A Day's Tramp

It was several years ago while working in a file shop in Quincy, Illinois, that I felt the need of walking as exercise. As the work compelled me to remain seated in a stooping posture astride a stone block upon which the files were cut, I often wished for a chance to stretch my legs. An opportunity came. The shop closed for repairs a week or more in July. I had long laid my plans for such an opportunity to occur. I would walk to St. Louis, spend a few days in sightseeing and then walk back again. I hoped that by getting myself thoroughly tired by walking, I could sit the next six months in the shop without murmuring.

Not being confident of my powers of endurance, I determined first to walk to Hannibal, a town about twenty miles from Quincy, and walk back again...
before undertaking a longer tramp. It rained on the Monday morning that I had intended to start, but this did not dampen my enthusiasm, for as soon as it cleared off sufficiently to promise a pleasant day, about ten o'clock A.M., I started. A walk of a mile through the city brought me to the Quincy depot and St. Louis rail-road track at the foot of the city's bluffs. On my right, at first, was the mighty 'Father of Waters' on my left long line of bluffs at the foot of which were lime kilns at distances from one half a mile to one mile apart. Before me as far as the eye could reach stretched the Bottoms. It was one plain of rustling corn, excepting a continuous narrow belt of trees, principally willow, along the river's bank. As I walked farther, the Bottoms became wider and I could only catch glimpses of the river through the trees.

At twelve o'clock, while seated on a bridge across a creek near a small village called Marblehead, I ate the lunch I had brought.
After leaving this place there were no more lime kilns to be seen along the route; nothing but corn to the right and left with an occasional wheat field on some of the farms on the bluffs. The houses along the way were small one-story structures generally built of logs and containing but one or two rooms. Around the doors of all were groups of tow-headed children who gazed at me as if they had never seen a stranger before. These bottom lands have been settled for many years but the present inhabitants do not appear to be any richer than their fathers must have been. They raise a large crop of corn one year; the next year the river overflows their lands, perhaps, and then they live hand to mouth existence until able to raise another crop. The very faces of the men had a dull listless expression, a seeming content to plod on in the same weary way year after year. Not one school-house or church stood along the way; this is a region of malaria.
fever, ague and Democratic majorities. It was not long before I lost all interest in the surroundings; I was beginning to feel tired. In many places the spaces between the ties were not filled up and the consequent stepping from tie to tie made my feet and legs ache.

It was about two o'clock when I reached a small station about five miles from the Hannibal bridge. I stopped here for a drink, then pushed on again in a western direction towards the bridge.

I had gone but a mile or two when it began to rain; first a few pattering drops, then a steady pour which soon wet me to the skin. There were no houses on either side as the bottoms were very low and cut up by sloughs and ponds. I received the full force of the storm as for several miles up to the bridge the rail-road track was laid on a high embankment and on trestle-work.

More than once while walking on some of the great lengths of trestle-work I was obliged to stop and close my eyes.
for a moment to prevent becoming dizzy. It had stopped raining about half past three o'clock when I reached the bridge. The scene from the bridge was beautiful but I felt too miserable to enjoy it. After leaving the bridge I had to walk about a mile before I reached the heart of the city. The place contained a population of perhaps ten thousand. Besides a new Opera House and rail-road depot there were no objects of interest to be seen.

I walked about the place for an hour debating whether to stay and walk home the next morning or to return on the train that evening. Having no change of clothes I decided to go home that night.

I passed the evening until train-time, twelve o'clock, in the waiting room of the depot. After a time that seemed an age to me, the train arrived and about an hour and a half afterward I was home again feeling satisfied with the tramp of the day. It is hardly necessary to remark, "I did not walk to St. Louis that vacation."
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Louis A. Bregger.

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