



## Whether Common or Not

By Will N. Maupin.

### The Old-Fashioned Fourth

Last Monday we celebrated the Fourth of July. That is we shot off a few firecrackers during the day, and a few fireworks at night, all for the edification and amusement of the little ones. We went out to a big park and wandered around all day, and we came home in the evening, tired out and contrasting the present method of celebrating the Glorious Fourth with the way we used to celebrate it in the old days.

I've said a lot about the old days and the old ways recently. This does not mean that I preferred the old days with all of their discomforts to the present day with all of its comforts and conveniences. But I am honest in declaring my belief that we have lost the real meaning of the Fourth of July, and all because we are growing blasé, forgetful of what the day stands for, and too self-centered to really take an interest in the larger matters of state. I want to talk to you a little while about the old Fourth of July celebrations we used to have some thirty or forty years ago.

For the Fourth, as for the circus, we boys used to hunt and hoard scrap iron and old rags for weeks on end to have some spending money on the Fourth. And as for sleep at night for a week or ten days before the dawn of the eventful day—well, that was wholly out of the question. The whole community used to be on edge for a month, everybody getting ready to celebrate. There were a dozen committees to look after the arrangements, too. Let's see, there was the committee on orator, the committee on parade, the committee on fireworks, the committee on "calithumpians," the committee on sports, the committee on "lutes, the committee on stands—a heaven only knows how many other committees. And they all worked, too. The committee on parade had in charge the matter of preparing the float and selecting the young ladies to represent the states. Gee, how pretty those girls looked, each one dressed in red, white and blue, a flag in each hand and a shield of the Union in front. And Columbia perched high above them all. The happiest young girl in the village was the one honored by being selected to impersonate Columbia. This float headed the parade, right behind the village band. And speaking of bands, do you remember, you gray-haired old man, how your greatest ambition between the ages of 7 and 15 was to be the tenor drummer in that band? They don't have tenor drummers in bands any more. They are either snare drummers or trap drummers. We wouldn't give a penny to be a snare drummer, but we confess to a sneaking ambition yet to be the tenor drummer in the band.

After the float of the states came "citizens in carriages and on foot," and the band headed the way to the nearest grove. But we came awfully near forgetting the first event of the day—the salute of thirty-six, or thirty-seven, or thirty-eight guns at sunrise. The number always exceeded the number of states in just proportion as the supply of gunpowder held out. Some villages boasted of a real little cannon, but usually we had to content ourselves with a couple of anvils. But the anvils made noise enough to satisfy

the soul of any reasonable small boy.

At the grove the village glee club started things off by singing "Hail Columbia," and then one of the village parsons invoked the divine blessing. Let's see, the program in its entirety went something like this—that is the program of the last real, genuine Fourth of July celebration we attended, which was some thirty-five years ago:

Song, "Hail Columbia," by the Glee Club.

Invocation, Rev. Thomas Shaw, pastor Christian church.

Song, "Star Spangled Banner," Glee Club.

Reading, "Declaration of Independence," Miss Etta Tandy.

Song, "America," Glee Club.

Oration of the Day, Hon. William Q. Seivers. (Hon. Mr. Seivers, by the way, achieved distinction by reason of being elected to the legislature from an adjoining county some years previous.)

Grand Basket Dinner.

The afternoon program consisted of a parade by the calithumpians and foot racing, jumping, wrestling, etc.

Of course the village band sandwiched in some music here and there. I remember "Montrose Quickstep" and a medley of national airs. A few years after the celebration referred to I achieved some distinction by reason of playing the "b" flat clarinet in the same village band, but by that time the celebrations were becoming passe.

And the "Grand Basket Dinner" at noon! Gee, but can't you taste it yet? Yellow-legged chicken till you actually grew pin feathers. "Mrs. Billikens do help yourself to some of this delicious peach preserve!" And country cured ham till you felt like rooting under a gate and squealing. "Now Mrs. Sniffers, do eat something; you'll find these grape preserves mighty good." And baked beans in a big jar. "Brother Smith you ain't eating enough to keep a sparrer alive—do have some more of them spiced peaches—plenty more where they come from!" And twisted doughnuts till the sight of 'em almost gave you curvature of the spine. "Now Sister Jenkins, you try some of my currant jelly. I had a awful time getting it to jell, but I think it is real nice and I want you to try some!" Eat—why we sat squatting there on the blue grass in the shade of the big walnuts and ate and ate and ate, until we felt just like rolling over on our backs and taking a solemn obligation never to eat another bite as long as we lived.

But the "grand display of fireworks at night!" It was always the largest collection of fireworks ever displayed, too. Once in a while they all went off at once, but when they didn't they were really worth while. Really, now, they were the biggest-balled roman candles, and the shootiest skyrocket and the reddest red fire we ever saw. And after the fireworks, home again in the cool of the evening. And we had heard the old Declaration of Independence—then a living, breathing document, not an antiquated, outgrown instrument, and we heard it from the lips of a girl whose father believed in it as he believed in his Bible. And we had heard an oration that breathed patriotism in every sentence, not a false note in it about "our duty to

our brown brothers," nor apologies for conquest and rule without consent, or "thrown into our laps by Providence." Not much, it was right in line with the sentiments of the fathers who wrote it and then went out and fought and bled and died to make it stand for what it said.

And how we did sleep that night! We made up for all the nights' sleep we had lost during the previous two weeks. And then for six months we revelled in the joyful recollections of the day, and spent the next six in looking forward to the coming Fourth.

The old-time celebration of Independence Day just naturally beats all hollow the modern method of celebrating the day. On the truth of this assertion I'll stake my reputation for truth and veracity, and I'll call on every one of the old gray-haired boys to testify.

All this reminds me that you have not yet written me to name your favorite song and your funniest story. I want every reader of this department to do that, for I want to see if my taste in song and my sense of humor coincides with yours. Don't be afraid to write because you have never written for a paper. There are those on The Commoner who are paid enormous salaries to edit correspondence. Just tell in your own language what your favorite song is, and write out the funniest story you ever heard just as nearly as you can remember it. We'll attend to the rest.

Speaking of the old sentimental songs, do you remember "Charming Bessie of the Lea?" And "Wail till the Clouds Roll By?" And then, of a different character, were such songs as "I saw the ship come 'round the bend, good-by, my lover, good-by," and "G'wine t' git a home in Georgia," and "Darling Chloe." Remember the old "rounds" we used to sing at school, "A boat, a boat, to cross the ferry," and "Scotland's burning?" And wouldn't you like to hear Deacon Snodgrass again lead off at prayer meeting with that fine old hymn, "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord," or "When we hear the music ringing?"

Come on with your vocal preferences and your funny stories. We are waiting for them.

### The Office Boy

"I've noticed," remarked the office boy apropos of nothing in particular, "that the people who are so awfully interested in beginning early to teach children habits of industry are a lot more interested in getting the kids into their mills and factories so as to make a bigger profit on the labor."

### Shocking

"I assure you," remarked the young lady at the glove counter, "that undressed kid is the prevailing style now."

"Mussful goodness!" exclaimed Mrs. Nurych, "I think such a fashion is puffically orful!"

### Brain Leaks

Some of the labor saving machinery should be in the kitchen.

You can not run up your business by running down your neighbor's.

Good nature is the salad dressing that makes the bitter things of life taste good.

Ever notice that when you are in a story-telling crowd the poorest story teller in the lot always murders your best story before your turn comes to tell one?

Of course I believe in dreams. If I dream of green snakes with the bodies of camels and the legs of lizards I believe I ate something that disagreed with me.

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