

THE SPECTATOR

OUR local observance of Decoration Day Thursday seemed to recall those sweet old fashioned heart-stirring occasions of some years ago when everyone picked their own flowers and nobody's grave was forgotten. As I remember, an impressive hush spread over the community early in the morning, lasting until well after the services at the cemetery were concluded, and there was little of the hurrah and holiday spirit in the air. In well-regulated communities such outbursts of sentiment were usually reserved until the Fourth of July. But that was before baseball became commercialized and resorts were all the rage and going to the movies was more important than attending church. What progress we have made as a people in the past twenty years!

At that, those Decoration Days of the long ago were not such dry affairs as the modern mind might imagine. Mingled with the sober sentiments of the day was plenty of wholesome fun and frolic, and family reunions and friendly exchanges followed as a matter of course. As I recall the order of the day, it was something like this: Early in the morning the youngsters raced out on the lawns and through the fields and even into the woods close by to pick a wonderful array of wild flowers still damp with the dew, while the older folks occupied themselves with hanging the flags and draping the front porch posts with "bunting." When the youngsters returned they were scrubbed and scoured until their skins fairly shined; then they were dressed in their best bib-and-tuckers, given a big bunch of flowers each, and hurried away to the town "green" where the parade would assemble. There was always considerable fussing and fooling around before the procession got under way, but it was well worth the trouble.

Those Decoration Day parades were worth seeing. First came the marshal, astride a prancing horse and wearing a slouch hat and a red-white-and-blue sash. Then followed the town band playing some lively, old-fashioned air. Behind the band marched the Grand Army men, carrying Old Glory and their faded and tattered battle flags and stepping along as sprightly as their advanced years would permit. For those unable to march, and the stragglers who couldn't keep up with the procession, there were beautifully decorated carriages following immediately behind the marching members of the "post." In my old town of a thousand souls, back in the eighties, there were over a hun-

dred Civil War veterans and they always made a splendid showing on parade. They were the lions of the occasion, and how old "Front" street would rock with cheers as these fine old fellows—everyone of them as proud as a peacock—marched by!

Following the veterans came the children's contingent, segregated according to their respective Sunday schools. There were four Sunday schools in that town and there was spirited rivalry between them. As I see them now, the girls all wore white dresses with wide colored waist ribbons tied behind in big "bows." The boys for the most part wore white "blouse" shirts with wide starched collars, some of them "frilled" or edged with something or other that was supposed to look fancy. Below their waist-lines the color scheme of the parade was sadly disarranged, for in each individual boy's case the color of his "pants" depended upon that of his father's worn-out suit. However, that did not seem to dampen anybody's spirits in the least and the boys managed to hold up their end of the parade in splendid shape. I almost forgot to say that each boy and girl carried an armful of flowers.

Then behind the Sunday schools marched the local "orders," all in full dress. In my town we had the "P. O. S. of A." (I have forgotten what this stands for), the Maccabees, the Knights of Pythias, and a certain order of "Woodmen" who always paraded in blue denim "jumpers" and carried shiny axes. I remember of my father once telling the high potentate of this particular aggregation, who in addition to his other honors had the distinction of being the town loafer, that it was all very well for him to parade around the streets, packing his axe, provided he made a solemn resolution that henceforth he would see to it that his poor wife, who had to "take in washing" to support the family, didn't have to chop the firewood to cook his own supper. That blunt warn-

ing, uttered in the presence of practically the entire population of the town, had a marvelous effect upon the lazy fellow, and the ridicule that was shot at him from that time on finally compelled him to materially mend his ways and become a fairly decent citizen.

But I am getting away from my story. The parade as described, with the "orders" bringing up the rear, would march from one end of the town to the other and then head for the cemetery. On the way to the cemetery was a steep hill, about half a mile in length, and the marchers usually broke ranks before they reached the summit. There every grave was decorated, the veterans caring for the graves of their departed comrades and each family looking after its own "lot." Then solemn services were held, conducted by the chaplain of the G. A. R. post, after which the assemblage dispersed for the noonday meal.

In the afternoon the whole population would again congregate in the town "square" or "green," as it was sometimes called—to listen to a recital of the daring deeds of the Grand Army men and perhaps a red-hot oration delivered by some celebrity from a neighboring community—someone who could make the air fairly bristle with patriotism. Then followed a band "concert," and sometimes a baseball game, which usually kept the citizens of all ages fully occupied until supper time—we called the evening meal "supper" in those days.

Supper over, everyone hurried out to the picnic grounds in the neighboring woods. There in the evening the old veterans would give a "bean-soup," as they were wont to call the affair. They would boil beans and marrow bones together in big iron kettles, making a delightful broth, which was dished out in plenteous portions to everyone present. Following the feed, the old army men would stir up the camp fires and start telling stories and singing their old battle songs.

What an inspiring affair that was, particularly to the boys, who always edged up as close to the camp-fire circle as possible. I recall climbing a tree one night that overhung the magic circle, in order to view the proceedings at close range. There was no formal conclusion to such affairs. Folks went home when the youngsters grew sleepy. The older boys usually were allowed to remain until the stories were all told and the songs all sung, and then each boy would proudly escort his favorite soldier home. Now and then there was some boy daring enough to walk home with one of the girls, but such courage was rarely to be seen.

Oh, what wonderful days! Would that they might return again to refresh the memories of those of us who were so fortunate as to be a part of them, and to enlighten our more modern fellow citizens as to the real significance and possibilities of a genuine, old-fashioned patriotic celebration!

I HAVE a name to propose for Utah's hall of fame and feel certain that every good citizen in the community will second the nomination. The person I have in mind is devoting himself earnestly and assiduously to war work as assistant director of the War Savings Committee for Utah, and—but never mind that handle to his name. I could name several of our fellow citizens with more distinguished war titles—a few, in fact, who have been twice or thrice honored in this respect—who aren't worth a whoop when it comes to directing war work. To tell the truth, some of these fine fellows are worse than nothing; they simply pose, pose, pose, and their official functioning is mostly confined to a frenzied endeavor to crowd themselves in front of the spotlight. Were their antics not so ridiculous, they would give everybody a pain; as it is, they are simply considered as a joke

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Our Jazz Band

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