

A SUGGESTED NATIONAL FLOWER

By Gertrude Christian Fosdick

AMERICA is a new country, and until now has been particularly lacking in signs and emblems. Of late years, however, there has been manifested a strong interest in choosing a suitable floral emblem for America, and surely the question is important enough to receive our considerate attention. Once selected, this flower must represent us



Illustration No. 1



Illustration No. 2

through all coming ages, as the Rose of England, the Lily of France, and the Chrysanthemum of Japan represent those countries to-day. The flower selected, therefore, should be one which not only grows throughout the length and breadth of this great land, but can supply us with suitable symbols and possibilities for conventionalization.

The last-named quality will doubtless appear more important to the artist than to the people, but we must remember that it is to the artist we look to combine and incorporate its forms in our National currency and postal emblems, and we will do well to choose, at least, a flower whose forms admit of the possibility.

All these points are strongly associated with the Columbine, a flower whose associations with our country are as happy as they are unique. It is interesting to note the peculiar aptitude of the Columbine as America's National flower.

First, its very name suggests Columbia. Nor is this, as may appear, a mere trivial play upon words. We know that the word Columbus means dove, a fact full of poetic significance when we remember how Columbus, like Noah's messenger of old, was sent forth to discover a new land. We also know that the Columbine took its name from the resemblance which one view of the

flower bears to a group of doves, as shown in Illustration No. 1 of this article. This form grows wild in the region where Columbus was born, as well as in our Rocky Mountain States.

Then, too, the botanical and horticultural name of the flower is *Aquilegia*, which is connected with the Latin *aquila*, an eagle, and was so named because the

flower reversed, as seen in Illustration No. 2, suggests an eagle's talons. Thus we have the thought of our American eagle, emblematic of fearless power.

Again, a front view of the flower shows the outline to be a



Illustration No. 3

beautiful five-rayed star (given in Illustration No. 3), emblematic of the stars of our flag, while the leaf (shown in Illustration No. 4) terminates in thirteen lobes, the number of the stripes, as well as of the number of original States in the Union.

Another point is that while the Columbine grows in many colors, three colors—the brilliant red, pure white and the exquisite cerulean blue—are the American variety of the flower.

Once more, a single petal of one of the long-spurred variety (given in Illustration No. 2) is the shape of a horn of plenty, significant of this fruitful land, while the short-spurred petal (shown in Illustration No. 1) forms a perfect little liberty cap.

Lastly, it grows in every State of the Union, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from Canada to the Gulf. In point of hardihood it compares favorably with the Rose. Our wild Columbines are in full bloom by Memorial Day, and have not all disappeared by the Fourth of July.

A Columbine association has been organized in Boston. Its aim is to bring about the adoption by Congress of the Columbine as the National flower. The selection of a floral emblem has been much discussed of late, and while there is a considerable difference of opinion as to which flower is deserving of such exaltation there is perfect unanimity in the sentiment that America should be fittingly typified by one of Nature's blossoms.



Illustration No. 4