

A Living Flag.

BY ARTHUR LORD.

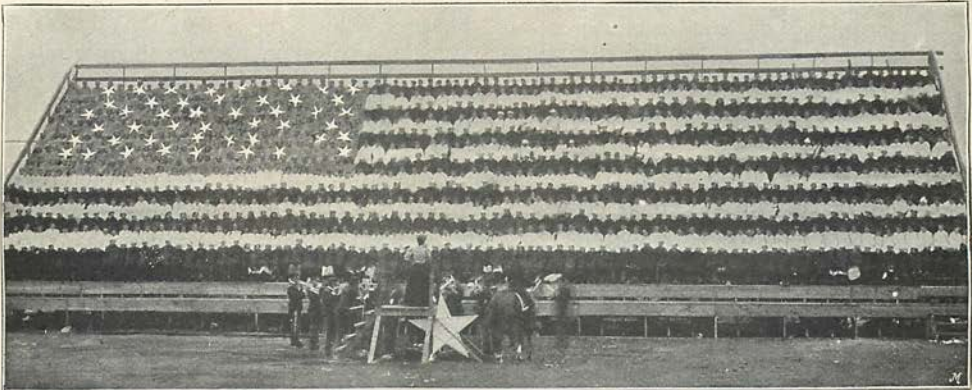


NOTHING new under the sun—that is a common saying. But the saying is untrue. The living flag was a new idea, germinated in the brain of a clever lady of Iowa, fostered by a public spirit during stress of war, and brought to efflorescence within sound of bugle-call and martial air. Such, in brief, is the history of the wonderful flag shown in the few pages that follow.

The clever lady who invented the flag is Mrs. Hortense R. Reynolds, a well-known supervisor of music in the public schools of Des Moines, Iowa, and the thousands of children who co-operated with her to loose

heart. Mrs. Reynolds felt that these children ought to be given a chance to show their patriotism in some practical way, and she decided that they should pay tribute to the "boys in blue" by means of the living flag.

There were, however, several difficulties in the way. The camp was several miles from the city, and the transportation of 2,500 children, without accident, was a serious problem. Again, the flag had to be put on without rehearsal. But this difficulty was easily overcome. Thanks to the assistance rendered to Mrs. Reynolds by two gentlemen from the "Commercial Exchange," Mr. Milo Ward and Mr. H. H. Lutz, a platform was built and put in readiness for the horde



From a Photo. by]

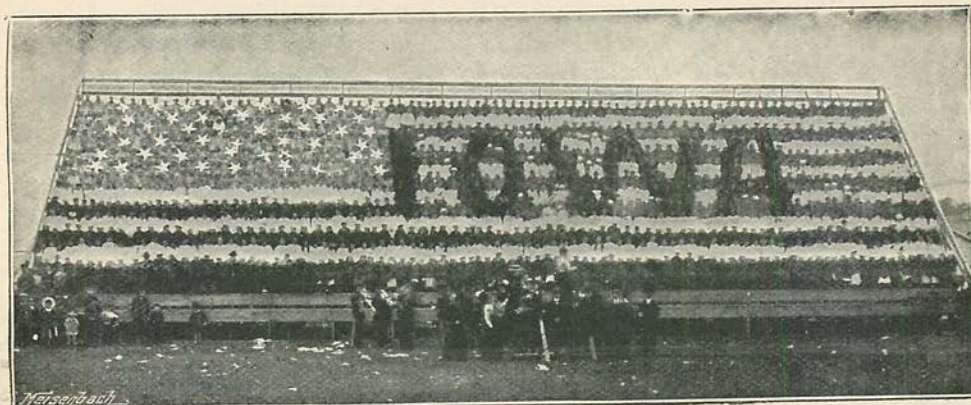
THE LIVING STARS AND STRIPES.

[Webster, Des Moines, Iowa.

the flag to the western winds were school children of the city. At the beginning of the war with Spain, now happily ended, four Iowa regiments were mobilized at the State Fair Grounds, near Des Moines. The place was called Camp McKinley. Of course, a great deal was seen of the boys in blue, and patriotism ran high, especially amongst the school children. They never tired of singing patriotic songs, and one could scarcely pass a school building without hearing strains of "The Star-Spangled Banner," "America," "The Red, White, and Blue," and other stirring songs, dear to the patriotic American

of lively school boys and girls who were so soon to test it with their burden of song. Lesser difficulties disappeared rapidly when superintendents of schools, principals, and teachers entered enthusiastically and bodily into the plan. The living flag was now assured of success.

By this time, with the aid of the illustration shown on this page, our readers will have discovered the secret of the living flag. The children were arranged on the grand-stand, in the familiar colours of the American flag. The blue stripes were made by children dressed in blue, and the white



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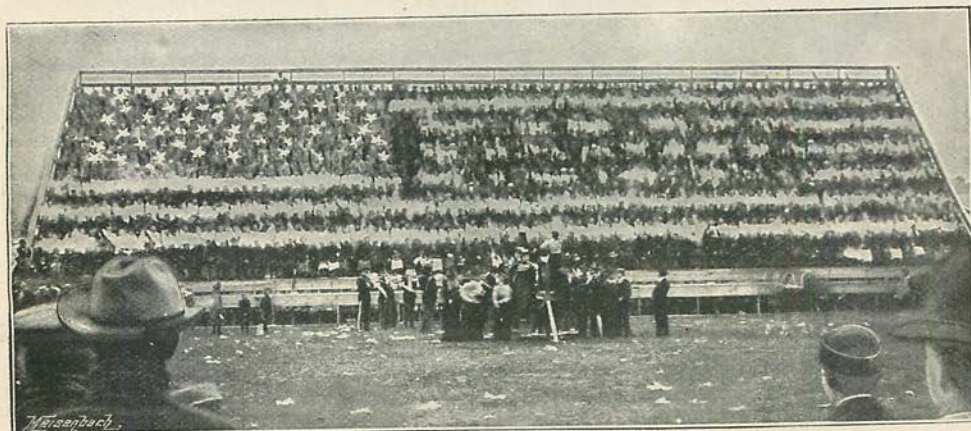
THE "IOWA" FLAG.

[Webster, Des Moines, Iowa.

stripes by children in white. The effect, at a distance, was that of an immense piece of bunting. The stars were of white pasteboard, and were held by the children. And, strange to say, the children, although excited to the topmost notch with the enthusiasm of the moment, managed to hold the stars still—at least, until such time as they were allowed to move them.

The most remarkable and exciting success was achieved by the "Iowa flag" shown at the top of this page. One hundred children had been arranged in the middle of the stripes to spell the word "Iowa." Under their other colours they wore black. At a given signal they removed the red and white, and the

At intervals, Mrs. Reynolds, who may be seen directing operations in the foreground of our illustrations, introduced clapping exercise, which, with so many hands at work, sounded like rattling shot. Swaying exercises were also introduced in order that the children might suggest to the spectators the movement of a piece of bunting in the wind. The effect, it may be added, was wonderfully shown, although our illustration cannot easily reproduce the life-like sway. The exercise, however, which the children most enjoyed was the privilege granted to them to remove their caps and swing them round and round, cheering the troops and colours as they passed in review.



From a Photo. by]

THE FLAG IN MOTION.

[Webster, Des Moines, Iowa.

word "Iowa" stood out in black upon the flag as plainly as if it had been printed there. We may imagine the effect of this instantaneous movement on the patriotic spectators, and it is no small wonder that the tramp of troops was drowned in a volley of cheers.

All the movements were performed by signal, sounded by a bugler, who moved around on horseback. The children sang "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," "Hail, Columbia," "Guard the Flag," and "America," while

Mrs. Reynolds led the children and the band from a small platform in front. One who was present on this eventful occasion has told us that the singers followed the movements of their leader with most remarkable accuracy and intelligence, and that the outburst of patriotic song from the throats of this multitude of children was one of the most inspiring things he ever heard.

In order to get the full effect of this wonderful flag, the on-lookers found it necessary to stand some distance away, which accounts for the absence of a crowd in the foreground of our illustrations. As we look upon the flag in this article, we see it as others did, although we cannot get the sound of the music and the songs. When the "Iowa" flag was on exhibition the troops formed in line before the grand-stand, facing the spectators, and from them received the plaudits they deserved. It was a pretty sight—a mass of colour and brilliancy—and the illusion was complete.

So great was the success of the flag that it was repeated for the benefit of the work-people, who came from far and near to see it. On that occasion the Cuban flag, as shown

in the accompanying reproduction, was given, but as the time was fixed for six o'clock, the lateness of the hour interfered with the attendance of the children, and, in consequence,

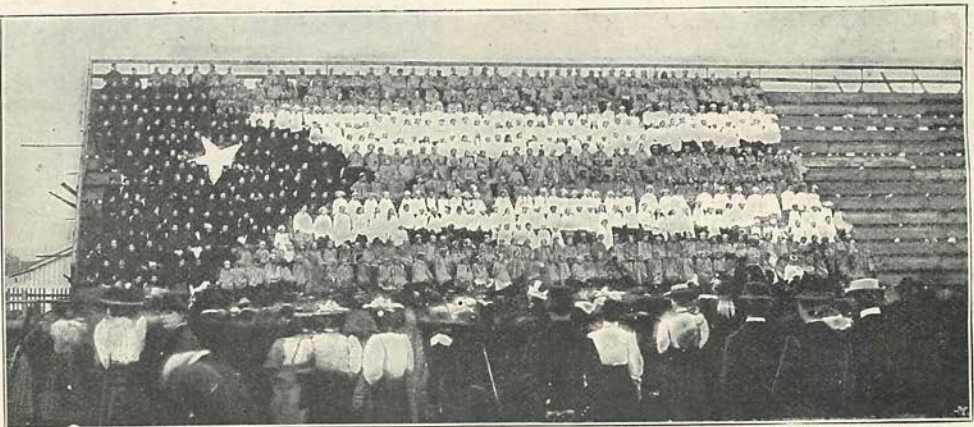
with the full success of the flag. Yet, as our illustration shows, the attempt to give a pictorial representation of the Cuban colours was delightfully pleasing.

After the exhibition was over, Mrs. Reynolds was, of course, the happy recipient of congratulations from everybody, and not the least pleasing of the tributes to her idea, and the skill with which it was presented, was a letter from the Governor of the State, who spoke for the military department, the administration, and himself in praise of her work. It is well, perhaps, to add that the whole exhibition was a labour of love,

and that there was no money consideration for anybody. The children entered into the spirit of the thing with gusto, the citizens of Des Moines supported it with their presence, and the soldiers were stimulated to action by this expression of their neighbours' admiration. The children, moreover, were taught a lesson in patriotism that they probably will never forget.



MRS. REYNOLDS, THE INVENTOR OF THE LIVING FLAG.
From a Photo. by Edinger, Des Moines, Iowa.



From a Photo. by
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THE CUBAN FLAG.

[Webster, Des Moines, Iowa.