



T-Bone Slim

RAISING A FAMILY

"Do they bother you on those trains?"

They do, brother, but what's bother to a life already full—each additional bother, must make room for itself by displacing another bother, thus maintaining the fulsome life we are prone to lament. Thus it is, too, owing to the universal disquietude, it makes no difference whether or no, which way-ever, the train goes or doesn't it will land you at the right place and in plenty of time (if it never gets there)—you can't go wrong. What of it if you do have to ketch the train on the bellyside of the curve and instantly became invisible to the law's cruel, calculating eye—miracles must happen. Standing in the rain waiting for the "8:30" until 10:30 p. m. then retiring soaking wet is just an incident that makes life interesting.

The scenery is just one more eyeful of cinders. The peeling skin is nothing but a ride thru the tunnel behind an ammonia car.

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Stretching myself out in a dirty car which I selected with great care while the train was debating with itself as to whether or no it shall turn a wheel—I reasoned I shall be less likely be disturbed by other travelers if I bed myself down in a car not so clean.

Woe is me, how was I to know that car had one or more three cornered wheels—I didn't sleep long.

Just as the engine sent a sigh thru the air-brakes a "cavalcade" charges the doors of my car and boosts into my car one woman, one baby, one husband and two sheiks—Goodnight I says to myself, my dream of sweet dreams was destined to remain a dream only—had the presence of mind to heave a polite snore in their direction in hopes they would pull in their "horns of nonesense" and also to assure them of my disinterestedness . . .

(Shut up, Slim, and let the gentleman do his own talking, and tell his own story:)

. . . "then I got a job for six days and earnt \$18. After I paid the rent I had just \$2.50 left. This kept us for three weeks but we had to live on 'pancakes'. Then I got a job and earnt \$12 . . . then I was idle again for a while. Then I got another job and earnt \$12 again . . . after that I was idle again for a while and finally landed a job to 'tend' sheep, on shares. This we did for a while and when that blowed-by we had lost everything, including the bedding."

"I didn't know what to do or where to go and then I got a job and earnt \$15—it was then we decided to open a hamburger joint.

"Fifteen dollars wasn't enough so I borrowed five . . . then I found out the stove would not work so I had to spend \$2.50 of that five for a new, second-hand stove . . . we had just enough money to buy the buns and hamburger and sugar—we borrowed the salt and pepper . . ."

"Yes," interrupted the soft-spoken young wife, (Mary, age 20) "and I went out and bought a nickel can of milk."

(She seemed to possess more intelligence than the three men put together—but I shall not quote her more.)

"Well, the joint didn't pay and at times we didn't dare to eat, ourselves. Finally I got a chance and sold it for \$40.00—with this money we bought a Ford and started for Spokane . . . she had a good motor and only for that motor we'd been stuck in the hills (Continental Divide) but the "wash-board" road soon got our tires and, at one time, I had three tires on one wheel—I could tell when one was slipping off by the "side-play" of the car. Finally the roads which are built to be forever improved, never to be finished, got our tires, I had no gas, no oil and only 35 cents to eat on. 'Twas then I sold the Ford for \$5 and made for this train . . ."

Such was the young man's story and if there is such a thing as salvation this young man would have found it. He had tried almost everything but bank robbery and wound up in a bouncing box car with his six-months old baby, wife and two able comforters.

The young wife unused to this form of transportation was "up in the air," not only in "the sense" but physically as well—the husband was holding the baby in his hands (not arms), and his lower extremity was pounding a tattoo on the car floor, for the car persisted in its efforts to shake loose a rib or two.

His punishment was SEVERE.

All this I saw by the light of the matches the worried mother was forever striking—every minute or so she would strike one.

(Note: the car was in the far rear end of the train, placed there so that if it jumps the rail no damage is done other than the killing or maiming of the rear-end crew.) The train made a long run to coal chutes without stopping and when it did, when it DID—I got off.

"ANYTHING is better than riding this car," says I trying to throw a little light on the darkness.

No, the bulls don't bother us much!