

Little Sleep First Night In Jungles for Amateur 'Hobo;' Real Adventure Commences

by Herbert Waters Jr.

The Jungles!

The home of the hobo, the "Bum," the "Weary 'Willies" of the road - men who have lost any grip on themselves - men with no object in life - outcasts of society!

What do they eat?

How do they live?

What do they think?

Such were the thoughts running rampant in my mind as I stepped from one world - a world of hope, of ambition, of love - into another world one of bitterness, lost hopes, vanished dreams, containing as strange a mixture of human beings as could be imagined, with even stranger contrasts, beyond imagination - yet all bound together by a common sympathy, a common understanding of suffering, probably drawing them closer together than any other class of humans in this so-called civilized world, bound by the "ethics" and customs of the clan.

And I was becoming one of them - not a spectator standing at the side and watching, but one of them - living, thinking, doing, and being a hobo, a bum - for three days and three nights, to learn the inside story of this strange hell-box of humanity - holding in its midst young and old, healthy and dying, hopeful and despondent, drunk and sober, honest and dishonest, clean and dirty.

MEETS FIRST BO'S

About 8:30 last Wednesday night I slung my blanket roll over my shoulders, stepped into a blacker than usual night and started my short but exciting career as a hobo. With disheveled hair, dirty and unshaven face, and disreputable clothing I started walking the ties of the N.W.P. branch line toward Sebastopol with little idea where I was going, what I was going to meet, or how I was going to live.

Crossing Roberts avenue and continuing west along the tracks, I had travelled but a short distance when I saw two "Bo's" coming onto the track from a side path. We met as I turned off the track to enter the path. One grunted. I grunted in return. It was a crude salutation, neither of us even bothering to look at the other.

LOOKED LIKE MORGUE

Expecting to come upon a group of campfires with the hobos gathered around them spending the evening, I was mystified at not seeing sign of light anywhere. Had they all "pulled out"? The path led around to the front of the old warehouse that sets back from Sebastopol avenue. As I reached the front of the building, which has a long loading platform covered with a roof, I saw a continuous row of bodies stretched out on the wooden floor, like a ward in a hospital, or, it seemed to me in the silent darkness, corpse in a morgue. As I walked down the line I could see that there were about 40 of them, without any sign of life, despite the early hour. Seeing a vacant spot, I climbed on the platform and set

about "turning in".

While I unrolled my two blankets, buttoned my coat tighter around me, and laid down on the hard, dirty floor, not a word or sound greeted me. All seemed sound asleep...

...Although the sleeping accommodations weren't exactly what I am used to, and it was turning colder as the night wore on, I might have been able sleep if it were not for other causes. I had no sooner become drowsy than a weird scream arose from the pile of blankets to my left. Had someone gone crazy? His continuous cries and ravings certainly made it appear so. Muttered curses and cries of "shut up!" from all up and down the line grew in volume until one kindly soul hit the screaming one over the head with a shoe, and quieted him for the rest of the night.

I learned the next day that he was a dope - or "snow" - addict, as dope is referred to among the clan.

When things had quieted down again and I once more neared the sleeping stage, I was given a sudden start by deathly groans at my right. Although I expected some more boots to fly, such was not the case. I learned the source of the groans the next day as an aged man, seriously ill, not expecting to live out the rest of fall. The groans had been somewhat creepy so I lay awake contemplating things for some time. The next interruption of my thoughts came when a bum soused up with canned heat rolled off the end of the platform to awake in a mean mood to curse the world in general.

...Awakening to the sound of much activity, I realized that my first night was gone, and my real experiences were about to open. I lay for a short while with my eyes closed to hear if any of them discussed me as they passed. Not the slightest attention was paid my apparently sleeping form...

...Later one of the hobos passing me commented I "must have pulled in kinda late." Finally the truck driver left and I was able to sit up and look things over. From that time on I had to be constantly on guard dodging people who might recognize me, as unpleasant consequences might have resulted had the hobos, with their ethics and what not, realized I was "spying" upon them.

Stretching my stiff body as I unrolled from my blankets, I took in the whole scene immediately. My "snow" friend to the left had vanished. He pulled out early, I was told. I saw the sick old-timer to my right, white haired and thin. Other odd characters loomed up and down the line. Two Spaniards, one a young fellow, were jabbering away full speed ahead in Spanish with several other hobos laughing at them. Others were rolling their blankets and belongings into "balloons," as the packs are known.

...Meanwhile almost everybody was leaving, some, with their balloons. some without. Although I couldn't see where they were going, I knew they must have some place to cook and eat, so I put some bacon and two pieces of bread in one pocket and a small frying pan in the other and started following after the rest to really open my first day's experiences as a hobo.

- Press Democrat, September 9, 1931

Scribe Eats First Breakfast Alone in Jungles; Discovers Hoboes 'Square' With Pals

Walking around the end of the warehouse where I had "flopped" for the night with 40 other "brother bums", I started looking for the hobo "kitchen" where I could cook a breakfast. As I reached the tracks my dining room for the next few days came into sight a long row of open fires along the side of the track with from thirty-five to forty jungle inhabitants gathered in groups of two or three, with here and there a solitary hobo, all busily cooking or eating.

The dozen or more fireplaces were all different - some elaborately built brick ovens, some built from scraps of iron from neighboring dumps, some set in dug-out hollows - but all permanent fireplaces used time after time by the itinerants, never destroyed, but left for the next user. No one "owns" any of the fire sites, it is a case of first come first served. Even the "permanent guests" in the jungles take whatever fireplace is vacant when mealtime arrives.

CANS NEVER REMOVED

Tin cans of all sizes - blackened from long use - some with wire handles and others without, lay sprawled up and down the line. The "kitchen utensils" are as much a part of the jungle as the fireplaces; tramps come and go but the assortment of cans is always on hand for the next one to use.

Down the line I walked, returning nods or greetings here and there when they were offered me. Coming to a vacant fire about in the middle of the group I busily set about making a fire to cook my grub. A stack of old railway ties near the camp provides a plentiful supply of fire wood, split up with a marlin spike or the lone axe with improvised handle that serves the entire group. In a short time a cheery fire was burning in my "stove" and my small frying pan was resting on the two iron rods crossing the blaze. That meal wasn't an elaborate affair for that matter none of them were but it hit the spot. It consisted of a bacon sandwich, dipped in the bacon drippings and then browned on both sides.

HAVE COMPLETE MEALS

As I sat on my seat (a five-gallon oil can) munching the sandwich I spent considerable time taking in the scene surrounding me. I was actually surprised at the way some of them fared: Mush, coffee, breakfast cereal, bacon, eggs, toast in fact anything you might see in a restaurant during breakfast hours. Some had more than others, but all seemed to have more than myself.

Breakfast activity continues for several hours during the morning, some eating early and others late. As soon as one group finishes with a fire, others throw on more wood and start cooking. Every thing has a lazy atmosphere. Eating is a slow process and quite a social occasion. They linger over the meal, trading jokes and banter, calling remarks from one fire the other.

The hobo's are happy on two occasions: when they are eating and when they are drunk.

"Buenos dias, senior!" interrupted voice at my side, and I looked to see one of the Spanish pair I had noted the night before smiling at me. He looked at the line of eating and chatting bums and commented in broken English, "Un Americano, he live by his stomach he rather eat than any thing!" Several groups invited him to join them and he sat down to with three others at the next fire.

HATE FARM WORK

I felt a little out of place sitting myself while the others talked groups, so when I saw an elderly man looking for a fire I nodded my head to mine and told him I was through. It broke the ice and as he prepared his meal he talked freely, asking me questions, not in an inquisitive manner but just being friendly, and I questioned him about chances for fruit work in the vicinity.

"You're too late," I was told, "prunes are all picked and besides, there's no money in the lousy things anyhow". I later learned that this disrespect for Sonoma county's prunes as a means for making money existed among them all - prune picking was almost a last resort...

...I stood up ready to leave when a happy-go-lucky looking bum stepped over with a "hello kid" and asked if I had a frying pan he could borrow. I produced mine, a small one, and he laughed. "A one-egger, huh? No, I need a big one. Got a gang of good fellows up the line and we are going to have a hamburger feed. Comon up after while. Where yu from?"

"Eureka" I responded. "Well, well, how is good ol' Eureka?" he questioned as he siddled closer. A good whiff of alcohol on his breath decided me to go easy a drunken man can get mad! "Well," I evaded, "I just came through Eureka, been working on a farm for a spell over near Arcata".

"Don't know anything about Arcata" he said, and I felt much easier. Neither did I know much about it.

"See yu later, kid, I'm going into town" and he started off. "Wait a minute" I called, "Want to get me some beans and bread?" He answered readily, almost too readily. I thought with grief, and I gave him a half dollar. I hardly expected to see him again, but it was for the cause. Would a hobo keep his word to another bum he had barely met or would he rather have the four-bits?

I GET MY BEANS

Going back up to the warehouse platform where I had flopped for the night, I was surprised to see most of the inhabitants gone. Was the entire group transient? Well, if they went I thought I had better go too, so I picked up my balloon and was ready to pull out when one of the old-timers stopped me and told me a guy with a loaf of bread and some beans had been looking for me and left word for me to join his gang out the tracks away. Was it a bluff or did he really make my purchases? Well, I wanted adventure and he looked likely to provide it so off the tracks I went, in search of my friend and the beans.

Less than a mile from the jungle I stepped into a nest of drunken, sodden bums, lounging in some tall dry grass. In the center sat the one who had invited me to join them.

"Here you are" he cried. "I looked, for yu'. Fellers, here is a great guy, he and I are old pals, met in Arcata, and he's gonna be one of the gang! Kid, to show you what we think o'yu I'm gonna give you first crack at this nice little bottle of 'buttermilk,' and 'ats a great honor, aint it fellows?"

As five tough means, [sic] dirty, drunken wrecks of human beings leered at me, my eyes roamed to the ground where they noticed the label on a denatured alcohol can, "Warning-Deadly Poison."

One sentence split the tense stillness. "Drink" he ordered, "and drink, plenty!" Grins had changed to scowls. Which was the greatest chance, the poisoned alcohol, or the five tough hobos?

- Press Democrat, September 10, 1931

Reporter Joins in Hobos' Canned Heat Party and Is Forced to Become Cannibal

Ordered to drink denatured alcohol by the five drunken hobos I had joined, I resorted to a ruse that would probably have been unsuccessful had they not been so 'gassed.' Putting the bottle to my lips I apparently drank, but my tongue in the neck of the bottle acted as a stopper while I faked gulps and swallows.

Instantly the attitude of the bums changed - they grinned and slapped me on the back. "Atta boy", "At a sport!" "Lookit 'im take it down" and such remarks greeted me as I passed the bottle to the next hobo. I was now one of the gang - I had friends - hobos, to be sure - but friends. They would fight for me, "divvy up" food or money with me, and accept me in any of their plans. I had been tested and found a "good guy" - it would have been an unforgivable insult to refuse to drink when invited.

Thereafter the six of us were a jolly bunch, spending half a day talking and laughing over every topic imaginable, with the bottle constantly going the rounds. I kept up my bluff at drinking and had to carry it on through by getting a little "silly" and posing as nearing the drunk stage.

ARE GIVEN FLOATERS

"Slippery" Williams, the first of the group I had met, gave me the lowdown on why they were keeping safe distance from the main jungle. The five had been arrested as drunk and given "floaters" with suspended 30 day sentences attached after they had sobered up over night in the "can". They gave the judge a story of hard working prune pickers and acted insulted when the Judge mentioned them as vagrants. Now they were celebrating "gettin' off easy". All claimed to have previous jail records here that the Judge had overlooked.

Anyhow, they were taking there time about obeying the floaters and didn't plan to "float" until they took a good notion too.

So for about twenty-four hours they had been on a drink. Slippery Williams had slept some of the effect off when he met me but now they were all on the way "under" again. But they knew better than to stick to the jungles, if the "dicks" caught them again it would mean the thirty days free "board" for the gang. And besides, the jungles doesn't take to having "fugitives" with floaters hanging around, they usually start trouble that ends in the entire group being started on the march. So the gang I was with had located a "flop" of their own.

HEAR THEIR TROUBLES

I sized up my "pals" while they were telling me their troubles. Little Joe, a short curly headed man about forty, was the drunkest of the lot, fast losing all connection with what was going on, but never missing a round of the "buttermilk." He got it into his head that I was his son. and there after every time anyone got in an argument with me he would rouse from his stupor to say "Leave my son alone,

unnerstan'?"

"Slim" looked feeble minded, and acted it. A lanky, loose-jointed brute of a man, he had an odd shaped head with a hanging, animal like, jaw. Frank, who claimed the county's prune picking "championship" since he had convinced the judge that he was an expert picker, was always smiling, drunk or sober. Even when he was mad he would smile, sarcastic as it was. "Scotty", an older man, was in poor health, and predicted that "deho", another name for denatured alki, would "take" him soon. He was pessimistic but a more conservative thinker than the others in the discussions we had. And last, Slippery Williams, my so-called "pal" was the wise guy of the lot. He talked and they listened. He joked and they laughed. He sang and they applauded. And he makes his living in just that manner hooking up with moneyed bums awed by his manner, until he had spent what money they had and then shedding faked tears as he left them, He wasn't a bit "dumb" like the usual run. When others join him for a "party" they usually expect to end up in jail, but then, "Slippery" is popular anyhow.

ARE GETTING HUNGRY

The bunch hadn't eaten for some time and were getting hungry. Naturally they turned to Slippery, "Hey, how about some eats, Slip ol' boy, we want eats." They all joined in begging Slippery to give them something to eat. It seems Slippery had pooled all their funds and was acting as custodian of the treasury. Oh, he had eats, he told them. "Did you ever hear of a pal going hungry when Slippery Williams was around? Not much." And then he went into a detailed description of his shopping tour. He had bummed free loaves of bread at bakeries, leaving the other loaves outside each time he hit a new shop. He hit a butcher shop, whined out a hard luck story, and asked the butcher to grind up any scraps he had into as much hamburger he could give him for 10c. While the soft hearted butcher was in the back of the shop fixing up much more than a dimes worth of hamburger and considering himself doing charity work, Williams helped himself to choice pieces of meat behind the counter.

But the other bums were tired of hearing Slippery brag, they wanted eats, they wanted coffee. But Slippery suddenly realized they were in a nest of tall grass with no place to start a fire. They argued about the safety of a fire but I soon sat on the idea, hitting a vital spot when I warned them a fire would draw the "dicks" and things would happen plenty fast if the fire got away in the grass.

WE BECOME CANNIBALS

But they were hungry and wanted to eat. Slippery was losing his hold on them and they were razzing his ability as a leader. "Wise Guy" Slippery wasn't too drunk to think of something.

"Cannibals" he cried, "Whose afraid to be a cannibal? Am I the only man here brave enough for a cannibal?" The idea caught them all. "We'll all be cannibals".

So Slippery tried to push aside flies from the exposed cheap hamburger, broke chunks of bread from the French loaf, and passed around raw hamburger sandwiches. Despite the fact I had already had breakfast, they insisted I join them so ate the raw hamburger, sickening as it was. Before we had finished we had three of the sandwiches each.

While I was struggling to dispose of my unappetizing "meal", Slippery raved on at great length over not letting it out that "Slippery Williams" got so hard up he had to eat raw meat. "What would Montreal Jimmy think? Wouldn't Whitey Nelson razz me? No, youse guys keep this in the dark." It is quite an insult to any good "bum" when he can't get a square meal or has to go hungry. It just isn't done. They

eat, prosperity or no prosperity, unemployment or no unemployment.

FIRE SCARES BO'S

I was suddenly startled by a crackling sound and the grass behind me burst into flames. A carelessly tossed cigarette butt had started a fire, with dry grass all around. Instead of putting the fire out, the hobos surprised me by yelling "Beat it" and starting running away, afraid of getting caught if the fire got burning good. In a few seconds I smothered the blaze with blankets they had forgotten to take in their haste. A few minutes more and it would have been a bad fire.

"My son's a hero" cried Little Joe as they returned when they saw I had put the fire out. "Gees, yu saved us kid" said Slippery. Most of them know that tough penalties are dealt out for incendiarism and are afraid of starting fires.

But among the group returning one was missing. Where was "Scotty"? He didn't come back. We all ran down the tracks where they had originally started and found Scotty, apparently a victim of the combination of denatured alcohol, a hot sun, and raw hamburger. He was unconscious, sprawled across the tracks with his head on one rail!

- Press Democrat, September 11, 1931

'Chimney Sweep' Racket Always Good for Few Dollars; Slippery Gives Up Buttermilk

Laying on the track was a broken-down old man, poisoned by drinking alcohol.

"There's a darn swell guy" testified Slippery Williams, suddenly serious for a moment, as he gazed down at "Scotty".

We dragged the unconscious tramp over to the shade under a tree and left him, the others promptly forgetting about him as they proceeded with the drinking and talking.

The orgy continued for an hour or so, when Slippery suddenly announced they had better all be on the move, but the gang had to split, three going north and three south. Protests greeted his decision, but after due discussion they all agreed that six was too many to travel together they would attract too much attention and would be spotted quicker by "dicks".

ABOUT "BUTTERMILK"

But when it came to agreeing which ones would pair off, it was another matter. Slippery tried to settle it but they didn't like the way he divided them up. Besides, he picked me to go with his trio, while the others thought I should go with them. Finally they decided that I should choose for myself and all were friends again while the bottle was passed. Before the "buttermilk" had completed the rounds the bottle was empty. Slippery tried to mix more, but his hands were so shaky he passed the job to me. The denatured alcohol mixed with about an equal amount of water turns to a cloudy white liquid, from which the name "buttermilk" is derived.

Before leaving they discussed plans for the future and where the gang would meet again in the winter. The bunch going north were going to try a hand at cutting grapes, while the other group was heading south, bound for San Pablo, Richmond, and other points in Contra Costa county, a popular county with the bums as it has many "modern", jungles and lots of "suckers".

They planned to do a little chimney cleaning, I was told, but I soon learned that the "Chimney Sweep" racket was more than it sounded. The chimney sweeps work in pairs, with one always seeking entrance into the house on some pretext. While working around a fireplace from inside the house he invariably picks up any odds and ends he might use himself or "peddle" to pawn shops. Then they charge the customer \$5 for the privilege of having his house robbed and go away leaving the chimney about as dirty as before.

SLIPPERY INSULTED

With balloons rolled preparatory to leaving, Scotty returned to the group, somewhat sobered up after vomiting heavily. He claimed the exertion of running "took" him and immediately wanted something to drink.

As I had no desire to "travel" I informed them that I wouldn't go with either bunch, but would stick around here for a while longer. Scotty told me I was wise, and to keep away from Slippery if I wanted to keep out of jail. Slippery was terribly insulted and started off in a huff. But before he pulled out I had noticed him secretly slip the remains of a can of denatured alcohol into his balloon. Now he had no more than stood up when Slim discovered it missing. They all jumped Slippery and for a while it looked like things were going to happen and happen fast.

"Slippery Williams, you wouldn't take a drink out of the Jungles, would you?" he was fiercely questioned by Slim as the atmosphere once more reeked of the meanness and toughness that had made my knees wobble when I was first ordered to drink. It mystified me at first, as I knew Slippery had bought the alcohol. But I learned that the lowest act and the meanest insult to his friends a hobo can give is to take away anything to drink from the jungles, whether he owns it or not. He can stay until it has all been drunk, but if he wants to leave while there are still more drinks he is bound by time-honored custom to leave the remaining liquor to his pals.

It didn't take Slippery long to decide. One look at the menacing faces surrounding him and with a forced laugh he contemptuously tossed them the can.

ITS PLENTIFUL

"What's Slippery care for a little alcohol? Ain't there plenty more in the drug stores? Can't I always bum money? Take your d---- drinks you lousy prune pickers" and with that he and Little Joe, stupefied and following like a dog, staggered off.

Where I was expecting to hear condemnations of Slippery, the three remaining bums laughed. "Oh, he's a great guy, even if he would steal your shoe laces" they commented.

With farewells exchanged I also "pulled" and soon met Slippery and Joe down the tracks. Drunk as they were, they had bummed a half dozen eggs at a farm house. Slippery, who a minute before had been at outs with the rest of the gang, even Joe, also surprised me by saying what a swell time he had

with the gang and what good fellows they were. And I learned from he and Joe as we walked that they had met about a week before, had a fierce fight, and while doctoring up black eyes, cuts and bruises together had decided to team up for a while!

I left the pair and returned to the jungle at the warehouse early in the afternoon. A few were cooking, but a noon meal is not common, two meals a day being the usual fare. I followed the two-meal "diet" while in the jungles, usually helping myself to fruit at different farms for "lunch" when I got a little hungry.

ALL WERE INFORMED

The afternoon was spent in gossip, but this time it was not with drunks I was gossiping, but the "old-timers" and others "laying in" for the day. We were sprawled on the warehouse platform. Some times two or three of us would argue, sometimes a large group. I drifted from one bunch to the other, trying to take in as much as I could. I was surprised at how well informed the general run was, but on the whole their thoughts are prejudiced and narrow minded. Their minds are filled with facts, gained from travel and reading, but when it comes to using the facts for useful thinking it is another matter. Their reasoning power is low.

Here is a glimpse of their opinions gleaned from the wide range of subjects discussed:

Ann Lindberg is a real sport her Pacific flight proved it. "Lindy" and Ann are the ideal married pair.

Politics? Oh, it is just another racket, but not as honest a racket as most others...

...The Golden Gate bridge will be built in spite of protests it is the greatest thing California has ever done.

Denatured alcohol dangerous? Naw, when this prohibition stuff was slid over druggists got their heads together and concocted a way for "us workin' men" to get cheap drinks.

But non-drinkers shake their heads - if a man drinks it is his own business, but - they tell of having seen many hobos die in convulsions or go blind from the effects of "deho".

Depression? Now you've started something, hit the one spot on which they nearly all are radical. Preventive measures and cures in profusion are expressed, but most of them so drastic as to be startling. It will take another article to tell how the hobo sizes up the depression.

- Press Democrat, September 12, 1931

Jungle Residents Predict Horrible War Will Result From World's Depression

War, and more horrible war than the world has yet known, killing, maiming and mangling millions of men, women and children, laying desolate hundreds of cities and towns, and practically wiping out the culture and humanitarianism of our civilization, is the dreadfully pessimistic prediction of the outcome

of the World's Depression of many of the "thinking" hobos of the jungles.

I was spending the afternoon in discussion and argument with a group of twenty loiterers "flopped" on the warehouse platform. After touching on many topics ranging from news and views of the day on through political happenings and predictions, the talk inevitably turned towards solution and outcome of the much talked of depression.

Every man had his views as to cause and cure, some optimistic, some pessimistic, some conservative, others radical. It doesn't occur to them, as it did to me, that the most violent and radical critics of organized government, cursing the unemployment and business conditions, were still hobos back in the prosperous 1927 and 1928, and are not victims of the depression. They are hobos and always will be. But now that the country is supposedly "suffering" from unemployment and depression, they all take up the battle cry and shout that something must be done.

TOO MUCH MACHINERY

The average bum is pessimistic about the outcome. Any form of relief work or congressional relief action is at most but temporary. Business inflation is a natural result of unfounded measurement of values. Will business climb back to its former heights? Maybe yes, maybe no, is the sentiment. But will unemployment be solved? Emphatically no, without drastic changes in our economic plan. According to the information I gathered, they feel that any upward climb in business, any so-called return to prosperity, and climb in stocks, will be at their expense, at the expense of the poor working man. Why? Because the trend to efficiency, to mergers, to machinery, always grows more noticeable in hard times. And this same efficiency, mergers, and machinery will throw more men out of work. Industrial companies cut down wages so that they can show paper improvement in financial "condition at the end of the year, pointing to it as a return to prosperity. Two companies merge, announce their confidence in business is a sign of prosperity, but at the same time the merger will do away with many positions. - That is the first outcome of the depression they expect, a false prosperity.

And why, it occurred to me, do these men, most of whom are just professional panhandlers and bums, although a few are really anxious for work, bother themselves about return of prosperity? Has it cut down their "income" in way of bumming and panhandling? No. Instead the depression has been a boon, more being done for them - breadlines, soup kitchens, etc.

ARE WIDE READERS

No, I doubt if many of them would have known there was a depression if they did not read-but they do read and read a lot- anything they can, get hold of. And they are a great bunch to seek sympathy, they trade stories of their troubles and each sympathizes with the other. What more natural topic would come up for discussion in idle time than what is wrong with the world? And the more they talk and brood over questions, the more they feel that it their own problems; each one begins to consider himself a victim of a heartless world.

"Depression, bah," cries one radical, "how do congressmen, politicians, millionaires, how do any of the big bugs know a thing about depression? Look at them, moan 'depression' when they lose a million in the stock market and only have a million left! They don't know anything about a depression. Then how can they solve it? You watch, it will be us guys that end this depression when it really ends, and it will end plenty rough on the rich bugs," argued, the heated communist.

But Russia and its communism gets little support from the hobos. They watch it skeptically. Something drastic is needed, they agree, but it took one of the oldest men in the jungle to actually say it, his words coming slow and serious and seeming to bear much weight with his listeners.

HORRIBLE WAR SEEN

"It doesn't matter who is right or who is wrong the trouble is here. Only one thing can end it for a very long period, and that one thing will surely come unless something unexpected relieves conditions in the next five years. War, a horrible war, is coming. It will be a world war of size hard to imagine. It doesn't matter who is right or wrong, all will fight and millions will die, countries will be laid waste. It will end with no one receiving a victory - but what is left of the world will have to go back to work, with much work to do and few to do it, to build the world back up again.

"There will be no unemployment, too many, will have been killed. There will be no time for political wrangling, the world will be too stunned and have too much work to do. Differences in politics, differences in races, differences in social and economic position, all will be forgotten in the struggle to return to a normal existence after such a horrible war. It will take many years."

Was this a hobo, a wandering bum, that I was listening to? But I listened intently as he continued, even going as far as outlining how and where the war would take place.

"The war will be unlike any other in history - it will combine revolutions with battles between every nation in a huge slaughter. Backed by communistic propaganda and promise of support, radical unemployed will attack the United States government. When the government thinks it has the uprising in hand, Russia will acknowledge the insurgents as the true government of the United States and send huge armies here to aid them.

ALL NATIONS TO FIGHT

"Immediately other powerful nations will align against Russia, with the entire globe split up in war, with fighting going on in many different parts at once. It will be a strange war, arising in many places and taking all in its midst. Not even women will escape, for they, will fight side by side with their husbands and sons. I hope I die before it comes!" he concluded and we all sat silent for a minute. Many nods of agreement were given. None contradicted this man in his dreadful prophecy. His words carried weight with them, he had traveled, had seen, had read. They agreed with him, war was coming.

The talk had given me shivers, I wanted to change the subject. I guess others felt the same way for soon several laughed and changed the topic to lighter subjects. But I had heard a serious prediction that clung throughout my jungle life, and I heard it reaffirmed by different groups in different places. War would be, the outcome of unemployment.

The group, which had grown while the orator was speaking, soon divided up into smaller groups talking and chatting. I resumed my observations and conversation by mixing with them.

I heard talk of forest fires going on a few yards away and soon edged in on the discussion. One of the bums had just recently come in from Willits, where he had spent a day on the fire lines and was describing his experiences.

HOW HE LOST HIS JOB

"How'd yu lose your job, bo?" questioned one of the group.

"Carelessness," he answered with a grin, "plain cuss-ed careless-ness!"

"Whatja mean, carelessness?" I quizzed him, hoping to get some information on how they fought the fires.

"Well, it was like this," and he stopped long enough to fill an old corn pipe before continuing. "A party of us had been sent out by the warden to put out the last blaze of what had been a big fire. By the time we got on the line it was going good. We puttered around a little but got hungry and decided to walk over a hill a ways to cook some grub. Well, we forgot to leave anyone on the fire line and whadya think had happened when we returned? The blamed fire had gone out on us! Carelessness, plain carelessness, not to leave anybody there to watch and keep it burning!" he finished as the crowd whooped up a laugh.

"Say," one of the boys asked when the laughter had subsided, "How do these fire warden guys get their, jobs, anyhow?"

"Oh, it's this civil service stuff," responded the fire-fighter.

"What's civil service?" again questioned the first hobo.

"You have to fill out a blank telling who you voted for at the last election!" was the answer he got.

- Press Democrat, September 13, 1931

Aged Hobo Is Given Medical Attention And X-Rays But Finds It Hard To get Food

As my first day in the jungles drew to a close I welcomed the approach of suppertime my second meal of the day. I stocked my pockets with the makings of my evening meal and was ready to go down on the tracks to cook when an interruption changed my plans.

The old man who had flopped near me the previous night and had seemed seriously ill, had upon the advice of others in the jungles, gone into town during the day to see a doctor, taking his balloon or blanket roll with him. It hadn't entered my head to worry about him, but several of the others did. One set out for town with intentions of locating him, returning just as I had planned to leave for supper.

He was carrying the old man's balloon. He was questioned hurriedly by several who feared the worst had happened, but it soon was learned that the sick man was returning, but had been too weak to make it with his own pack. He soon arrived, a "buddy" on each side.

SLEEPS ON FLOOR

His face was white and wretched with suffering. He was terribly thin and weak from lack of

nourishment. As soon as he had been made as comfortable as a sick man could be laying on a hard floor with a blanket and canvas over him, he was questioned as to what the doctor's "verdict" was. Many have an apprehension of doctors and consider themselves gone when they are so bad off as to have to be put in the hands of a doctor.

Well, what'd the sawbones tell you?" he was asked.

"Nuthin'," was the discouraged reply. "He spent the whole afternoon takin' pictures of my insides but didn't tell me anything but 'go back and get plenty to eat' to help build me up."

But he wouldn't eat, not even liquids. Nothing would stay in his stomach, even milk upsetting him. The ill hobo was genuinely appreciative of the doctor's free service in examining him and was returning again the next day if he could make it, he said. But the others thought differently.

TOO MUCH TROUBLE

Little groups here and there discussing the sick one muttered remarks about the way they "run this charity business." Some one mentioned how expensive the X-rays were and the number that had been taken free, but the sentiment was soon expressed, "Why go to all that trouble and expense to take X-rays and then send him back here to this kind of a life where he can't sleep comfortably and the food isn't so hot, when the same amount of money would pay to put him under cover where he could die in comfort at least?"

It did seem quite a contrast to me - the extreme care with which every instrument used on him by the doctor was cleansed and disinfected, the strict guarding the doctor and his nurses go to against any dirt or germs coming into contact with the patient while in their hands - and then sending him back into the dirty and unsanitary life of the jungles, eating and drinking out of anything available, sleeping with his weak body exposed to the cold.

His friends tried to argue him into eating but he insisted anything he had previously tried made him sick. But he finally decided to try out some beef tea cubes he had purchased and was struggling to get up when I suggested he let me boil him some water to dissolve them in. He appreciated my offer and I was glad of the chance to be of service as well as make a new friend. I was surprised to learn afterwards that I had not only made one friend, but that my interest in the old man had made me many friends among the gang.

DIRTY CAN USED

I had become used to the jungle methods of living and eating as far as I was concerned, despite my short stay, but it did move me somewhat to have to prepare food, or medicine, as the beef tea broth really was, in an old dirty can. But it was all there was to be had so I soon had the water bubbling for him. He wanted to sit around a fire to get warmed a little before turning in for the night so was helped down to where I had been making his broth.

Dissolving the cubes in a tin can of the boiling water he drank the broth. He almost trembled as he drank it, it had been so long since he had had nourishment. He told me he had had nothing but milk for a week, and the last few days the milk had turned his stomach.

After the warm drink had cheered him somewhat the sick man talked a little happier and spoke of

death light-heartedly. "I shouldn't kick" he mused, "I have passed my four-score and ten, and that's much more than many of them ever do." I helped him back to the platform, returning, after being thanked with real appreciation, to continue with my own supper.

My menu was unchanged since breakfast, but, beginning to feel the pangs of hunger, I doubled it. Two bacon sandwiches, some fried bread and some piping hot coffee made quite a meal. The coffee came as a pleasant and unexpected addition to my menu, being given me by another hobo.

I had previously noticed him watching me, and I guess he felt a little sorry for a "kid" to get started in such a life. "Want a hot drink, kid?" he called to me. I responded readily, and soon had fetched an old milk can for a cup and was washing down my greasy sandwich with coffee - and what coffee! Blacker than a spade and strong enough to support a bridge, I had never tasted anything like it, but it certainly hit the spot that night. The coffee-gift was sort of an introduction so we talked back and forth from our fires and Others would stop and talk to us now and then.

KNOWN AS "RUSTY"

I soon realized that I was now actually one of the bunch. To the few staying at the jungle I had become known during the day as a "good guy" and to the new ones dropping in every few minutes I was as much of an inhabitant of the jungle as any other, and had been there just as long for all they knew. So from the second night on I had plenty of friends and always someone to talk or eat with during the day. I was dubbed with several names and nicknames, with "Rusty" and "Kid" being the two most popular forms of salutation.

- Press Democrat, September 15, 1931

Reporter Finds Clothing, Eats, Can Be Had; Bo's Strong For Santa Rosa

Following supper and the usual gossip around the fire with others, I went back to the warehouse. As long as it remains light the bums are reading, magazines, newspapers etc. As the population picks up at night with newcomers pulling in, the platform was lined with forms now, some laying, some sitting, reading and talking.

Ironically, a sign over the warehouse platform seemed to laugh down on me.

"No Loafers Allowed", it read, in large red letters.

I paced up and down the platform, taking it all in... Quite a few of the hobos are heading into the cotton section of the state, some to work, others because so many have already accumulated there that breadlines are open.

SWAP INFORMATION

Walking on down the line I stopped at each group for a few words. Many were trading information. Those from the north tell those going north how conditions are, what towns to avoid, receiving in turn

the same information to the south. Most of them can name the exact time trains leave from any point to any other point and know whether a town is on the main line or not.

I was "tipped" to much information. My ragged jeans were considerably too small for me, and I was told I could get a good pair of pants in San Rafael at an orphanage there. If I was going south I could get plenty of clothes in Berkeley. I was told the names of several bakeries in Santa Rosa "sure-shots" for bread. Eggs were also easy to get, either from the farms or from packing houses, in the latter case the eggs usually were to be expected none too fresh. Breadlines and soup kitchens were discussed, winter being referred to as the "bean" season on account of the free feeds.

Santa Rosa, I learned, is really a popular town. The bums get good treatment here, plenty to eat, and have a good place to flop in the jungles.

By this time the majority of the hobos on the platform had rolled in for the night, despite it being but 7:30 or 8:00 o'clock. But it was cold and the blankets provided warmth.

I decided to wander down towards the fires along the train tracks as I wasn't ready to retire just yet. Quite a number of the bums prefer the ground and soft grass to the wooden platform for a bed, and I found many sleeping down near the tracks, or hovered around fires talking. As there seemed more life here than with the group I had left, I went back for my balloon and prepared to sleep under a fruit tree for my second flop since joining the jungles.

But before I went to sleep I was to get one more lesson in hobo lore. I had had much to do during the day with denatured alcohol and had seen others drinking drinks prepared from canned heat, but I now got my first lesson in preparing the "heat" as a drink.

Three hobos next to me had several cans of the heat and had invited a few others to join them. The rest of the bums were asleep, or trying to be, as I was. The canned heat is cheaper than denatured alcohol, therefore more popular. Its content is about the same, and it is really a dangerous drink.

The canned heat is a spongy, wax-like substance, purchased in small cans at the five and ten cent stores or at any drug store. The contents of the can is emptied into a rag or handkerchief - a red bandana was being used when I witnessed the process and squeezed. The alcohol is strained through the rag into a bottle or can, and then cut with milk or water.

The drink was soon prepared and in the midst of their joking, drinking and revelry, I dropped to sleep.

When I awoke again in the stillness of the night it was to awake to the reason that more of the hobos preferred the hard platform to the temptingly soft grass for a bed. I was literally covered with ants - large ants, small ants, ants on my face, in my hair, in my clothes, all over my body. I was alive with the crawling critters. Beating them out of my clothes and blankets as best I could, I moved my bed and went back to sleep but it was the last night I slept in that place.

WRITER HUNTS FIRE

The second morning dawned foggy and dreary, and I crawled from my blankets stiff and cold. I was among the first to roll out but it was so cold and damp I preferred getting around a fire to staying in my blankets.

By the time I had a fire going others were getting breakfast and I invited one of the hobos I had enjoyed talks with to join me at my fire. I was later glad that I invited him as he had some coffee and I hadn't planned what to eat being a little tired of the bacon sandwich menu. He had one egg and offered to split it with me after it was fried, but I decided a few cups of good black coffee and some toast was enough to start the day off for me.

I was beginning to think I had seen what was to be seen in this main jungle and planned to "hit the road" during the day so wasted no time over my morning meal. Not anxious to start out too early while other bums were leaving as I had no particular destination and might be embarrassed if some friends suggested me leaving for Sacramento or some other distant point with them, I returned to the warehouse platform for a short visit.

[..]

- Press Democrat, September 16, 1931

Negroes Get By In Jungles But Indians Unpopular Due To Violation of 'Bo' Ethics

One of the strong impressions I obtained during my stay in the hobo jungles was the lack of race prejudice. It was brought to my mind as I sat on the warehouse platform the morning of the second day watching a negro sweep and clean up around his flop or bed.

Throughout the time I was with the hobos, the colored man was treated just like any white man would have been. All seem tied together by a common sympathy and understanding and one race or color is as good as another as long as you prove yourself a "square guy" according to the code of the jungles.

I was soon joined where I sat on my blanket roll by another bum who entered into conversation. I twisted the topics toward the acceptance of the negro in their midst and he told me that it was something not to be seen anywhere but the west. In the other parts of the United States the color line is so far drawn that white men won't ride, in the same box cars with darkies. Violation of some of the jungle ethics is the only reason for being an outcast. I was told that Indians were considered "out" at present because just preceding the opening of the hop season many of them had been staying in the jungle and when they left for the hop fields they took along choice cans and jungle-made buckets and other useful articles considered a part of the jungle.

SHOE IS FIXED

My heel on one shoe had been torn loose, and as I was working on it with my pocket knife a bum stopped and asked me why I didn't use the last at the other end of the platform. Following him, I found a regular work bench, with two sizes of lasts and a small hammer. I awkwardly tried to fix the shoe myself, but was shoved aside by my benefactor who told me he would fix it. He had a pocket full of shoe nails and in a short time he had turned out a job any shop would have been proud of. They take good care of their shoes and the lasts are always use for making repairs.

The platform looked like some kind of a camp with all busily working. I had missed this the first day

by leaving early. Several were sweeping and cleaning up surrounding their flops. Others were gathering up loose papers.

Using a piece of broken mirror hung on a post, one man was shaving with an old straight razor. Over in a corner a hobo was shaving another hobo, to have the service returned later.

Straight razors are more popular, as they can be easily sharpened. But it was while I was in the jungles that one of the new comers arrived with some information that all were glad to get how to sharpen safety razor blades. All that was required was an ordinary drinking glass. And it was surprising how sharp he got the blades by running them around the inside of the curved glass.

WHEN IT'S WASH DAY

Many were doing their washing and hanging clothes out in the sun. I strolled over to watch them and got my first glimpse of a "hobo washing machine." A five gallon oil can, filled with soapy water in which the clothes are then put is the body of the "machine". An old milk or bean can nailed to the end of a stick makes a fitting plunger for the machine and by rapidly moving the plunger up and down the clothes can be washed real well without even getting your hands wet.

One of the bums who was staying in the jungle permanently was busy with an assortment of bottles he had collected, washing them and trying to fit various sized caps and lids on them. I was curious as to his plans so walked over to watch him.

"Got to do my canning 'fore winter sets in," he grinned up at me.

"Canning?" I replied in surprise. "You don't mean to tell me you are going to put up some fruit?"

"Why sure, I do it every year that I am not on the road," he told me, and went on to describe his plans.

It seems that about this time or earlier every year he collects jars and bottles from the dumps, goes around "visiting" orchards and vineyards to lift whatever fruit he may want, and then cooks them up into crude sauce to put in the jars. I later tasted some prunes he had cooked up and although it was somewhat flat from lack of sugar it did taste pretty good and imagine it will come in real handy on bread during the coming winter.

About nine o'clock in the morning I decided to leave the jungle and spend a day traveling the outskirts of Santa Rosa, trying my luck at hunting work, "bumming" food, and locating other jungles besides the main camp.

My campaign for work was unsuccessful, even my offer to work for my board. I traversed the entire western section neighboring on the city with no success. I visited prune orchards, hop fields and vegetable gardens, being turned down in every case. Prunes were all over with except dipping, and they had more help than they needed for that. Hop fields were surrounded by itinerants camping during the crop and many more were on hand than was needed, I was told by the foreman of one yard. At a vegetable garden I was told in broken English that the boss would hire "nobody but Italians."

I had to be careful in my search for employment not to run into any farm where I was known, but after several hours walking and asking I decided work wasn't to be had on farms at least and decided to

try and rustle some grub.

Whether my inexperience counted against me or I was not "in the know" as to what kind of places to hit I do not know, but I was a complete failure as a "moucher."

One lady glared at me and asked "why don't you work for a living?"

A man said he "Couldn't feed his five kids, let alone any tramps."

Another woman gave me a lecture and told me it served me right to go hungry as I was "probably a runaway anyhow!"

Two people told me to go to the Salvation Army and gave me directions to find their headquarters.

And finally, at my last try, a big bulldog sent me a flying out of the yard before I had a chance to knock at the door. My first try at bumming food was a grand flop!

- Press Democrat, September 17, 1931

Scribe Wisened Up on Jungle Habits Gets Good Nights Sleep

After "listening in" on a hobo songfest in an evening of jollity I prepared to turn in for the night - my third and last night as dweller of the jungles.

Much had transpired since my entrance into hobo-land, and my education in jungle lore was gradually increasing. Where my first night had been one of no sleep while I rolled and tossed on hard cold floor and my second had been little better due to selecting a site for my flop directly over an ant hill, profiting by experience took all possible precaution and made due preparation for my final night's sleep and the comfortable night that followed proved it was worth the trouble.

No sweeping draft along the platform chilled my back the final night, as a windbreak of empty prune boxes served as fine protection. And my bed wasn't so hard either, due to a careful gathering of old papers that served as a mattress, as well as keeping out the cold seeping up through the boards on which I slept. And, finally, I wasn't to awake in the middle of the night with my blankets in one place and myself in another, for after rolling up in the blankets and canvas I tied myself in with a short piece of rope,

FIRST GOOD SLEEP

When everything possible had been done for a successful sleep, I passed into oblivion in the midst of snores and other noises to enjoy my first real night's sleep since coming into the camp.

I awoke to a chilly and foggy dawn, and lay rolled in my blankets for some time contemplating my experiences and wondering what further adventures would be brought forth in the final day. Finally I joined the others' in the bustle and busy preparation for a new day, stretching kinked muscles, rolling

up my blankets, getting my grub sack, and setting off for breakfast.

On the first and second days had taken it easy at meal time, wishing to take no chances of running shy of food or funds before the end of my time in the jungle. But now, with the end of the trip in sight, I ate and ate plenty. After skimping for two full days my breakfast was quite an experience and I felt like I was living high.

In fact I became so generous that I invited another man to "sit in" on the feed and get filled up. Bacon, eggs, bread, hot coffee - what more did we need for a perfect breakfast? I could think of nothing until a man passing us stopped to offer to trade several snails (the bakery variety) for an egg. I parted with the egg and we received the crowning touch of the meal to "dunk" in our black coffee. The snails proved stale, but it made little difference with the coffee.

GO TO PARK

After the meal we lounged back in the grass for the usual gabfest following a meal. As usual many slung their balloons to their shoulders and departed, but I was still curious as to where they spent the days, as many would disappear during the day but always be back at night. When they were out bumming food they would usually go alone at different times, but a certain group seemed to all leave and return about the same time each day.

On questioning my companion, I learned that quite a number liked to spend the day or part of it on the Depot Park at the foot of Fourth street rather than stay in the jungle. It was the "going" habit of those temporarily retired from the road. The park is a meeting place and general headquarters during the daytime, although they return to the jungles at night. Transients stop off there to look for friends before continuing their journey.

And the hobos never know when they may get a "hunch" to take to the road. They roll up every day, especially those going into town. Despite the short distance, they take their packs with them, for if they meet someone on the road they know, or just suddenly have the urge to move, they can start without further preparation.

I returned to the warehouse with my breakfast partner and stood by while he put all his belongings into the blankets and rolled them into a convenient if not neat bundle.

IS DAILY HABIT

"But you aren't planning leaving are you?" I inquired.

"No, son, I guess it is just sort of a habit. I been doin' it nigh onto 20 years every day and don't feel started on the day till I have the old balloon rolled." He paused in his work as he commented with a grin. "And then you never can tell some of these guys get in trouble now and then and we all git orders to move. It's nice to be ready to git out in a hurry!"

As he sat on the roll to hold it in place while he tied it I volunteered to help and quickly cinched the pack with a running bowline and some halfhitches. Tying knots is one accomplishment at which I could keep pace with the best of them, and so he tried to stick me on several knots. Being an old seaman, he knew his ropes, but every time he asked me to tie one I didn't know I kept a step ahead of him by asking him for something hard and showing him a few new ones.

"Huh, now I know where you came from - jumped the Navy, didn't yu?" he asked. "Besides, the Navy is the only place you could learn to wash your pants so clean!"

My jeans, despite my efforts to get them dirty, still looked a little too well washed in comparison to the average hobo's clothing.

"Oh, I don't know" I evaded and walked off without saying yes or no. I passed the incident up with little thought, but it was hardly more than a few minutes than the word had, spread around the group that I was a runaway from the navy. I guess they had been trying to size me up and were glad to seize upon upon some excuse for me being among them.

Anyway, I think I was even more respected after that and treated more as one of them.

MANY GET HAIR CUT

I had seen many queer sights and run up against queer happenings during the visit with the hobos, but one of the odd incidents that impressed me didn't happen until the final day, during the morning as I sat on the platform after breakfast.

A middle aged man was walking down the line stopping at each man or group of men for a few minutes. In response they all looked into what mirrors of broken glass were available and soon were digging into grub stakes for bread, other food, cigarettes, or other odds and ends to give to the man in their midst. He soon joined me just as my curiosity was driving me to go find what it was all about.

"Want your hair cut, kid? Or shave? I'll take anything you got for it," he said, and it dawned on me what was going on. A barber, and a good barber he was from some of the work he did on the others, was traveling from jungle to jungle, making a living by cutting hair or shaving hobo's in return for food or money. He didn't ask anything, you parted with what you could afford and he cut your hair. Meanwhile in every town he hit he applied for work. His traveling "barber shop" system of living was keeping him going until he could find a job. And although many of the hobos wouldn't think of parting with long hair and grizzled beard, others enjoy a hair cut, either for the novelty of it or to make them more presentable. The barber carries his clippers and razors in his balloon.

In conversation with him I heard a scathing denouncement of the modern woman and her modes of living. He blamed them for putting so many men out of work, and cited his own case.

"A barber shop used to be a man's place. Now with all these flappers wanting haircuts and whatnot just because a man happens to not be good looking he can't get a job the woman don't 'fall' for him!" he exclaimed as he snipped away on the long locks of one of his customers.

-- Press Democrat, September 20, 1931

'Bumming Food' No Trick If You Know How To Do It; Champion Of Hobos Proves It

During the morning of my third day in the jungles, as I was sitting on the warehouse platform, trading stories with others and picking up all the information I could get, a middle-aged man, apparently also new to the game from his actions, but popular with the group, joined us to tell a tale of woe concerning his experiences in trying to get food from a nearby house.

His story brought home to me my experiences of the preceding day, when I was turned down one place after another until I was discouraged and gave up, deciding to buy whatever I needed to eat.

But the group listening to him apparently enjoyed the humor of his pathos for his pride had not yet become used to "begging" for a living.

He was given all sorts of bantering advice, with one of his friends finally chiming in with "No woman can turn you down if you hit her right, bo."

HE GOES FOR FOOD

To prove his declaration he asked directions to the place and said he would go there and return with food of some sort. The discouraged hobo warned him that she was a "tough hombre" and wouldn't fall for any sob stuff. She had given him a "lacing," as he described it, for going around begging when she said her own husband wasn't half so big and strong yet was providing food for the whole family. But the confident and evidently experienced panhandler wasn't a bit discouraged and promised to return with the makings of a good lunch.

And sure enough, less than fifteen minutes later, hardly time to walk to the house and no time to have done any kind of work for the food, he returned with a good sized arm load of assorted food - eggs, bread, some cold meat, sandwiches, and some jam. It looked like he had completely cleaned out the lady's pantry shelves.

With a grin he laid his offering at the hobo's feet who had dared him try to make the "touch." The crowd laughed in glee and admiration. This man seemed to be the "champeen" when it came to bumming food.

When called on for an explanation by the man he had helped he went through his entire process of asking for the food with real dramatic ability, only interrupted occasionally by bursts of applause as his listeners got a big kick out of the performance.

LISTENS TO STORY

Walking to a post on the platform, he knocked in mockery, then walked over to a grizzled hobo with a sweeping bow,

"Oh lady, my pride humbles me but my hunger forces me to your door. Please don't confuse me with these hobos - these bums, who beg at your door regularly" he swept the gathering with a contemptuous look. "You can't turn me down without at least listening to my story, can you Madam?"

"I was just a hard workin' man, ma'm, when my pard got sick. Now, what would you think of me if I left him? No, I stuck to my pard, carin' for him and givin' up my job. Now we're both down and out. Now me, I wouldn't bum food, I would work for it, but then who would care for my buddy? Gosh, lady, I would be willing to work in your yard now but he is all alone and I hate to leave him long. Couldn't you spare something, at least something, for a poor old sick man? Now, lady, what if some relative of yours was down and out. Ah, gee, thanks a lot lady, gee but your kind, you really remind me of my dear old mother. Now, now, dontcha cry, lady I'll take this grub back and I know it will help my pard get well!" He was almost shedding tears from his acting as he concluded his dramatic interpretation of how he broke down the lady and got the food.

The group howled as the story progressed, and did no end of kidding him when he finished. And the food? He didn't want it at all - tossed it to the group to divy up. He was just "bumming" for fun, or experience.

RAID HEN HOUSES

While the topic of conversation was food I was given a little information on eggs. Someone was discussing the price of them when one of the inhabitants with a sly wink said "Hen fruit was cheap enough where we got ours last night, wasn't it, Pete?"

He proceeded to tell of the nice "find" he had made in way of an egg supply, and from the way others chimed in I decided the place had been hit often. Robbing henhouses is considered dangerous practice, as the hens usually make plenty of noise to interrupt the process. But at a nearby ranch the eggs, after being collected, were stored in a shed near the edge of the train track, at a very convenient spot for climbing the fence. No lock guarded the shed. What better set-up could be arranged for egg thieves? But they are wise, and took no chances of spoiling things by wholesale robbery. The eggs just disappeared a few at a time, not enough to make the owner suspicious.

I had heard no mention during the entire stay about religion. When the subject was first brought up near the end of my visit the attitude taken was rather a surprise.

Someone jokingly slandered religion and churches in the course of his conversation.

BACKS UP CHURCH

A sudden response surprised me. "Don't go knocking religion, see? I'm religious and I don't care who knows it" was shouted by a man standing next to me.

"Religious?, Blah, you ain't even seen the insides of a church, bo, and what more you probably never will!" he was told. Others also "razzed" him.

"Oh no?" was his answer, "Well let me tell you something, I never miss a priest or minister in any town I go to - they are all good for four bits!"

And he was actually serious - his form of "religion" brought real returns to him - returns that he could spend, whether for food, gambling, or canned heat.

The sun was edging past the middle of the sky and my day as a hobo - last day of living and thinking hobo philosophy - was rapidly drawing to a close. My adventures were complete and I had the

information I had come after - the inside life of the denizens of the jungles - the professional bum and the down and out man, victim of unemployment.

The remainder of the day passed with little incident, and my parting, although I was glad to be stepping back over the borderline into a real life, and, even more, stepping back to real food and real beds, I did somewhat feel that I was going to miss their simple philosophy, their simple ways of living and their unfailing friendships and generosity among each other.

SCRIBE GETS ADVICE

To make my going create no questions or curiosity, I left the platform to return later informing some of my newly acquired friends that I had a job - temporary at least, I told them.

"Stick to it, kid!" cheerfully, encouraged the darky who had always been friendly with me.

"This ain't a life to follow, buddy, stick to yer work if you can, was the parting advice of one of the old men.

So, with a final view of the jungle that had been my home for three days and three nights, I slung my balloon to my shoulders and hit the tracks to walk to an awaiting car out of sight of the hobo camp.

After a series of baths and rinsings my life as a Hobo was ended and I returned to pounding the keys of my typewriter.

- Press Democrat, September 22, 1931

Every Town Should Have Its Jungle Camp Reporter Says

..In the series of articles now being concluded I have tried to depict the actual experiences, the actual persons met, the incidents taking place, the thoughts and questions arising in my mind. So in some places you may have sympathized with these men, where in others you made up your mind to turn away the next one to, "hit" you for food or money.

It is this wide range of difference that makes it hard to say anything that takes in the entire group generally - that all hobos do this, or all do that - for just as in every other strata of society there is embedded the good and the bad, the conservative and the radical. So keep in mind that in any mention of the group and what should and should not be done there will always be exceptions.

The dangers of allowing undesirables to congregate in groups and discuss their troubles has long been told and frequently the hobo gangs are broken up when they become too large. I have heard people criticize responsible officials for allowing them to live together in such filth of surroundings and associates.

But if any impression was made upon me it was that the best thing possible, both for the hobos and for the community, is to allow and encourage the existence of such places as "jungles" ..

... What is to be done for them should be a permanent policy in every town, not just in hard times, using a combination of public and private agencies when needed.

Two don'ts stand out: Don't give money to them, and don't give them food without some kind of work. Money, whether to a fairly 'square" hobo or one deep set in the ways of the road, leads to more trouble than it does good. Even though the man may try to do right with the money given him, his associates will take advantage of him. And the handing out of food without work is just encouraging hobo life.

But what can a town do for its transient unemployed? Here are five suggestions:

First, provide some place for them - a "jungle". If possible some kind of shelter, an old building with running water.

Second, provide regular inspection by authorized officials.

Third, make available medical treatment or advice when it is needed, without undue red tape.

Fourth, utilize the community woodpile idea, even if no one ever cuts a stick of wood. People are assured no one will starve when they know that a man can always get a meal by cutting wood.

Fifth and last, a free employment agency should be maintained.

That is all that can or need be done. Hobos will come and hobos will go, but as long as a community gives them an opportunity to live fairly decently it has done all that should be done.

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