

He Had Pride



By T-BONE SLIM

Lo, behold, all ye scoffers, a story—
A story of life's underwhirl;
And mark ye, your blood may turn gory
As its vital statistics uncurl.

It's a story of struggle and labor,
A tale of a nobleman true,
Who may be your very next neighbor—
Yes, perhaps—it may be even you.

Just an expert in system and dodging
A toiler predestined to roam—
At every new boxcar, and "lodging,"
There was no one to welcome him home.

With a mind that was lofty with learning
He drifted along with the tide
And knew of but contempt for earning
The then going wage—he had pride.

How he longed for the joys of tomorrow
And swore at the woes of today,
For "his" was an every-day sorrow
But his future—was sunshine and play.

He had fought where the game went the farthest
And tried out the greatest of loads;
At times his pet grief was the harvest,
Then again 'twas the building of roads.

In the woods, for poor down-trodden workers,
His voice had repeatedly rung
And, strangely, the o'erbearing shirkers
Were afraid of his sulphuric tongue.

From the heights of a noted mechanic
He stepped down to lift up his kind—
Nor felt he the slightest of panic
As he left the smashed ladder behind.

He would quote well the great Aristotle,
The pages of Marx he had turned;
He had read, too, his shirt and his bottle—
So, you might say that he was well learned.

When it came to commanding or hating,
We'd find him quite anxious to serve;
In fact, he was too 'commodating
In all questions of honor or nerve.

Thus it was, when hard-pressed by the masters,
He shook down the ladies of shame;
Relieving the girls of their piastres
And left them financially lame.

Then the sheik of the sisters of mercy,
A bull-cook and hostler of souls,
Took after our fast-healing Percy
Just to "plug him up" plumb full of holes.

When the war had subsided (if any)
Six bullets had punctured his hide—
His wounds though both grievous and many
Were apart from his grit and his pride.

So he rushed to a doctor and savior
And thus to the sawbones he said:
"I say, on my word and behavior—
I ran foul of a hailstorm of lead."

Lo behold, all ye scoffers, a story
A story of life very bold—
I warn you your blood may turn gory
As its vital statistics unfold.

He recovered his health, in a measure—
And lovingly gazed at reform,
And sought once again the pay-treasure
In industrial serfdom and storm.

But the pay, it was low and unnerving
The board, it was maggots and swill;
His bed was a hangout for vermin
And, shortly, he found himself ill.

Then a hospital beckoned and offered
To help him to fight the new foe—
And now, for the first time, he suffered
On a cot that was whiter than snow.

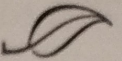
All the strife of the ages barbaric
Did parade in the nooks of his mind;
His words, therefore, grew quite tartaric—
I'm afraid he forgot to be kind.

His remarks showed a lack of good training
So sharp was his breathing and trite—
Indeed his blue words were most maiming;
Yet, he thought he was safely polite.

Yes, he staggered the 100 lb. nurses
With many an unpolished cough
And horrified, with his soft curses,
To the poorhouse they hustled him off.

I'll admit that his pride was now fractured,
And deeply he felt his disgrace—
It looked like a plot, manufactured;
An insult "too damn dirty to face."

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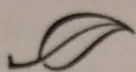
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WHOSE DUTY

I am the Christus—
The Truth-Speaker—
Lucifer—
The Light-Bearer—
Rebel of all times and climes—
The wisdom of—
Gods, Mortals, Devils—
Is mine—
Therefore—
Give heed unto this:—
Much, we are hearing, these day
About—
"Our duty to the State."—
But—
WHOSE duty—
They fail to specify.—
Mine? Nay!—
What duty do I—
A Proletarian—
Owe the State?—
Answer Me, O State's Men!—
What has It ever done for Me
That I should—
Worship It—
Die for It—
As a Proletarian—
Be, the Propertyless?—
Owe duty to the State"?—
You must be joking!—
Give heed unto this:—
We have I seen It—
The State—
Which out its mailed fist to—
Demand Our Life—
To increase Our liberty—
Always it comes to us—
The Proletarians—
Shooting, murdering, cruci-

APRIL, 1926

Down the railroad he walked, tears agushing—
And hid in the weeds (as he cried)
And when the fast mail came arushing
Then he crawled on the tracks—
'Guess he died.

Yes, of course our poor tale has a moral
('Tis vital statistics you scan)
He came out of the exploiters' chloral
And expired a non-union man!

MORAL:

Oh if he and his kind had united
Their numbers, ideas and skill—
His wrongs would, no doubt, have been righted;
And the trains would have no one to kill.

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He'd have followed great ideals and high codes
And would not have feasted on swill—
He would not have slept with the microbes
And, of course, he would not have been ill.

They'd have broken their unholy fetter,
Not deigning a cross word to spill—
His pay would have doubled, or better—
Thereby saving the poor ladies "till."

Oh if they had but organized strongly,
Our troubles would be o'er, or nil;
No power could hop on us wrongly—
And our dead friend would be with us still.