



The Editor's Table

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“THE
FLAG
OF
PEACE”

The Editor's Table

The Flag

Out of the glowing memories of the Past come those of the great American Civil War. Stored in the child mind so long as it shall live are the stories, the songs, the flag-waving, the marching of the men who came "Home from the War" in 1865 and 1866. My widowed mother taught district school in Minnesota in those years, and I, a small boy whose feet could scarcely reach the floor from the low front seats, drank in the spirit of the time.

One of the old war songs rises in memory as I look over the pages of that book so long needed, *The Flag of the United States*, by Dr. Milo M. Quaife:

"Oh, wrap the Flag around me, boys!
To die were far more sweet
With Freedom's starry emblem, boys,
To be my winding sheet."

There they are again! The steamboat coming up the Mississippi River, thronged with blue-coated soldiers coming back from the South. The War was over! The Peace was won! And Captain Isaac Thompson of our Minnesota regiment bringing back with him a stalwart black Negro (Calvin Simmons) who went to Mother's school and was the herculean delight of the playground.

Dr. Quaife has made every lover of the American Flag his permanent debtor by writing its true history.

It has been a large part of the pleasure and duty of the Nebraska State Historical Society to expose and explode the fictitious tales of the Trans-Missouri frontier—to set up the Truth of the heroic adventures of men and women who made this region one of the most famous and inspiring in human history; to put Fable in its proper place and give Falsehood its proper label. Conspicuous in this service has been the revision of the Wild Bill fiction.

Elsewhere in this issue is a condensed narrative revealing the service of Dr. Quaife in that most important field — the true story of the Flag we love.

The American Constitution at Work

When the teachers of Nebraska's public schools open their doors this summer they will find at hand a brochure of highest importance to them and to their pupils. It is the work of Professor E. P. Wilson of Chadron, for many years head of the Department of Social Sciences in the State Teachers College there, and for thirteen years before that a superintendent of public schools in this state. Briefly, it is a thoroughly practical method of giving boys and girls a clear comprehension of the meaning of American Democracy in the only way it can be given — by actual application that brings the abstruse phraseology of textbooks within range of their own daily school experience. And it is backed by the work of teachers who have tested it and whose stories (included in the bulletin) are of intense and thrilling interest.

For many years I have known that government must be taught by practice. In the early years of Doane College the students organized a "United States Senate," of which I was a member. It was a voluntary association and its meetings ran through several years. To the college and the students its results were extraordinary. Several of its members later became legislators. All were inspired with new meanings of our government.

Later, my own conducted classes on "Practical Legislation" (given in the Law and Political Science department of the University of Nebraska) were attended by groups of enthusiastic students, many of whom have since held high places in the state and national government.

But Professor Wilson's method is more logical and important than either of the foregoing examples. His teaching of *The Constitution* begins in the grades. The children set up and operate in miniature the very plan and practice of the government in which as men and women they become actors. The practice of "Good Government" in school creates in the child mind the standards of conduct most needed in the State and the Nation. The effect on our future society is beyond calculation.

The next step in Professor Wilson's program is its application to children's schools all over the world. Hitherto I have published my own plan to secure World Peace when the World War ceases. It must have as one of its leading features the teaching of World Patriotism in the schools of all the nations. This is now entirely possible. The Wilson plan makes a foundation for such teaching in all our grade schools. Its extension to the uttermost parts of the civilized world becomes a necessary item in our plans for permanent World Peace—the glory of One World—the pledge of our planet in harmony with the highest ideal of human cooperation.

“Joseph Schafer, Student of Agriculture”

Such is the title of a book of 76 pages, beautifully printed, bound in heavy paper, just received from its publishers, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. It is a tribute to the remarkable man who from 1920 to 1941 was Superintendent of that Society. It contains four sections written by his fellow-workers, each bringing out some aspect of his character and service. Annexed to these tributes are thirty-two challenging pages of bibliography—the titles of historical publications produced by Joseph Schafer in his active years from 1898 to 1941.

It is the judgment of the writer of this review that Joseph Schafer has made the most important contributions to American history of any made during his lifetime. He was the finest combination of scholar and everyday common man I have ever known. His grasp of the whole field of modern American life was the most complete, and his painstaking industry in that field made a record without a rival. He had a most extraordinary background for his life work. He was born of German immigrant parents from the Rhine Valley. He grew up in the state which gave him, outside of his school life, the most intimate knowledge of the vast German and other immigrant migrant peoples who have transformed American life since the revolution period of Europe in 1848. He was also a farmer in his boyhood background, and never ceased to be a farmer in his conceptions of American society.

To the great transformation of the American continent through the pioneer farm settlement of the entire region west of

the Allegheny Mountains, Joseph Schafer gave the most adequate interpretation of any American writer. This transformation of the unsettled wilderness into the region of greatest available resources in our time has made possible the reconstruction of the world, in which process we are now engaged.

We Americans who have settled the prairies, plains and mountains of America in the lifetime of pioneers yet living, have proven to be the decisive factor in World life, as future historians will chronicle. And among those thinkers in terms of this pioneer period, none has made a more valuable contribution than "Joseph Schafer, Student of Agriculture," as his associates in the Wisconsin Historical Society fondly and faithfully name him.



ROSE OF THE PRAIRIES

“The Flag of the United States”

In this book, through infinitely painstaking research, Dr. Milo M. Quaife has given us the true origin of our nation's flag, tracing its evolution and exploding the myths that have tarnished its bright colors with the corrosions of idle fancy and of deliberate falsehood. Dedicated to his son, “who fought for the Flag and lies buried in its folds,” this work was undertaken as a patriotic duty to check the great mass of “misinformation found even in such publications as the Boy Scout *Handbook*, and those on the Flag issued by the U. S. Marine Corps and the United States Flag Association.”

The author quotes an authority who in 1929 protested against one very common misrepresentation—that the Stars and Stripes was carried as a battle flag in the Revolution: “Almost every one of the hundred or more books and booklets on the ‘history’ of the Flag proceed on this and other equally false views of the reality.” The increasing repetition of such errors in histories, public addresses, paintings, and the films brought forth this volume.

The evolution of our Flag through its English-Scotch origin may be outlined in a few words, though the author gives full details. The war standard of the Saxons was the Dragon, used throughout the Tudor period (1485-1603) “as one of the supporters of the Royal Arms, and at the present moment it supports the arms of the City of London.”

Meanwhile another symbol, the red cross of St. George who slew the Dragon, rose in public favor and eventually drove all rivals from the field. “The mystery of popular acclaim remains forever inscrutable.”

Then in 1603 James VI of Scotland became also James I of England, and found “plenty of trouble in his task of driving these two stiff-necked peoples in double harness. Their ancient jealousies could not be exorcised by any mere act of diplomacy. . . . For hundreds of years St. Andrew had been the patron saint of Scotland and his cross of white on a deep blue field had become the national flag. So King James in 1606 sought to terminate the quarreling among his seamen by a single clever stroke.” The two saints were united, and the Union Flag of Great Britain was born—the red and white crosses against a field of light blue. But the intense racial rivalries did not die until, a century later, the Act of Union brought a new ensign to be known as the Union Jack or Meteor Flag—a red field with the symbol of the Union (a deep blue replacing its lighter shade, however) in its first canton. Upon the addition of Ireland's cross of St. Patrick in 1801, the British Union assumed its present form.

January 1, 1776, marks the birthday of America's national army and America's first national flag. It was nothing other than the British Union flag with its red field divided by six horizontal stripes of white, and they called it “the Great Union Flag of the United Colonies.” For the colonists

were still loyal subjects of the King, and the flag they adopted signified both their loyalty and their new union among themselves.

So, in honor of the new Continental Army, a great ceremony took place on Prospect Hill in Somerville, and the Great Union Flag was first displayed on that January day. Floating from the 76-foot mast of an old schooner, it was seen even in Boston. In July it was rendered obsolete by the Declaration of Independence, but Congress, moving slowly, did not enact the first legislation creating a truly American flag until June 14, 1777, when "the new constellation" of thirteen stars was substituted for the united crosses.

But the flag of thirteen Stripes and Stars was soon outgrown, yet not until the passage of a new flag act (the third) on April 4, 1818, did our present banner come into being; nor was it rendered legal until July 4th of that year. We are indebted to Peter H. Wendover, New York City's representative in Congress, for his patient and far-seeing labors through two sessions to eliminate all irregularities and produce an ensign that should be uniformly responsive to the growth of the nation. "As nearly as anything else in this changing world, it has proved itself a permanent creation." Yet not until many years later was the flag of our country used by the United States Army, nor was it intended to be so. In Washington's official correspondence it was "the marine flag." Flags had always been necessary to distinguish ships at sea, and usually floated over fortifications. "The majority of Americans, however, never saw a fort or a ship at sea; and never, until the Mexican War of 1846-48, fought under it; hence they did not possess the love for the Flag which today is shared by all loyal citizens."

With this background of fact it becomes easy to discern the myths and fables. To these Dr. Quaife devotes two chapters that should be reprinted in pamphlet form and placed on the desk of every school child old enough to study history. And with it should go a copy of the address by Dr. Randolph G. Adams of the University of Michigan (quoted in the "Exchanges" of this issue) wherein he pays eloquent tribute to Dr. Quaife and his great work in the name of Truth.

"Of all the myths woven about the Stars and Stripes, the one associated with Betsy Ross is the lustiest. . . That such a myth should have come to replace in the minds of millions of twentieth-century Americans the true story of the origin of our flag affords a sorry illustration of the ease with which a wholly baseless tale can be foisted upon the general public by the arts of clever propagandists, . . . deceiving even Smithsonian Institution and the world of scholarship with their audacious inventions. Like the rival fictions of the *Bon Homme Richard's* flag, the moment we submit this story to sober examination it crumbles beneath our gaze. . . Yet despite the complete absence of any supporting evidence, and the embarrassing presence of ample contradictory facts, the legend swept the nation and was introduced into its school books. Eventually a Betsy Ross Memorial Association was incorporated with the objective of converting

the supposed 'Flag House' into a national shrine; leading churchmen, educators and public officials sponsored the movement; a nation-wide ten-cent subscription was launched, to which two million persons are said to have subscribed; . . . and this foolish hoax finds recurrent statement in successive histories, in uncounted textbooks, and in 'historical' presentations on the silver screen."

"The Flag of Peace"

The original of the beautiful ensign which forms the frontispiece in this issue is believed to be the most unusual picture of the Stars and Stripes ever painted. No engraving can even hint its beauty. Done in oils, and more than six feet in height, its soft folds give every illusion of a full view of "Old Glory" and against the soft summer sky it seems to glow with life. The story of its creation is quite remarkable.

Mr. Fred Tripp of Beloit, Wisconsin, had gone down to Excelsior Springs in Missouri where he was a patient in the McCleary Clinic and Hospital during a long illness. Returning home, he was possessed by the thought that a fine painting of The Flag should hang in the lobby of the hospital for the inspiration of all other patients. Though he had never had a painting lesson in all his seventy-one years, he brought out a six-foot flag, sat down before it, and produced this masterpiece which he presented to the hospital. In his accompanying letter (probably in 1942) he wrote:

"I have seen many pictures of The Flag, but it is always unfurled as a battle-flag. This flag represents Peace, and we can well imagine that everything we Americans have, and all of our hopes and aspirations, our joys and sorrows, are symbolized in the folds of this beautiful emblem."

Then, motivated by a spirit of patriotism, the McCleary Clinic produced lithographs in full color which were sent with their compliments to more than forty thousand patients of the hospital and to many other thousands throughout the nation. So universal was the response to this painting that probably millions of inferior copies have been circulated and sold. Original lithographs may be seen in the offices of the Director of the Museum and the Superintendent of the State Historical Society.