

# The Brotherhood of Man

BY CEDRIC WORTH

*A noble aspiration which became considerably shopworn when  
two veterans of the road engaged various Wobblies  
in something more than psychoanalytical dispute*

I DID not see Mr. Jim Tully, Mr. Harry Kemp nor Mr. James Stevens. But a thousand other hobo philosophers sat along the curb of the main street of Wessington, South Dakota, that morning, discussing the noble art of tramping, its shades and difficulties, its nuances, subtleties, principles, niceties, aims, delicacies, vexations, paradoxes and tremendous importance. Since that day each one has written his book, published excerpts in the reviews, and been hailed as the voice of rugged, untamed manhood, which prefers freedom to soap, or something.

These men, even then cogitating their writings, looked appraisingly at Nels Corwin and me as we walked down the street from the direction of the elevator. We were just arrived without breakfast on the local freight. Coal dust lay heavy on our faces and our hands were black with grime. This condition served to identify us, it aroused no comment, nor should it have, seeing that the noble philosophers we passed were also filthy.

The three blocks of the street we traversed up one side and down the other, looking closely along the curb

for some acquaintance met in a box car who might be good for the price of coffee. We found none. In front of the pool hall we sat down with our feet in the dust.

"You fellows just pull in?" asked a young philosopher next us.

"Just got off the train," I said.

I SHOULD not have phrased my answer that way, for like the other arts that of tramping has a patter which its earnest devotees strictly adhere to. They conduct learned controversies about it in the editorial notes columns of *The American Mercury*. In ten months of hoboeing over all the States west of the Mississippi I had schooled myself not to deviate from the accepted forms of speech, but occasionally I slipped. I was immediately rebuked.

"Live near here?" the young man beside us asked.

That was an insult, of course. It was put in the tone with which Adrian Dornbush, who painted beside me in Coblenz and Heidelberg, receives critical opinion of his work from a student at the Dubuque Art Institute, of which he is director.

"Made it from Wichita in two days," I said — a lie by three days. "Any of the Squareheads cutting wheat around here?"

"They're only paying six bucks." The young man spat into the dust and rolled a cigarette. "Nobody but the homeguards are working for that."

"Nobody's going out, eh?"

"We're organized up here," the young man said, "and seven bucks a day is what these Squareheads got to pay, the way they expect a man to work from daylight to sundown."

A young farmer in overalls and torn straw hat drove a Ford at a walking pace along the other side of the street.

"Any of you fellers want to work?" he shouted to the men on the curb.

"Seven bucks," the answer came in a bored drawl. Those who made it looked archly at each other.

The farmer drove the length of the street and speeded up his Ford, disappearing in billows of dust on the road from town. The philosophers talked on of man's inhumanity to man, and particularly of the wicked farmers' wilful inhumanity to down-trodden harvesters.

NOON came. It was very hot. From the stores on the street men and women hurried to houses on cross streets for dinner. A few of the sitting men left the curb and went to the lunchroom. A few more went to one or another of the groceries and bought bread, sardines and cheese. These walked with their purchases to the cattle loading pens down the track, where there was cool water free.

The noon hour sped and those few who had eaten came back to the curb. Their return, like their departure, was politely passed without note.

Nels Corwin and I noted it. We were not hoboos because of a burning sense of brotherhood with the great unwashed, but because we had neither money, job nor home.

"Let's get a job," said Nels.

We had one formula for getting a job which had never failed us. It was not patented nor did we keep it secret, but we never saw anyone else use it.

"Know anybody who needs hands?" I asked the proprietor of the pool hall when we went in.

"Why, yes, I guess some hands are needed," he said; and asked in surprise, "You fellows looking for work?"

Convinced that we were, he said: "Now, I think I seen young Jake Schwimmer driving along a while ago looking for men. His place is three mile straight out the road from town, turn south two mile."

"Kind of a long hot walk," I said. "May we use your phone, or will you call Schwimmer up?"

He called Jake Schwimmer with his surprising news.

We strolled to the end of the street and sat in the shade of the German Lutheran church until Jake drove in. The curbsides gave us the philosophers' curse as we drove away in the farmer's car.

FOR fifteen days we labored in Jake Schwimmer's fields. His mother, who brought little Jakie from Germany, cooked us great heaping harvest hand meals of chicken and dumplings, mealy boiled potatoes, beef roasts as big as hams, and hot, home made bread. In the cool of the evening we went to the windmill to wash our shirts, underwear and socks before

turning in in the spare room which had the best bed in the house.

We finished shocking Jake's wheat on Monday. After dinner Jake said, "I'll give you boys a full day for to-day. You been good hands."

A place was carefully cleared at the dining table. Jake sat himself squarely before it. The mother brought ink bottle, pen and check book and placed them on the table. With great deliberation Jake wrote two checks for \$90 each. That afternoon he took us to the bank in town and we cashed the checks.

Farewells said to Jake, we went to the town shoemaker and sat in our socks while he half-soled our shoes. Under each new sole he nailed three \$10 bills for us.

**T**WENTY-FOUR hours later we lay on our backs in the shade of a willow tree at Aberdeen, a hundred miles north and east. Near our tree was a railroad crossing where north-bound trains slowed so they might easily be boarded. We watched a figure moving toward us along the track, and recognized when he drew near the young philosopher who had sat on the curb beside us at Wessington. He recalled us, too, and sat down in the shade.

"Going North?" he asked.

"Yeah," said Nels.

"North Dakota?"

"Ah-huh."

"Gonna join the Wobblies?"

"Christ, no!"

"Lots of them up there."

"We won't see much of them. We aim to work in the harvest."

"Plenty of them in Aberdeen now," our young friend said.

"Yeah," said Nels, "I noticed that. We been panhandled plenty. Wish

them guys would move up the track and make a stake."

"You fellows worked in Wessington, didn't you?"

"Ah-huh."

"How much you get?"

"Six."

"It used to be two."

"It used to be four bits a day, you go back far enough," Nels said.

"You know what brought up harvest wages? The I. W. W.," said the young fellow. "They made the Square-heads come across."

"Sure," Nels said, "they did it by quitting work and hands were so scarce they would pay almost anything for help. That makes it O.K. for us. We work and don't need any scummy walking delegate to tell us what to work for. Those dirty grafters go around peddling cards and song books and shove all they collect off the poor bums into their pockets. We don't aim to support them with our dough. Where you been working?"

"I couldn't find work. You fellows willing to stake me to a meal until I hook onto a job up North?"

We rolled from our backs and pulled two dollars apiece from the thin rolls in our pockets. The boy thanked us and hurried toward the town. He was a short, well set-up lad, twenty, perhaps, and cleaner than most. At the end of an hour he was back.

**W**HEN a north-bound freight came along he ran to the rear of the train. We swung into an empty box car near the locomotive, closed the doors and prepared for sleep.

There was a pounding on the car door at Kidder, a stop twenty miles up the line. Through cracks we saw the young man and four companions

so we pushed open the door and gave them a hand up. One was dressed like a brakeman, trousers and vest of a shiny brown suit and dark blue shirt with starched collar and bow tie. They went to one end of the car and we to the other.

Not far beyond Kidder we crossed the line between the two Dakotas. The paunchy fellow in the brakeman's costume came to our end of the car.

"You fellows carrying cards?" he asked.

"Cards?" I said politely.

"You know what I mean, working-men's cards."

"Wouldn't take a step without one," I said, and pulled an old card case from the big watch pocket in the bib of my overalls. From it I drew an engraved card discolored by sweat and handed it to the man. He read — it was the year after the war — :

CEDRIC RUTHERFORD WORTH

*Lieutenant, United States Marines*

He read the card and stared at me for a minute, so steadily I got creepy. Infinite disgust was in his stare.

"Now, captain," he said, "you and the major here," pointing to Nels, "are in North Dakota. This is our State. You can't ride these trains without a red card, understand. You can take out a card now, or you can get off the train — now."

The train was making about twenty miles an hour.

"How much do you get for a card?" asked Nels.

"It costs you \$3.25 to get into the one big union," the man said.

Nels shouted with laughter.

"Jesus! We ain't even got good health," he said, "let alone \$3.25."

"You can't put anything like that over," said the organizer. "That fellow down there saw you guys flash a roll in Aberdeen."

"I'll bet you ate your dinner off it," Nels said.

"Come on, now, what about it?" the organizer was sharp. He drew a flat book of red cards and red receipts from a hip pocket.

"Say, mister, do you stuff birds?" said Nels, simulating a harelip. "Well, you know what you can do with that book."

THE organizer went back to the four men. They huddled in a group, talking. Frequently they looked at us, and the little fellow who had eaten of our bounty smiled.

Cleats of one-by-four pine had been nailed to the side of that car to protect something in shipment. Where we sat on our haunches Nels loosened one of these with his hands. There were nails in the end of it. Nels was quarter-bred Cherokee. I asked no questions as he laid the board, four feet long, on the floor at his feet. He rolled a cigarette.

Four of them sprang to their feet suddenly and rushed us. The organizer remained where he was.

They charged in a pack. Plainly, none wanted the honor of being first to close in. We were larger than any of them and tough as asphalt from a summer in the fields. The young fellow of the curb was the man I wanted to reach.

Nels took three steps forward, and they saw his club. He swung it, and a tall man screamed as the nails sank into the muscles of his shoulder.

The others, disconcerted, stood hesitant, and I got at the comrade I had singled for reproof. The moving floor of the car spoiled my stance, but I landed on his abdomen solidly enough to double him up. The other two jumped me and I could not cover. Their fists brought blood from my nose and opened the flesh over a cheekbone before Nels laid on again with his club. We went to our corner and they carried the last man Nels had struck to their end.

Still breathing hard, we left the car at Rutland, in North Dakota, a little later.

THE harvest was ripe for gleaning at Rutland. The score of houses in the village stood on a single street; a barber shop, two pool halls, a two-story wooden structure with a sign proclaiming it the "Rutland Hotel", and a few stores. The curbs were lined with comrades talking upon the evils of Capitalism.

They were most thickly seated on the corner by the barber shop. I went into the shop and asked for water. It was given me by a kindly barber, who also provided towels and plaster, with which I bandaged the cut on my cheek. He declined money for his bloodied towels.

Out in the street we elbowed our way to a seat on the curb among the philosophers.

"Wouldn't surprise me if we run into some Wobblies up here," Nels addressed me in a great declamatory voice. "If we do I aim to lay out every one of the God damn . . ."

It is difficult to indicate what he said about the Industrial Workers of the World. Nels was once sergeant in charge of Sixth Division Headquarters

runners. The Sixth Division travelled more miles over France than any other, and its members made contacts with many gifted cursers in their travels. The command of downright profanity displayed by Nels was superb. Only for a base did he use the common epithets concerning canine ancestry and the unwed state of female parents. They were adorned with scrolls and parabolas of the most unmentionable adjectives.

The speech to me could be heard for half a block, and was heard by at least a hundred of the brethren within that radius. When he stopped speaking there was a complete silence on the curbs. It lasted a long time.

"Well, I'm glad to see there are no Wobblies here," said Nels. "Let's go over to the pool hall and see if there are any there."

THE silence was not broken until after we were through the door. While we were absently playing at pocket billiards—I was too much upset to do much at the game—a weather beaten farmer came. He held converse with the proprietor.

"You fellows looking for work?" he said, coming over to us.

"Yes."

"You Wobblies?"

"No."

"The Wobblies asks six dollars a day. Suit you?"

"Fine."

"I had to shoot a feller last harvest," he told us between squirts of tobacco juice. We were driving through the dust to his farm. "He was a Wobbly. Come to work for me for five dollar and when I was half through a-cuttin' he says I got to give him six. I wouldn't do it. Got up next

morning and went out to milk and there he stood a-cuttin' the draper (canvas conveyor on the binder) with a knife. Made me so God-awful mad I takes the shotgun and lets him have it in the belly. They was a-goin' to burn my crop this year for it, and I had to hire field guards after the wheat got ripe."

SIX days ended the harvest of that man's fields. On the last day we were approached by the village constable, who offered us a place on his threshing crew. Threshing pays a dollar a day more than shocking and lasts from three to six weeks in each community. We took the job. After three weeks the heavens darkened.

On the third day of rain we went to town. Our stocks of tobacco and socks replenished, we went into confidential parley with the pool hall man. From him we learned that the owner of the Rutland Hotel sold drink of a kind in favor locally.

Surprised quiet fell upon a dozen men when we entered the principal room of the hotel. They were members of the brotherhood employed in the vicinity who, like us, sought refreshment while the rain kept them idle. The host took us to his kitchen and furtively produced a bottle. We were young, then, and strong, but a drink was all we could use of that bottle's contents and we went back to the common room.

"That's them two scissorbills," someone in the room spoke. "They had to go to work for the law if they went to work at all."

"They got their friends laying outside or they wouldn't have the nerve to come here," said another.

"Ever been in Chatillon-sur-

Marne?" Nels asked me. "We had a hell of a time there and left corpses piled high as a barn. I felt just like I do now when we went into that town."

The talk was ended by a drunk who roared out a ballad from the old I. W. W. song book, for which I was glad.

I looked over an old newspaper, while Nels went out a side door and along a boardwalk in the rain to an outhouse. A man followed him and stepped into the little building right after Nels.

"You fellows are so brash because you got protection, you think, working for the constable," he said in the darkness. "You ain't got protection, no matter who you work for. This is our country, and I'm warning you to get out, savvy?"

Nels crept as far away from the voice as he could. He was afraid of a knife.

THE primitive latrine was probably twelve feet long; its only equipment a peeled log, running from end to end. In front of the log was a floor, behind it a pit.

Nels heard the other man move. He crouched. The man moved again, and Nels swung with all his might at a shape he could dimly see. His fist landed solidly on ribs. The fellow stumbled, his knees struck the log, and he fell over into the pit behind it.

Nels hurried back into the hotel. A train whistled at the station less than a block away.

"I don't like this town," he said.

"Don't think much of it, myself," I said.

We ran out into the rain and caught a train for Aberdeen, Sioux City and Omaha.



# "They Shall Not Pass!"

BY KARL W. DETZER

*Etchings of heroic adventure in regions where the country  
doctor still lives and braves all dangers, distances  
and labors to perform his mission of mercy*

AT LEAST once each year, usually about the time of the first big snow in Upper New York State, editorial writers find opportunity to mourn the passing of the country doctor. In their steam-heated sanctums eight floors up, with a classified directory bearing the names of eight hundred specialists in eight hundred diseases at their right hand, they grow lachrymose over the eclipse of a Grand Old Institution.

The idea spreads inkily across the land. Newspapers in rural States copy it one after another. They comment on it, in most cases with sarcasm, and sooner or later the country doctor reads it. Of course it amuses him; annoys him a little, perhaps. Observing himself in the glass, he admits that he does look a little tired (there was that diphtheria scare late in the fall when he couldn't get much sleep), but he is far from dead.

These are good editorials for the most part, well written and full of homely philosophy. Their only flaw is that they start from a false premise. The country doctor is not passing. As fifty-one million rural citizens know, he is doing business at the old stand

just as faithfully as he did when father was a boy. And he has no intention of quitting. Of course he has lost the luxuriant and awe-inspiring set of whiskers which once were an integral part of an M.D. diploma. He has lost the horse and buggy. He has lost faith in whiskey-and-quinine as a last resort in all mysterious ills. But what of it? So has the city lost its old-fashioned horse car, the old-fashioned mustache cup, the old-fashioned editorial writer with his gun on his desk. Let us be of good cheer.

It is true that the old-fashioned city doctor is out of the picture. He has been succeeded, legitimately, by the specialist. But there has been no such succession in the country. The wide open spaces still have, and need, their general practitioner. It's no place for specialists out where the pavement ends.

THE industries in our North Michigan county are nothing more than fishing, fruit-growing, sand-farming and a little late timbering. We have ten thousand souls, most of them poor and a tenth of them Indian. The house in which these words are being written