



LO, THE SCRIBE



I, T-bene Slim, author by the grace of "a crying need," and humpbacked by virtue of having worked at the Galewood freight-house ten days, do hereby take the readers into full, free and unlinfited confidence:

We have been ambitious—like Ceasar.

We are still ambitious—like Ceasar.

And we propose to remain ambitious—

until we die of overwork—like Ceasar didn't.

All our life, so far—we have had three ambitions:

First, to be "different."

Second, to write the best poem—just one.

Third, to be a party to all current heart-ache, want and oppression—we desire no special privilege. (And now, oo la la, Vera Moller has gotten "off the center" and beat me to it, with the poem "When Fiends Laugh Loudest," O Oh la la—I melt with grief).

Being an author, in distinct contravention to my ambitions, because of peculiar circumstantial "demands," it may be that I will be pardoned for discussing Ambition No. 3, viz: "to be a party to all heartaches, etc.," to partie,pate in all hopes and fears and other great disturbances that rim-wrack the human stethoscope. And being a writer I must anticipate and partake of the disappointment and sorrow of other writers—I must grieve with them lament with them and altogether perform as if I had been the victim of their misfortune. My duty is clear. Not only must I help them with their sorrowing, but I must aid them to overcome their sorrow.

My duty is double; but not doubly clear. What can be the cause of their sorrow? There is only one cause for sorrow, failure.

Success is never a grieving matter (and tears in connection, indicate the presence of happiness, onions or cinders).

Failure it is then that causes writers to mourn.

Well then, if that's the case, I, with my greater experience, must "prompt" those struggling writers in the ways of successful penmanship, penwomanship and penchil-drenship.

I believe that is settled.

First—the first qualifications for a successful writer is a red-card, in a hip pocket; in the case of a lady, as near the hip as practicable. That will prove the presence of sufficient brains—brains really are the first qualification but since they are synonomous with Wobblie "tickets" we will not make an ourang-utang of ourselves by har-ranguing further on that score.

Second: Obtain a specimen of good penmanship. Get yourself a model of classic literature—and study it until you know it by heart, including punctuations. The I. W. W. Preamble is best for that purpose—especially that part of it that says, "so long as hunger and want are found among the millions of working people." Note: It says "so long," not "as long"—That's the "gram-mer," (pronounced gran'ma) of it.

When you've got that, you're a writer—you can now commence laying awake nights—earning your living days, preferably with your feet or shoulders so's to keep your writing fingers pliable. (Keep away from a spike-maul and wheel-barrow).

You're now a writer—a great writer—without question. The inquiring multitude will read your stuff and understand every word; with the result that you are strong in their strength, a most positive factor in the world of events—a medium for great good—you are clear. And as time flies you become clearer—either that or your readers get more penetrating, mebbe a little of both But—

A time will come when you doubt your ability, just like I did—it is then you must undergo a test. Send a story or two to a literary contest—like I did.

You will now begin to lose flesh. The august judges will ponder and ponder, cock their eye toward the ceiling, compress their lips, purse their eyes and mop sweat . . . and the flesh will simply roll "off of you." Your friends will think: "It's his conscience," "You've kermitted a crime or corn-tracted a secret disease. . . I tell you this final test is the worst thing about literature . . . I'm waiting for a decision right now, a shadow of my former glorious self, and twice as critical.

You've entered a story. Good!

Your continuation as a writer will now depend on the judges' decision.

You will either be discouraged or exalted. So, let me tell you, if the judges, in all their wisdom, award you "the prize" you had better try paper-hanging, plain hanging, peddling papers or rolling cigarettes—your "line of communication" is broken—your usefulness is at an end—your career as a writer is finished—your whole life is blighted and your friends will flea you as they would a pest. . . .

That is the Test—for is it not written in the book of life, "it is given but to a few to understand horses."

P. S.—Written pending decisions Feb. 2, 1925.