

Keokuk Daily Post
November 29, 1856

For the Post

Snodgrass' Ride on the Railroad

Cincinnati, Nov. 14

MISTER EDITORS--

Well, now, dang me skin if I don't feel rather curus, "so far from home and all them that's dear to me," as the bordin-school gals say the first time they write to their friends--still, I ain't takin on about it to speak of--all the difference I kin see is, I feel a little more religious, maybe, when I get a little sick, than I used to.

You know arter going down there to St. Louis, and seein so many wonderful things, I wanted to see more--so I took a notion to go a travelin, so as to see the world, and then write a book about it--a kind o daily journal like--and have all in gold on the back of it, "Snodgrass' Dierrea", or somethin of that kind, like other authors that visits forren parts. I couldn't keep still so at last I went and got a map, so as to find out the shortest way to Cincinnati, and after examining of it keerfully, I come to the conclusion that about the best way was to go back to Keokuk, and from Keokuk to Quincy, and from Quincy to Chicago, and from Chicago to Indianapolis, and then down to the end of my ultimate destination. And the result of it all is that I am here, safe and sound, and I would recommend everybody to take the same road, and derned if they won't see sights.

Now, as I'm going to say somethin about this voyage, I guess I'll commence at Keokuk, bein as that's the general startin pint of the inhabitants of North America. I went down one night to the railroad office there, purty close onto the Laclede House, and bought about a quire of yaller paper, cut up into tickets--one for each railroad in the United States, I thought, but I found out arterwards, that the Alexandria and Boston airline was left out---and then got a baggage feller to take my trunk down to the boat, where he spilled it out on the levee, bustin it open and shakin out the contents, consisting of "guides" to Chicago, and "guides" to Cincinnati, and travelers guides, and all kinds of sich books, not excepting a "guide to heaven," which last aint much use to a fellar in Chicago, I kin tell you. Finally, that thar fast packet quit ringing her bell, and started down the river--but she hadn't gone mor'n a mile, till she run clean up on top of a sand bar whar she stuck till plum one o'clock, spite of the Captain's swearin,--and they had to set the whole crew to cussin at last, afore they got her off. That sand bar was a aggravating thing, anyhow, as we was runnin a race with an old fellar with a carpet bag, who calculated it was good exercise to walk to Quincy, and he got about half a day's start of us. However, when we did get off, you ought to a seen that old steamboat slinging sand with them wheels of hern. She'd got her Irish up now, and din't keer a scratch for bars and nothin else--and away she went walkin down the river on four inches of water, and jumpin over three acre patches of dry land, jest as though she had

legs. The old man and her had a mighty tight race of it, and she only saved herself by takin a nigh cut across the bottom, comin in fifteen minutes ahead. We had to get off the boat here, and go in the omnibuses to the cars.

My fare down to Quincy was a dollar and a quarter, and portorage about four dollars and a half, which is mighty moderate, and people oughtn't to complain, for though the packet company makes money, they can't afford to hire porters at ten dollars a month, and no reasonable human being could expect to have his overcoat keerfully preserved into the baggage room, while he's eating dinner, without payin a quarter for it--it's worth nine cents a minit.

When we got to the depo, I went around to get a look at the iron hoss. Thunderation. It wasn't no more like a hoss than a meetin house. If I was going to describe the animule, I'd say it looked like--derved if I know what it looked like, unless it was a regular old he devil, snortin fire and brimstone out of his nostrils, and puffin out black smoke all round, and pantin, and heavin, and swellin, and a chawin up red hot coals like they was good. A feller stood in a little house like, feedin him all the time, but the more he got the more he wanted, and the more he blowed and snorted. After a spell the feller caught him by the tail, and great Jericho, he set up a yell that split the ground more'n a mile and a half and the next minit I felt my legs a waggin, and found myself at t'other end of the string of vehickles. I wasn't skeered, but I had three chills and a stroke of palsy in less than five minutes, and my face had a curus brownish-yaller-green-bluish color in it, which was perfectly unaccountable.

"Well," says I, "comment is superfluous." And I took my seat in the nearest wagin, or car, as they call it--a consarned great long steamboat-lookin thing with a string of little pews down each side, big enough to hold about a man and a half. Jest as I sat down--the hoss hollered twice, and started off like a streak, pitchin me head first at the stomach of a big Irish woman, and she give a tremenjus grunt and then ketched me by the head and crammed me under the seat, and when I got out and staggered to another seat, the cars was a jumpin and tearin along at nigh unto forty thousand miles an hour and everybody was a bobbin up and down like a mill saw, and every wretch of 'em had his mouth stretched wide open and looked like they was a laffin, but I couldn't hear nothin, the cars kept sich a racket.

Bimeby they stopped all at once, and then sich a laff busted out of them passengers as I never hearn before. Laffin at me too, that's what made me mad, and I was mad as thunder, too. I ris up, and shakin my fist at 'em, says I, "Ladies and gentlemen, look a here, I'm a peaceable stranger--" and away went the train, went like the small pox was in town, jerkin me down in the seat with a whack like I'd been thrown from the moon, and their cussed mouths flopped open and the fellers went to bobbin up and down again. I put on an air of magnanimous contempt like, and took no more notice of 'em and very naturally went to bobbin up and down myself.

I jest took a peep out of the winder, and drat my buttons, if I wasn't astonished at the way that rail road was a gittin over the ground. I tell you, Mr. Editors, it made a rail fence look like a fine tooth comb, and the air actually turned blue in the vicinity. Thinks I if that devil at the other end of the train's going home tonight, it won't take him long to get there. Bimeby the second clerk came a staggerin in hollerin "Tickets. Tickets." When he came to me I told him I wasn't going to stop--I was going to Chicago. "Well, give me your ticket." "Not by a derved sight," says I. "You can't come any o them tricks on me, old feller. You can't get my ticket and then stick me ashore at the first wood yard your old cook stove stops at."

First he got mad, and then he got tickled, but when he found he wasn't making much, he like to a skeered me to death, threatening to throw me overboard--so I yielded in a condescending manner, and traded my yaller ticket for a red one, which wasn't Sunday school

fashion, where you get ten red tickets for one of tother color. Arter that, he made a regular practice of comin in every two minutes hollerin "Tickets." It's my opinion he's a darn nuisance, and ought to be turned out of the company. If a feller was to travel on that road for a week, that clerk and the peanut boy would pester him to death between 'em.

It didn't take me long to git used to the cars, and then I begun to put on airs like an old traveler stickin my feet over the back of the next pew, puttin my ticket in my hat band, pretending to go to sleep, and so on, and never lettin on to keer a cent where we was going to. So, when a feller asked me if I thought we would the connection, not wantin to appear green, I told him "No, dern the connection," but I couldn't imagin what that "connection" meant, no how. Another feller asked me what was the next town, and I told him Chicago. (I didn't know the name of any other place on the road, and I had to tell him somethin, to keep up appearances), and the blasted fool got off there. Served him right--he'd no business going so far away from home without havin his mother along.

At last, after skimmin over a pooty big "arm" of Lake Michigan, they call it--where I couldn't see nothin solid for the cars to rest on--we got to that place Chicago, which they say is Old Nick's local agency for the world. The cars run into a tremendous house, about as big as Warsaw, and as soon as they stopped, mor'n three hundred fellers come a cracking their whips around and hollerin: "Baggage for the Massasoit House" and "Carriages for United States Hotel" and "Passengers for the Little Miami Railroad," "Here's carriage for G'lena 'n Sh'cago Railroad," "Gentlemen going east take Suth'n Mish'gan Indianan Railroad," and so on, every feller hollerin as loud as the very Dickens would let him. Directly a feller commenced yellin "This way, gentlemen. This way with your checks. This way." Then another feller commenced grabbin up trunks and looking at a brass thing hangin to 'em, and hollerin out the number he found on it--then as soon as some feller in the crowd would hand in a number like it, he'd slam the trunk down with all his might in the depo-and he was a pooty strong feller too.

"Two hundred and forty-two, Nor'n cross," "Here--242" (Slam goes the trunk.) "Nine hundred and sixty-eight, G'lena and Chicago." "968." "Four hundred an thirty seven, Ill'noy central." "All right 437." "Say, let that baggage alone." "Where's my hat?" "Oh, thunder, who's seen my wife?" "Gentlemen goin south take seats in the train at the far side of depo--going east, take seats in cars on middle track." "Put down that trunk--b'longs to Mishigan Central." "You'r a liar." "You'r another," and away they go at it, pitchin into each other like dogs, till the depo police pitches into them and takes 'em off to the watch house. Now its amusin to notice how keerful them fellers is with baggage (that's a kind of sarcastified remark--understand). I see 'em knock a hole in the floor--3 inch oke plank--with a trunk not much bigger'n a carpet sack--and that's a unpolished fact.

I shivered there considerable of a spell, waitin for my baggage, and finally got the bottom half of my trunk, what had the check on it, and bimeby my vallis made its appearance, with shirts and cravats hangin out at one end, and socks and collars at t'other--lookin considerable like a Irishman that's jest got out of a New Orleans 'lection riot--and dern my cats if I'd a knowd it was a vallis at all, only for a piece of my name what got left on the end of it, (by mistake, I spose) for it didn't look no more like that article than a steem bote. After I got the balance of my trunk, I shoved out for the Massasawit House, and put up for a spell.

I know it's fashionable to describe hotels, and tell how much they cost, but I reckon it aint necessary for me to do so--specially as don't know nothin about that hotel, only--they charge enuff. Chicago's a great place, but I ain't going to say nothin about it, only jest this, that when

you feel like tellin a feller to go to the devil--tell him to go to Chicago--it'll anser every purpose, and is perhaps, a leetle more expensive.

Next day I started for Cincinnati--and as this letter is growed pooty long, I'll only say at there's more blacksmith shops in Indiana than anywhere else in the world, and I calculate we stopped at every dern one there was the whole state. The cars would run about three hundred yards, and holler and stop--and so on till we got to Indianapolis, and took the midnight thunder-an-ligtnin train, and arter that we come a tearin down here at the rate of four hundred and thirty-seven miles a minute, leavin the rail track red hot behind us--in some places it melted.

Yours, what's left of me.
SNODGRASS.