

MAGAZINE SECTION

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WHEN THE MULTITUDES FLEE THE CITY



They Are Proud of Their Cities and "Scared of" Them, Too

"STEP lively!" It is the summer song of the big ones—the American cities that spread over all that they can seize of creation.

They're all proud of them—the citizens who have helped build them and are pushing them along; proud of them and scared by them when the heat sweeps down. You can't crowd stone and iron together by the hundreds of tons, cover acres of ground with them, pile them up till they hide the sky, without paying for it.

Sea breeze, lake breeze, mountain breeze all wither when they strike mile-long streets, beset with steam engines on each side, meshed with arteries and veins carrying live steam below the surface and exhaling fiery air from thousand of stacks.

When the heat sweeps down the little kings of the cities are the men who stand at every vent-gate leading to car or boat, singing the song that never ceases, from the Atlantic to the Pacific—"Step lively!"

No command in the United States, from Section 1, Article 1, of the Constitution down, is obeyed so implicitly. Perspiring, wilted, ready to drop, the crowds awaken to one last burst of energy when they hear it, as foot-sore troops make a last dash when the bugle calls. With a rush and a crush they pile into the vehicles that are to bear them to places that they hope are cool.

Heat has become such a terror to the cities that a wave of suffering sweeps from New York across the continent, gripping Pittsburg and Cleveland and Chicago and Detroit and all the rest long before the weather-observers suspect that it is time to issue the annual bulletins about the hottest day ever on the record for humidity.

The day the first straw that appears the rush to escape town begins, and if the sufferer has to wear his winter overcoat on the way, he still thanks his stars that he has escaped the heat of his beloved town, of which he is so extremely afraid.

Later, when it becomes really warm,

every other citizen is highly inflamed of countenance and may be seen dragging family festoons after him, all equally inflamed, and all bound to escape into a cool some place or another at whatever cost of time or anguish.

The heat of the towns often is largely imaginary, but there is nothing imaginary about the heat which the escaping multitude creates for itself in its wild rush to "escape."

There is no more noble example of human suffering borne patiently in a good cause than is that of an American crowd undergoing summer pains cheerfully for hours in order to get away from their beloved cities.

From every town railroad tracks run out, planned strategically to keep open the lines of summer retreat. Luckily, as the cities grew and increased their demands for avenues of flight, the electric roads came into being and opened hundreds of miles of country all around the house-

masses. The marine engineer, too, has thrived vastly in catering to the annual flight; and if he has not made the American excursion boat a miracle of safety, he has at least made it a wonder for carrying the biggest possible live cargo the greatest possible distance in the shortest possible time.

But, though they link mile on mile of track, pile wheel on wheel on the iron road, add knot on knot to speed on the water, and each year press sea and lake and river down with still more floating monsters, the fugitives beat their capacity. And every day the crowds of most of the big cities have to fight anew, not for seats, not even for standing room, but for mere hanging room.

Every American city is proud of something that it owns which is the biggest in the world; and so almost every one of them is convinced, half with disgust and half with pride, that its crowds are the biggest, its conveyances the most inadequate and its gen-

eral rush for trolley-cars, steam trains and steamboats the fiercest.

As a matter of fact, when a city-full begins to move out in a hurry—a barrelful trying to pour out of a few bung-holes—there is bound to be a helter-skelter time at the bungs. And the differences between the scenes at the various city bungs are only differences in the temperaments of the people.

"Little old New York," being the first halting place of the foreign crowds, has the worst—not so much in temper as in sheer inability to do anything except to push.

Possibly if a given New York crowd of, say, 15,000, could be segregated, kept intact and driven half a dozen times over a given route, it would learn to be quite an intelligent crowd, able to take measurable care of the comfort of all.

But New York's crowds are ever new. Each hour there are new atoms in each that have it all to learn.

This makes the daily New York flight a rout that reproduces all the misery of the flight from a stricken field. The crowd prepares for a rush for the cars, not when they come in sight, but when the gongs are heard blocks away. A stranger, suddenly transported to the entrance to the big suspension bridge, or to the landings

of the steamboats, might well laugh in the face of the man who strove to convince him that the fighting, shouting, red-faced, crazy crowds were going for pleasure. He would refuse to believe that anything except the terror of sudden and terrible death could induce human beings to battle so.

Many times as big as could possibly be accommodated by it, rushes up the track to meet it, swarms over it fore and aft, climbs with bland ferocity over the passengers who are trying to get out, and glares with a united glare at the slower mob that charges behind.

Man, the hero, the strong and undaunted, seizes woman, the weak, the gentle and timid, and hews his way over young and old to reach a spot where he can seize some part of the car with a death grip. And having succeeded at last, ten to one he finds that his gentle protegee has climbed in ahead of him, while other gentle ones, defeated, divide their time between glaring balefully at her and repairing damages.

New York, of course, imagines that it has the only experiences of the kind. New York raises its three million pairs of hands each day over each new happening and calls on high heaven to witness that such a happening never happened to any city before.

But, as a matter of fact, if the crowds of other cities do not all in-

cline as New York's crowds do, to purvey sudden death to each other every time they go out for a day's chaste pleasures, there are few cities, big and little, that "let their children go" without squeezing them good and hard at the gate.

The trolley car with its cheap fares has done it. When steam railroads provided the only means of exit, the fares were high and the crowds remained neatly and unobtrusively separated into units in their houses and streets. The trolley car, a modern magician, raised the multitude over night with its spell of a five-cent fare; and alas! like most magicians, it is helpless to cope with the monster it has made.

It is a monster like all monsters from the time of fairy tales to the present day—fearful in size but lamentably clumsy and helpless in other ways. Like the dear old dragons, it spits fire and smoke in its battle for seats, and having fought the fight, it pants, buttonless, breathless, disheveled, clings to straps with fingertips, and is ready to have its head scratched by the princess and be deceived into doing it all over again next day.

But it isn't an entirely easy-going monster. One of its peculiarities is that it is easily pleased with some things and excessively particular about others. It is a hard monster to figure on.

One thing with which it isn't easily pleased is the place to which it goes

It's the American Habit—Run Away to Some Other Place

through such travail and labor. The old bare inclosure, with its dry, brown earth packed into hopeless solidity, which was unblushingly named a "grove" a few years ago, has had to hide itself. My Lord the Monster has a dainty appetite nowadays. He is even being educated beyond Ferris wheels and toboggan slides. He demands architecture, splendor and miracles for his summer amusement.

So New York has raised a city of vision on the ruins of old nasty Coney Island for him. Philadelphia sends trolley cars through glorious scenery into great parks—trolley parks, such as Willow Grove, that are more beautiful than any one thought of making even the biggest municipal parks a few years ago. Steamboats carry her throngs down the Delaware to the Capes, a day's trip now that once was a voyage. On the river lies Washington Park-on-the-Delaware, to which more steamers carry more crowds every day.

Pittsburg's monster piles itself into trolley cars that speed for miles into the open country until they, too, reach great trolley parks, laid out with everything to please My Lord. River steamers wait at every pier to bear masses along the Ohio, Monongahela and Alleghany rivers, where resorts are scattered for miles along the shores.

Cleveland has its Manhattan and Euclid Beaches, where an inland Coney Island waits. Great lake boats leave it daily every hour in the day crowded from rail to rail with excursionists bound for a score of places, big and little, far and near, along the beautiful lake.

Detroit sends her crowds out by trolley to her Saratoga of Mount Clemens, and by boat to her famous Flats, where yacht villages and fishing villages and house-boat villages have been reared by the fugitives from the city.

Boat and car whirl out of every portal in Chicago and Boston and St. Louis—yes, and out of the smaller towns, too, that are set in trees themselves and have gardens around each house. Even there you will find a crush in the cars or the boats.

It is the American habit. When it gets hot, run away to some other place.