

lack of permanent address, and dif-

T-BONE SLIM DISCUSSES

RIGHT-HAND HABITS

Once upon a time there was a double-track railroad, and it happened that the trains on this road would use one track going east,—the other track was nonchalantly referred to as "west-bound," and used for that purpose—and merrily the cars did "bound" not only on the westbound, but on the eastbound as well. And it happened on this road that the custom was to run the trains on the "lefthand" track instead of the right hand—which was the custom on all other roads. Now, it came to pass that the regular crews of this road did not present themselves for duty—duty, get that—at least they were "not on hand" to take on Labour. Possibly a "strike" had detained them? Possibly they had starved to death? Maybe they had been pinched? . . . Anyway, the railroad company proceeded to hire such applicants as made their appearance and insisted that the trains be run as if nothing had happened, instructed them to use the left hand track always (single tracks over bridges were to be classed left-hand, both ways). Well, the new boys, who had been running right-hand all their lives, went out and pretty soon reports of wrecks began coming in. The wrecker, (in charge of a right-hander), starts out in a hurry and, sure enough, it, too, forgot to take the left-hand track, and piled the fast mail into a ditch—that was the last straw. These men meant well enough, but running to the right had become a habit with them, and it began to look as if the road would have to change itself to a right-hander. Indeed, if it had not been run left-handed successfully for years and years, there are those who would say that it cannot so be run. The fact that it was so run could not be argued away.

But the railroad could not change itself to right-hander because not all of its left-handers had gone . . . some were still on the job, and they, on a right-hand road, would be almost certain to run "left" sooner or later. Here was a fix—Force of Habit—and looking directly at it we find that men learn to follow the paths of life under the tutelage of pecuniary emoluments; the way they have been taught. And they view life either superficially, unseeing, or analytically, observing. Ex.: Ask a conductor, "Is business picking up or falling off?" You will get in reply the benefit of his superficial examination. For he is far indeed from the extra board. But if you want a clear-cut, direct, truthful, complete answer, based on experience and knowledge, ask the head brakeman—he it is that is up against the extra board and he it is that looks at things with seeing eyes, analytical eyes. Now, then, because of adversity, some of us learn to look at things as they are and in detail—our eyes somehow seem to penetrate deeper than the surface condition. We go clear to the root of a thing.

We saw that there was a crying need for the I. W. W.—to keep the boss from putting his feet on the table—and we proceeded to organize and install such an institution (in the sacred precincts of "our" fair Autocracy) and it was to be run left-hand, different from all other such institutions—dual nothing, a modified democracy—to the end that every member shall have the fullest possible "sayso" in its affairs and that they be notified of the facts, from time to time.

T-Bone Slim.