

"The Marshal Will Cut Your Hair—"

T-Bone Slim Records Some Impressions Of the Psychic State Of Christians In the Famed City of Salina, Kan.

By T-BONE SLIM

Stories had come to me to the effect that harvest hands are suffering great privations in the sovereign state of Kansas; therefore, being a man of great wealth and independent fortune, I thought it fitting that I sacrifice my time in investigating the rumors—in fact, I saw it as an urgent duty.

To get at the facts I must of needs disguise myself and present myself as a povertystricken workingman—this was not very difficult because I resemble a workingman in many respects and the look of desperation comes to me as naturally as the same look comes to a farmers wife kicked all out of shape by a herd of discontented Holsteins.

First of all I discovered that no harvest hands starved to death in Salina this year—a record that the city can look back upon in afteryears with pride and distinction—Kingman had better look to her laurels.

True it is, tho, Salina has no clear title to that record insofar as the hand of fate intervened—a harvest hand discovered an empty box car in which one or more bags of beans had ripped open and spilled all over the floor—that incident alone rescued many from an untimely end and helped in no mean measure to preserve Salina's prestige in the forefront of Jayhawk hospitality. Then, again, just as the situation became critical, and the more tender hearted commission men, (rank outsiders) left sacks of potatoes out in the night air for the "purpose of being stolen," as one remarked, the officers of the law hastened to "the jungles" and loaded 70 of the hungry men on the MOP, M. P. Lines, if you please, and sent them south where the grain is ripe—no doubt figuring "the riper the grain, the less the cramps"—anyhow, nobody starved within the limits of Salina; that is, lest he be lying in the weeds. And Salina's "community chest" is still intact in its virgin glory! The first three restaurants I applied to for aid to appease "the terrific pangs of my hunger" and to calm the "assaults of my surging appetite" (in Russell, Kans.) I was turned down and told, "go to the marshal"—a very sympathetic creature, no doubt, and not at all like a man elected because of the calloused nature of his conscience—sort of "passing the buck," so as to say.

"What! Me go to the marshal? Me?," I exclaimed. "Me, who knows every 'pig-shoot' in the state! Me, who knows every farmer in this county and could be elected for sheriff tomorrow morning before breakfast. Me?" I moans, losing all sense of my grammar . . .

When I said that the proprietor almost jumped out of his clothes, but still stuck to his story "go to the marshal." I'm beginning to believe those dark rumors are true—but I need verification. I approaches a businessman. After assuming a proper look of anguish I imparts to him the secret desire of my heart: "My dear sir," I cries, "I do not want to starve today—I want to sort of stick around so that next winter we may all starve together—I'm

most irrevocably opposed to starving in the summer time."

"Well," says the great man, "go to the marshal."

Hm—a great man, that marshal, and to tell the truth I would rather go to him than to a public executioner (no matter how gentle or considerate.)

Now, to be just, let us not say that those business people are thus trying to dodge their responsibilities and kill the last remaining spark of generosity within their otherwise worthless hides; let us say rather that their selfishness is in the ascendancy and that it grieves them sorely to live in the fear that other citizens are not doing their share to still the sufferings of the unemployed—hence the community chest, "to to the marshal."

Unfortunately, only the professional beggars find it opportune to go to that busy thief-catcher and crime-detector; while others of the needful canvas the residences as yet unaffected (shall I say uncontaminated?) by organized charity and collective Samaritanism—no doubt a few find their way to the marshal's manor where his good wife, who knows her husband like nobody else knows him (if he has a wife) throws open the bounties of the marshal's board to the unfortunates—people speak well of the marshal, but that is beside the point.

The point is, business men have found it necessary to organize their charitable inclinations, (if any) so as to distribute the burden upon the community instead of adding it to the price of commodities—not that I see what difference it makes insofar as the community pays the bill in either case; in fact the move lends itself unhappily to the view that absentee-helpfulness is charged to costs, and "chests" exist for the purpose of discouraging all but the rawest application for succor—a very depraved condition—its only extenuation is "they organized."

The starving harvest hands are unorganized. They have neglected to shunt their miseries from their shoulders and are, for that reason, begging today—begging for work, begging for bread, begging for bull-durham, begging for salt, begging for soap, thread, medicine,—some praying for death—they neglected to organize.

Few years ago an organized worker

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thoughtlessly mentioned organization to one of those weak minded workers on a freight train they were riding—the poor, unfortunate man got dizzy, his head went around and around—he fell off the train. When they gathered him up in a clothes basket, he said, "I was thrown off" . . .

Not long ago the employers themselves became disgusted with the unorganized condition of the American working class and organized "company unions" all over the country; trying their damndest to keep our disgrace a secret—and I cannot find it in my heart to blame them for, verily, if the workers won't organize a genuine union, an imitation is better than none insofar as it may encourage the boys to organize a real one.

I have not the power to put in words the arguments necessary to bring to life "the action to unite"—I can only hope. As to the advisability of the workers uniting at this time, I can only add to their own conviction by saying "this time" like any other time is the right time. It's something like "the right time to beg"—if you wake a man up at 2 o'clock in the morning and ask him to feed you, that's the right time.

Apologize for not reaching him sooner. (Damn those flies!—they seem to think they are writing this article.)

Be it known by these presents that for 40 years Kansas has knocked the bottom out of the northern market by dumping ahead of those less favored states, and felt secure in doing it. The result of that has been that a greater percentage of northern farmers were bankrupted—mebbe I should say, bank disrupted.

Overproduction has been the great cry these forty years—with the possible exception of two war-years—each year there has been an overproduction but I cannot find the accumulated pile. It must be hid. Argentina has been beefing about an overproduction these many years. Canada howls it cannot sell its surplus. Russia claims a surplus.—Practically every country has produced so much that it's people starve for the want of it—logic, what?

The same holds true to Kansas, etc.—But I prefer to think the American farmer is starving, with his hand on the plow, because he is unorganized. Were the farmers organized, that enormous surplus would shrink so small that it would require most powerful "specs" to see it. I claim the farmers are unorganized, both for attack and defense. I claim the northern farmer is totally unorganized for self-defense against the Kansas "dumping" and, incidentally, unprepared to hold this year's wheat to dupm ahead of Kansas next year. The mere mention of that condition goes far to prove them unorganized and explains their presence on the legislative "prayer rug" at Washington, D. C.

What do they expect the senators to do, eat the surplus? Possibly they are "begging" Congress for assistance—for all the world like an unorganized harvest hand in front of the butcher and baker. Now my opinion of organization is not that it facilitates and makes for well-being with fine phrases, soft-syllables, beautiful-pleas, a tear or two—I view organization in a very different light and when I see people weeping I make up my mind they are unorganized.

This year Kansas begins to realize its lack of solidarity with its northern brother and if they have any money in the bank they better take it out now while the taking is good—55 cent wheat will not pay for that combine!

The combine, by the way, has not benefitted the Kansas farmer in the slightest—all it has done is throw 100,000 men (or more) out of work and the Kansas farmer in his sublime ignorance has been getting a great kick out of it: "Thank God, we're at last rid of those bums."

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