Slim," she says, "that rack you are using is 9 by 14; two feet wider than the rest of 'em; you better come home right away or that thrasher will put you in a graveyard with overwork. You can see yourself, that it holds 31 to 36 shocks while them other racks hold only 18 to 24. . . ." She told me a lot of other things—so what could I do? Being a dutiful son I went up to the thrasher and told him I had been suddenly called home on account of that wide rack and that if he don't want to have dealings with my mother he better have my time ready right after dinner.

"Can't you stay till night?" he asked.

I can, but won't—you've got three hours to get a man in my place—that's the very best I can do.—

But getting back to the letter:

"Slim," she says, "I'm surprised that you would 'fall' for them wide racks. As many times as I've warned you that threshers are full of iniquity, dirty pool, so as to say—dirty pool to the extent that they dassen't hire a man in the evening for fear of picking up a former victim. I'm surprised at you. You ought to know that over half the threshers carry two big racks, not on the same side; oh, no, they're placed on opposite sides and serve to make it easy for the homeguards on each side. If they were on one side only, the home boys on the other side would have no advantage. On a crew of 10 racks the two big racks makes it nice and comfortable for the 8 men with small racks—on the principle of sacrificing "two for all"—these eight men were with the rig when it started, spend their sweatless days with it and finally finish up with it in a blaze of glory and phoney loads—and you work with them rats and stand for those wide racks, I'm surprised."

But mother, (I answers back at 10 o'clock), I've got only 30 cts. cash and \$5.50 coming. — Eleven o'clock I got another letter from mother telling me to "pick up those eight shocks under the blower for an even, small, load—so's to get an empty rack for mile and half drive to dinner, and that \$6.50, with the 30 cts., is enough to get out of the country with.

So here I am, alive and well, right on the main line, but it was a "wide escape."—T. B. S.