

Our Trip to St. Louis



OUR trip to St. Louis. Is this a fact, or is it a dream? Is the thought that went through the mind of every member of the Battalion of Cadets of the Maryland Agricultural College on the morning of May 30, 1904, when they were preparing to board the train for St. Louis. We had heard of nothing else for six months preceeding this, but how few of us really believed it. And were we not justified in our belief? Had we not been disappointed each year before? There are few of us who did not think that a few days, or even a day before we were to start that the president would announce "It will be impossible for you to go," but this was not the case.

On the morning of May 10, 1904, at 10:10 a. m. we boarded the train at College for St. Louis; all of us in high glee over our expected good time. As our train pulled out from the station we waved a last farewell to our friends who had gathered there to see us depart.

The day passed as quietly as could be expected from a crowd of 125 boys on a train en route for a Universal Exposition. The train made but few stops that day, but at each one "Stubby" jumped off to see some of his friends, and to come back with something to eat. This we did not seriously object to, as long as he shared up. The afternoon found us pulling over the mountains of Western Maryland, and after the boys, who by the way, were allowed to smoke, would stand on the rear platform and light their cigarette from the burning coal in the engine. But amid all this excitement we "unnaturally" got hungry, and found ourselves eating sandwiches and drinking coffee with as much relish as we would have shared a banquet two days before.

Nightfall comes and one by one we tumbled off to dreamland where most of us remained until "Were you ever in Cincinnatti?" echoed from ear to ear and from car to car. Well we knew that we had reached Cincinnatti and that sleep was out of the question until we should leave, which we learned would be in about forty minutes. The boys all piled off the train to see what the place looked like, and some of them to wash the coal dust down their throats. On comparing our watches with the clock in the station, in Cincinnatti, we found that somewhere in the mountains of West Virginia we had run over an hour while we were asleep, and while our watches registered 3 o'clock the clock said 2.

After leaving here everything went on quietly until morning, when we found ourselves ploughing through the plains of Indiana. It was here that the boys began to realize that a little water might improve their personal appear-

ance, so proceeded to wash their faces, but they soon found that this cold water, without elbow room to rub sufficiently, tended to streak rather than cleanse them, so most of us decided to wait until we reached St. Louis and take a warm (?) shower.

Sandwiches and still sandwiches. "Don't worry" the boys would say "we'll soon be at our journey's end and eating good grub." "Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise." But, "the same old thing in the same old way" gets monotonous. And at each stop the boys would pour off the train and "Rah! rah! rah! rah! rah! rah! rah!—pretty girls" could be heard pouring from the lips of the crowd. "To tell a 'fib' is sometimes pardonable," and to say "pretty girls" under such circumstances might not have been recorded in the "big book." The commandant began to fear, lest some of the boys should get left, so issued orders to the O. D. not to allow any body to leave the train unless it made a prolonged stop. I wonder how many O. D.s and "commys" it would have taken to stop that bunch from getting off—even if only for a minute?

At 2:40 o'clock p. m. we got off the train at the main entrance to the Fair grounds, and while waiting in the broiling sun for the baggage to be loaded on the wagon "Ferdy" suggested we take a look at the snow-capped peaks, the Tyrolean Alps and get cool—oh what a bright boy is "Ferdy!"

We marched up through the Fair grounds to the Administration building and halted, while the "Commy" went to see where our barracks was located, but upon investigation he found that we were to go into camp instead of barracks. We always make the best out of life (?) so were willing to go into camp, barracks, or out-of-doors for the sake of getting a place to rest. After relieving ourselves of our guns and equipments we started for the "Military mess hall" (accent on the mess). On our way to dinner we received cheers from all the other colleges in camp, which were returned when we marched back from our meal.

The afternoon was devoted to fixing up camp, and about five o'clock we started out to see what a Universal Exposition might be at any rate. "Seeing is believing" is an old maxim which is not true, and one needs only one hour at such an exposition to prove it, for here it is impossible to believe what you see, and you would be very much fooled if you should believe half of it.

Naturally we devoted our attention to the "Pike," which was the most important phase of the exposition to us. The evening was spent on the Pike. We would walk up to the gate of a show, give a few cheers and walk in as if we owned the place. Of course we would rather pay, but to keep peace in the family we would go in without paying to accommodate the manager (??).

About eleven o'clock the boys came back, tired, hot, sleepy, and ready for bed. Not thinking that a blanket was necessary, we folded ours up and used them as pillows. As night advanced we realized that a pillow was not so necessary as a blanket, so converted the former into the latter. The blankets were soon doubled, but with not much better results. The desired effect (to keep warm) seemed hard to obtain. "What fools these mortals be," or better said, "What fools we mortals were." Why didn't we know that the cold was coming up through the canvas cot instead of down through the woolen blanket? The next morning when "Reveille" was sounded "Rat" stuck his head out between the tent flaps and offered to make a bet, but upon learning what his proposition was, nobody was willing to take him up. Everybody believing, for once, that what he said was true.

The next day we undertook to see the whole thing—only 1,390 acres literally covered with buildings—a small undertaking for a day.

We saw what we could of it in the day, and, of course, went to the Pike at night. But when we returned that night each one was sure to wrap himself up well in his blanket, in order that he might be proof against cold, either from above or below.

Everything went on quietly and about as usual until Friday, when we were going to have a parade of all the corps in camp—down the side of the lagoon, up the Plaza of St. Louis, and back home again. About one o'clock it began to rain, and came down pretty steadily for about an hour, when the sun came out. A messenger appeared, telling "Commy" that the parade would begin at 2:30 sharp, and then "We want more rain, We want more rain," came from all quarters of camp. For once the wishes of everybody in camp were gratified, when it began to rain as if somebody were pouring it from buckets. Those among us who had seen the "Galveston Flood" so vividly reproduced on the Pike, realized that if it rained in Galveston as it did in St. Louis, it would not take "forty days and forty nights" to destroy a city by floods. Soon each boy found himself clinging to the ridgepole of his tent watching the water, a foot or less deep, rush over the floor of his tent and expecting each minute to see his cot go with the water. All things have an end, and after everybody had about as much water as he wanted a Divine Providence stopped it. It is true that we had no parade that afternoon, but the fact remains that nobody who was in camp that day ever yelled "We want more rain" again, and if he had done so he would have had to seek a new place of abode.

The next day, Saturday, the Pike was dedicated, and of course we had to take it all in, and each boy picked up a fair damsel (not a hard thing to do in St. Louis) to take her on the "Great Scenic Railway," for if there was ever a

place where you had to sit close and hold tight, it is the Scenic Railway. Even the President and Steward enjoyed this trip while their wives were many miles away.

Sunday, "nothing doing" was the thought that prompted the boys to remain on the Pike until about 2 a. m. If you think that there is nothing doing in St. Louis on Sunday, evidently you have never been there. For where is the Bull-fight, Delmar Gardens, and last but not least, Montesono? Well, we didn't have any bull-fight. Delmar is about a half hour's ride on the car, and Montesono about ten miles down the Misissippi River. Enough to say about these places is, if you have never been there, don't go; and I know if you have been there once you won't go again.

Monday finds "Stella" at her same stand on the Plaza of St. Louis. Is there any wonder that one of our First Sergeants would rather drill there than on the Administration Quadrangle? The Pike is still there, and we had a little money left, so off we go when supper is over, with about 1,000 other boys right there with the goods. If we did the Pike, they made it up on somebody else. They didn't lose, you can bet on that.

There is always something new, and to-morrow the Maryland Building will be dedicated. It was there that Alex Streett mistakes "Cab" for "Steppy" and tells him a secret. "Stubby" gives three cheers for Mrs. Fisher and the boys sang "Maryland, My Maryland" to the tune of "Dixie." I might as well state that they had good Maryland water in this building. The next day—Wednesday—we leave for home at 8:30 a. m. "Well, we might just as well go back to the Pike," the boys said, and they could appreciate a good show. Ordinarily water cost 6 cents a glass, so we didn't use much, but now they had no dust in their throats. The next morning we went to breakfast at 7:30 a. m., after having gotten up at 4:30 and packed our belongings. At 8:00 we found ourselves retracing our steps toward the main entrance to the fair grounds.

At 8:30 we boarded our train at the Wabash terminal, all as happy as when we boarded it at College ten days before, because we were completely worn out and eager to be out of the excitement.

Just contrast us now to when we came out all willing and anxious to remain quietly in our seats and take life—I mean sandwiches—as it came, and not jump off at every station and yell at the girls. Not because we had seen so many "pretty" girls were we willing to glance casually at them through the windows, but because we had learned from experience that pretty girls don't grow in that part of the country. The Maryland girl for me!

The next day at 2 p. m. we stepped off our train at College, a rougher, tougher, blacker bunch of boys, ever to have been white, I venture to say has

never been seen in this part of the country before. Our faces and clothes about the color of the engine which had pulled us. When a little later we entered the college dining-room—thanks to the Vice-President, who was acting in the capacity of Steward—we found a dinner that would have tempted the appetite of the most fastidious, but I might add that ours needed no tempting.

Too much thanks cannot be given Capt. Silvester and Colonel Fuller for the thoughtful consideration given us as a bunch of college boys off for a good time. Within reasonable limits we were permitted to do as we wished; and I speak the sentiment of the student body when I say that their every action impressed fully upon us that our welfare and pleasure was their aim throughout the entire trip.

Looking back upon the time spent away from college on this trip, each boy will say that he had a most enjoyable trip, and when the time came for our return each one found himself ready to come. After all, in the words of the poet, "Be it ever so humble, there is no place like home."

J. N. M.—'05.