

Saturday In Downtown Indianapolis

ROBERT A. DARMER

Saturday is an interesting day because it has a different meaning to almost everyone. To a few, Saturday is a day of rest and relaxation; to the majority of the public today, it is just another day of work; a young boy's definition of the last day of the week might be that it is a day to finish any chores which have accumulated through the week; still another definition familiar among women, especially, is that the day under discussion is a day to accomplish any tasks in the business district of the city. This last phase may be combined with a certain amount of pleasure, such as window shopping, visiting the department store's sale on hosiery, etc.

What with the war and its accompanying complications, more and more people are riding the buses and streetcars to town and walking the two or three blocks that they used to drive. This adds to the confusion and bottlenecks on the sidewalks and is steadily making it more of a dread risk than a task to go into town on Saturday.

Let us make an imaginary trip to town on a Saturday and see part of what happens there. First you board your bus, trolley, or streetcar, which you share with the other 387,000 people in the city (or so it seems); after half an hour's patience-testing ride, you arrive in the heart of the Hoosier capital where you discover just how many people there are in Indianapolis and its neighboring cities. You are now standing in a so-called safety zone which appears safe only when you are out of it. While working your way to the opening in the safety zone, in order that you may cross the street legally, you will probably

collect a few new phrases to enter into your little black book. Once you are free of the safety zone and supposedly safe on the sidewalk, you meet an onrushing crowd of hurrying, dashing, anxious and anticipating, but otherwise sane people. While possibly meaning well, these people make you feel as though you are the ball carrier on a football field with the entire opposing team about to pounce upon you. If you are a strong hearted person and can stand this treatment for about five minutes, you will then gain enough courage and stamina to try to make progress amidst this unarmed army. Playing safe, you "follow the crowd" for a short distance; then you remember why you came to town (i. e., supposing, of course, that you did have a purpose for coming). You remember that you wanted to go to a department store for something; just what it was is of small concern now, but it may be recalled when you reach your destination. Now the time has come to break away from the trend of the crowd, which is flowing as steadily and fast as an electric current; you take a deep breath and make a left turn toward the street, battling the swiftly flowing current of people until you reach the curb. For a short moment you are comparatively safe; all you have to oppose here are a few automobiles and an occasional streetcar, which are compelled to stop at the traffic signal. You take a step from the curb and one of your fellow men narrowly misses making you a case for the hospital with his automobile, but your nerves are built up to such an extent now that such a trivial incident fails to make its impression upon you.

As you approach the vicinity of the department store which you intend to patronize, here again the people are flowing in and out of its doors, somewhat resembling a mighty river current. Contrary to first impressions, getting into this store is really quite simple — you merely edge your way within range of one of the revolving doors, and you are soon inside, willingly or otherwise. Your trip through the revolving door will probably not differ much from that of others who have had the same experience — average number of children lost, a heel or toe bumped here and there, a few hats mangled, etc. But remember, you intended to come into the store; there are those who unfortunately wandered too close to the revolving door and were victims of circumstance. As to the matter of what it was you wished to purchase — that is more blurred than ever now. As far as you can see there are people going in as many different directions as exist, and accomplishing apparently nothing. Remembering the proverb, "A stitch in time saves nine," you decide to take the escalator to your desired floor. After riding two flights, you are compelled to wonder whether the proverbial "stitch in time" saves nine lives — or nine minutes; the proverb doesn't say, but you can draw your own conclusion.

You have now reached your desired floor and have sighted a sign, hovered close to the ceiling for protection, which denotes your particular department. Upon reaching this department, you find all the clerks willing and trying to help — help get rid of what customers they have. Without having to diagram the desired article to the clerk more than once, you

are now the proud possessor of an article purchased from a department store; ordinarily this would be nothing unusual, but since it occurred on Saturday, you undoubtedly deserve a gold medal.

Having purchased your article, you are now ready to leave the store; your mission is half completed. All that remains is the "long journey home." Having made use of the escalator once before in the day, you know how the crowd moves and you can look about you now. Here you will very likely see the small boy who is trying desperately to ascend a descending escalator — an example of perpetual motion in the making. Now you are on the main floor and are again approaching the only device that takes in as many people as the local draft board — the revolving door. This time you know the method employed so you are not worried; after all, there are only two possibilities: either you get through alive or else you have nothing more to worry about.

Calling upon your last ounce of energy, you brave your way to the street-car or bus line. Here you board your vehicle which is operated by a courteous, patient operator. You know he (or she) is patient and courteous because the advertisement says he (or she) is. Maybe Webster's definition of "patience" and "courtesy" doesn't agree with the bus company's definition — Webster is simply out of date! After riding your allotted mileage, you alight from the vehicle and again learn how to breathe.

It is indeed peculiar how this event will make you realize what a safe place home is, in spite of what safety engineers would have you believe.