

BIRTH OF OUR FLAG.

ITS ORIGIN WRAPPED IN HISTORICAL MYSTERY.

Washington Was a Member of the Committee Which Accepted the Design, and It Is a Curious Coincidence That His Shield Consisted of the Same Figures.

The American flag really dates from Jan. 2, 1776, though officially only from June 14, 1777, when Congress passed the resolution decreeing that the flag of the United States should be thirteen stripes alternate red and white; that the Union be thirteen stars, white in a field representing a new constellation. This is nearly all that the records tell. Whenever a new state is admitted a new star is added. The respectable antiquity of our flag is best realized by comparing it with that of other nations. The Spanish flag was established in 1785, the French tricolor in 1794, the Italian flag in 1848, and the flag of the German Empire dates from 1870. As for "the meteor flag of England" which an imaginative poet once applied to the present national ensign of the United Kingdom, it is enough to say that there is no such flag in existence. The British ensign is commonly termed the "Union Jack." This royal standard dates from 1801 when it was first hoisted over the Tower of London. So that the pretty fancy about "the flag that braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze" is simply gilt-edged gibberish.

The origin of the flag of the United States is wrapped in historical mystery, but there is good reason to believe that it was designed and adopted largely out of compliment to Washington. He was a member of the committee which accepted the design, and it is a curious coincidence that his shield consisted of the same pieces and figures that the flag is composed of. Washington's crest was an eagle, and the colors and the metal of his coat are also the principal colors in the flag, namely, red and white. Washington's object in this may have been the laudable desire to perpetuate himself seeing that he had no direct posterity. He may have been inspired by the fact that in giving us a free country he was also entitled to influence the features of its flag. Accordingly instead of the stars which in heraldry consist of six or more points the United States have adopted instead the five pointed figures of Washington's shield. These are in heraldry called mullets. The flag thus receives an additional lustre from the silent honors thus paid to the Father of his country by his own contemporaries. The framers of the resolution on June 14, 1777, were probably for these and other reasons desirably silent upon these points. It is considered that they were anxious to have Washington escape the animadversions of the Conway cabal, whose opposition would have been aroused at any open attempt to make a hero of Washington and whom this cabal intended to supplant by General Horatio Gates. Anyhow our official knowledge upon the motives and principles that may have influenced the framers of the flag is very limited and gossip has attributed the designing and the arrangement of the flag to a lady with French predilections who lived in Philadelphia.

During the revolution many of the states had their own flags, and Lexington was fought under "waving streamers." Some people also go so far as to state that Washington copied the East India Company's flag which had also thirteen stripes, red and white, but such is not likely. Paul Jones claimed that he first hoisted the flag of America on the Alfred. The national emblem was then a rattlesnake which indeed came nearly becoming a national emblem instead of the eagle. The flag of the "Ranger" which was fitted out by Congress for Jones was thirteen stripes with the rattlesnake undulating over them and with the motto—"Don't Tread on Me!" However, from out of all these various devices there was evolved a national standard designed under Washington's supervision and which was accepted by Congress. It was Mrs. Ross who made the banner which Congress approved, from a rough sketch furnished to her and made by the hand of Washington; so that it seems clear, alike from the facts and from the probabilities that the plans and preferences of Washington dominated the national flag. No story of the American flag, however, which omitted the vicissitudes—which beset its birth and early existence would be complete, that failed to state the part that France played in the matter. This was so vital a part that Captain A. T. Mahan stated in his speech at New York, Feb. 7, 1897, that "there would be no flag at all if it weren't for the French under De Grasse appearing at Hampton Roads," while 5,000 trained French soldiers tackled Burgoyne and Cornwallis on land, fighting side by side with Americans.

The flag of the fifteen stars and fifteen stripes was carried by Old Ironsides before Tripoli and throughout the war of 1812. It was the flag worn by the Constellation in her actions with the insurgent and La Vendee; the flag that waved over Berne, being the first American flag placed upon a fortress of the Old World; the flag of Lake Erie, Fort M'Henry and New Orleans, and of our naval victories on the Atlantic, and which was carried around Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope in the Essex, the first United States cruiser to show a pennant beyond either.

The flag worn by the United States brig Enterprise in her action with the British brig Boxer, September 4, 1813 and afterward the pall which covered the body of Capt. Burrows, had fifteen stripes and fifteen stars; this flag which was old on the day of the engagement, and patched with a still older one, was, after the action, found to bear the marks of fifty-nine shot holes, chiefly musketry.

The bear flag, which was raised at Sonoma June 14, 1846, is now in the possession of the Pioneer Society of San Francisco. It is made of white cotton and red flannel, and has painted on it the semblance of a grizzly bear. The artist was so unfortunate in his efforts that the Spaniards in their derision called it the "Bandera colchis," or hog flag. The army which raised this flag and attempted to revolutionize a state consisted of fourteen Americans.

Capt. Montgomery, of the sloop-of-war Portsmouth, then lying in San Francisco Bay, raised the United States flag on the plaza of Yerba Buena, now Portsmouth square, under a salute of twenty-one guns, on the 8th of July, 1846. Since that date the flag of our nation has constantly waved over California.

The City of Charleston, S. C., presented a regimental flag to the South Carolina Volunteer on the 24th of December, 1846. The Mayor, in his presentation speech, said: "The motto that glitters in the sunlight from this banner, 'Not for ourselves do we conquer, but for our country,' covers every heart here present." This flag, riddled by bullets, was carried at Contreras and Cherubusco, where Col. Butler was killed carrying it. It was also the first flag borne inside the City of Mexico by the United States forces.

Something from Scotland.
Mrs. Hohmboddie: "What are you reading that absorbs you so?"
Mr. Hohmboddie (looking up from his book): "It's a new Scotch novel."
Mrs. Hohmboddie (with enthusiasm): "Oh, I am so fond of those dear dialect things! Do read me a little."
Mr. Hohmboddie: "Can you understand it?"

Mrs. Hohmboddie (loftily): "Can I understand it? Well, I should hope anything you can understand need not be Greek to me!"
Mr. Hohmboddie: "No; but it might be Scotch."
Mrs. Hohmboddie: "Go on; read just where you are at."

Mr. Hohmboddie (reading): "Ye see, Elspie, said Duncan, doucely, I might hae mair the matter wi' me than ye wad be sperin'. Aibhins ma een is a bit dazilt, an' am hearin' the poolses thuddin' in ma ears, an' ma tongue is clavin' when it sud be gaein'; an' div ye no' hear the dirlin' o' ma hand an' feel the shakin' o' ma hond this day gin I gat a glimpse o' ye, sair hirplin like an auld mon? Div ye nae guess what's a' the steer, hinner, wi'out me gaein' it mair words?"
Mrs. Hohmboddie: "Stop, for goodness sake! What in the world is the creature trying to say?"

Mr. Hohmboddie: "He's making a declaration of love."
Mrs. Hohmboddie: "A declaration of love? I thought he was telling a lot of symptoms to his doctor."
Nothing Like a Good Dictionary.
"Father," said his son, looking up from a book, "what is pride?"
"Pride?" returned the father. "Pride? Why, a—oh, surely you know what pride is? A sort of being stuck up—a kind of—well, proud, you know. Just get the dictionary. That's the thing to tell you exactly what it is. There's nothing like a dictionary, Johnny."

"Here it is," said the latter, after an exhausting search: "Pride—being proud."
"Um—yes, that's it," replied the father. "But—well, look at 'proud.' That's the way. You've got to hunt these things out, my lad."
"I've got it," answered Johnnie. "Pre—pre—pro—proud—having pride."
"That's it. There you are, as clear as day. I tell you, Johnnie, there is nothing like a good dictionary when you are young."

Musical Criticism.
The little daughter of a certain musical critic was overheard the other day entertaining a visitor while her mother was out of the room.
"And do you like music, too?" asked the visitor politely.
"Oh, yes, indeed," replied the child, with as near an approach to her father's manner as she could manage. "I'm specially fond of opera."
"What operas do you like?" asked the visitor.
The child hesitated. Then she recovered her grown-up air.
"Oh," she said carelessly, "my favorites are 'Lohenschman' and 'The Flying Grin.'"

The Gibson Picture Fad.
A scheme for using Gibson pictures (and it may be hinted that this fad has been so overdue that it is showing signs of passing) is to arrange small ones in artistic groups on a square of delicately tinted paper harmonizing with the prevailing tint of the room. For a pink room, a sheet of pink glazed paper is used, an edge left that gives the effect of a frame. On this the pictures are pasted, and it is then attached to the wall by means of tiny gilt thumb-screws, doing away with the tearing or blowing off of these pictures when less securely fastened to the wall.

A Chinese traveller applying for a passport must have his palm brushed over with fine oil-paint, and then press it on thin, damp paper, which retains an exact impression of the lines of his hand. Transference of the passport is then impossible, for no two persons have the same lines on their palms.

Cats can smell even during sleep. If a piece of meat be placed immediately in front of a sleeping cat's nose, the nostrils will begin to work as the scent is received, and an instant later the cat will wake up.

THE CONNING TOWER.

Where the Admiral is Stationed During an Engagement.

The conning tower of the modern ironclad presents the greatest contrast between the old and new methods of fighting on the seas. The conning tower starts over the forward turret. In this circular chamber, scarcely six feet across and protected by walls of steel twelve inches thick, stood Commodore Dewey. Above his head was a roof of solid steel. The first impression of the lay observer as he enters this little inclosed chamber is that the enemy and all other things are invisible, and that the battle is to be fought out on the lines of simple guess-work.

But stepping forward and bringing his eyes to the level of the armor plating between the arched roof above and the steel walls he becomes aware of a little narrow slit along which he may sweep his eyes and take in the whole range of the horizon.

Below and directly in front of him is the sharp-pointed bow of the boat and the two long white muzzles of the guns protruding many feet from the forward turret.

From the moment of the beginning of the battle until the end the commander is invisible to his men. His voice is the only thing present—mainly through speaking-tubes and telephones.

On that group of speaking-tubes to the right are the words "Bow torpedo tube" and "Above water torpedo tube." At the left is the voice tube to the engine-room, and this completes the circuit that discharges the giant guns.

Right in the centre of the conning tower is the steam-steering wheel, binnacle and compass. Thus by the directing hand of the commander standing in the centre of the tower, with his hand upon the compass, is the battle fought. Who of all humanity save the man himself can realize the immensity of the strain upon the human mind placed in control of this mighty engine on the day of battle? In this little spot is concentrated the whole power of the mighty machine which we know as an ironclad ship.

Never since the world began was such a power concentrated in the hands of one man, and with that power the judgment to direct it, the will to apply it, the knowledge to utilize it is placed in his hands.

The commander in his conning tower has but to press the button and the great engines will drive the boat through the water.

Down in the chambers of the guns are the masses of the powder charges. A touch, a spark, a great flame and a thundering crash, and the steel shot will rush 2,000 feet in a second. The touch of another button will loosen the torpedoes. A word through a third tube will send a storm of steel and lead flying from the machine guns on the upper deck and in the round tops.

OLDEST OF AMERICA'S CONSULS.
Has the Proud Distinction of Over a Half a Century's Service.

The proud distinction of half a century's service, making him the Nestor of the American consular corps, belongs to Horatio J. Sprague, the United States Consul at Gibraltar. Mr. Sprague was appointed by President James K. Polk May 12, 1848. Moreover, his father before him, Horatio Sprague, of Boston, Mass., was appointed Consul at Gibraltar by President Andrew Jackson April 30, 1832. Again, the son of the present Consul, Richard Louis Sprague, is Deputy and Vice Consul, and, if the record of the Sprague family is kept up, will be serving the United States at Gibraltar when the twentieth century is half gone.

Horatio the elder, a native of Boston, visited Gibraltar before and after 1812. He subsequently established in Gibraltar the business of American merchantman and shipowner. Ancient records refer to him as "enjoying a high standing in the commercial world, of great moral worth and general hospitality, especially to his countrymen." During the first years of his Gibraltar residence, in 1815, he was presented by the Humane Society of Massachusetts with a gold medal for aiding in the rescue of Captain James Riley and his crew from slavery. Those worthy New Englanders had been placed in slavery by a horde of wandering Arabs in the African desert. The present Horatio was born in Gibraltar on August 12, 1823.

The "Coming Man" of Spain.
Don Francisco Romero y Robledo, former Spanish Minister of Justice, and present leader of the Conservative party, is just now an interesting figure in Spanish politics. It is not unlikely that he is the "coming man."

He was born in Antequera, Andalusia, and in appearance is much more like an Englishman than a Spaniard. He is tall, of fair complexion, with light, curly hair, now turning gray, bright, piercing blue eyes, blond mustache and beard tinged with red, and big white teeth, with two larger ones in front, slightly protruding, without which the caricaturist usually considers no Englishman complete. The comic papers do great things with these teeth, and put them in evidence on every possible occasion.

Senior Romero's success as a politician has been due in a great measure to his personal magnetism and splendid oratory, which is considered second only to that of the great Castelar; his voice is musical and resonant, and his most bitter opponents in politics are often so carried away by his speech that they applaud almost unconsciously, even when the words which flow in such graceful, telling eloquence from his lips are directly against them and their aims.

Sleep Is Only a Habit.

Mr. Edison has adopted the theory that sleep is only the force of habit, that if he but try, men can get along without sleep precisely as they get along without stimulants. He accounts for the sleep habit as follows:

"The truth is that this habit of sleeping originated when there was no such thing as a good artificial light. People could not read, they had no way of amusing themselves at night, so when darkness came there was nothing left for them to do but lie down and lose themselves in oblivion.

"Now that we have the electric light and other means of illumination, the world is sleeping less and less every year. By-and-by, gradually, of course, the time will come when an hour or two of rest will be enough. Then people will find that they have been wasting valuable time. It is all right for a man to change his work or seek some sort of diversion, but that is very easy to do by changing work and varying the subject of study."

This is precisely in line with the philosophy which holds that men are only what their environment makes them. In support of his theory Mr. Edison relates that when the phonograph had to be finished in a certain number of hours in order to be in London on a certain day, he worked continuously for seventy-two hours without a minute of sleep, and so did all of his assistants but one or two.

His chief assistant says that Mr. Edison has gone on for years, working hard with little rest, merely dropping down occasionally for a rest of an hour, or, perhaps, only for ten minutes, and then coming up again, apparently as fresh as if he had had a long holiday.

Just Spill It.
In a certain class of divinity students there was one member who was generally acknowledged to be slow. His fellow-students called him dumb. For certain reasons, however, the young man received every favor.

Shortly before the final examination those in charge of the class were talking the matter over with the Bishop. It was agreed that, in spite of the fellow's singular ineptitude, he would be permitted to pass if possible.

"If he can answer one question," said the Bishop, "I'll ordain him."

The instructor-in-chief accordingly primed the stupid student for the event.

"You need answer only one question," said the instructor, "and that one will be easy. But mind you don't say anything else. Promise me—not another word, or you'll be certain to get yourself into trouble."

The student promised, and the instructor went upon his way rejoicing. A little later the youth was ushered into the Bishop's presence.

"Who was Saul?" asked the Bishop. "The first King of Israel," answered the student, quickly enough; and amid the congratulatory smiles of the instructors, he prepared to depart. But just as he reached the door, he turned and added, "Subsequently called Saul of Tarsus."

A Tartar Courtship.

Among the Tatar Tartars a curious mode of "popping the question" is reported: The Tatarian Cobeles in search of a wife, having filled a brand new pipe, with fragrant tobacco, stealthily enters the dwelling of the fair one upon whom he has bestowed his affections, deposits the pipe upon a conspicuous article of furniture, and retires on tip-toe to some convenient hiding place in the neighborhood, local etiquette requiring that he should execute this strategic movement apparently undetected by the damsel of his choice or any member of her family. Presently he returns without further affectation of secrecy, and looks into the apartment in a casual sort of way. A single glance at the pipe he left behind him enables him to learn the fate of his proposal. If it has been smoked, he goes forth an accepted and exultant bridegroom; if not, the offer of his hand and heart has been irrevocably rejected, as not even worth a pipe of tobacco. By this ingenious expedient the pain and humiliation of verbal refusal and fruitless pleadings are spared to luckless wooers, and Tartar maidens are saved from importunities justly regarded as peculiarly trying to female sensibility.

Severe Rules in the Russian Army.

When an officer in the Russian army is insulted, a military court of honor sits to decide upon the action to be taken, and he has to abide by the decision of the court. Not long ago, two young officers of the Russian army quarrelled while drinking together, and one slapped the other across the cheek with his open hand. They were intimate friends, and when in his sober senses the aggressor humbly apologized for the affront to his brother officer, who cordially accepted it. A regimental court of honor had to be held, however, and it was decreed that the officers should fight, though both were much averse to doing so. A duel was therefore arranged at twenty paces, and the young officer who had received the affront, and forgiven his friend, was hit in the hip and crippled for life.

The Eskimo and Punch and Judy.

Some time ago a skipper who visited the Arctic regions presented the head man of an Eskimo community with a Punch and Judy show he had on board, and gave the native instructions as to how to work the figures. The Eskimo's son is now said to be an expert at the business, and, in a hut nightly throughout the long winter, makes the familiar marionettes dance about, to the intense delight of his fur-encased friends. The show is known among the Eskimos by something like its English name, only they pronounce it "Eootantody."

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WAR FACTS AND GOSSIP.

The United States government has ordered 144,000 corn cob pipes for the use of the soldiers.

An exchange remarks, "Cervera's father was a wine merchant hence that accounts for the son being so easily bottled up."

Blanco says he knows all the war plans of our government. Blanco may be a sharp cuss, but we believe he lies in this particular instance.

The E. Keeler Company, of Williamsport, has submitted the lowest bid (\$11,850) for placing boilers in the Treasury and others buildings at Washington, D. C.

"Whenever you hear a man blowing about his burning desire to go to the front," says the Philosopher, "you may safely bet that he knows he won't pass the examination."

Speaking of smokeless powder, smokeless firecrackers would be an improvement. Perhaps we shall yet live to see them; but not until the millenium may mortals hope for that most perfect of squibs—the noiseless cracker.

The flagship New York was over late in getting into the naval fight off Santiago harbor, and thus Admiral Sampson missed the opportunity of a lifetime. The honors this time are for the captains of the battleships, and no mistake.

Mexico has had a suspicious increase in her coal traffic since the outbreak of the war with Spain. Spanish vessels receive this coal, much of which is shipped in the first place from the United States. It is a trade that will bear looking into.

Among the virtues attributed to Lieut. Hobson of Merrimack fame are these: He graduated at the head of his class, was the youngest in that class, he neither smokes, chews, lies, drinks or swears. He is devoutly religious and is the best dancer in the American navy.

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Rough on Bicyclers.

The surgeons, who have been making examinations of the members of the militia volunteers will make reports that will be apt to discourage, though it may not extinguish the bicycle habit, and particularly the use of the low handle bars. It is said at the medicine department of the army that a great number of the volunteers who have been rejected for physical disability are bicycle riders, who, by that violent exercise, have developed diseases of the heart and the spine, which unfit them for exposure or endurance. These troubles are said to be confined almost entirely to riders who use low handlebars and lean forward on their saddle. This position not only induces curvature of the spine and other diseases in that part of the anatomy, but causes the other organs to crowd the heart out of its place and produce irritation which ultimately becomes chronic. As soon as they have an opportunity to do so the examining surgeons will be called upon for reports on this subject.

The future is uncertain, but if you keep your blood pure with Hood's Sarsaparilla you may be sure of good health.

July Weather for Ten Years.
If precedents go for anything, it is going to be a sizzling July. The average temperature for this month during the past ten years has been 73 degrees, the warmest month being in '94, with an average of 76, and the coolest in '91, with an average of 70. The average rainfall for the month was 4.47 inches, and the average number of days of rain, 11. There were 8.40 inches of rainfall in July, '91. The average number of clear days was 11; partly cloudy, 11, and cloudy 9. July 1st, 1898, started in with every indication of a record-breaker.

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