

# THE LITERARY DIGEST

May 17, 1919

## THE BIG MILITARY PARADE IN WASHINGTON OVER FIFTY YEARS AGO

THE parades and reviews of returning troops to-day recall the "grand review," held in Washington, D. C., in May, 1865, fifty-four years ago, when the Army of the Potomac, the Army of Tennessee, and the Army of Georgia, just back from winning the war for the Union, marched in parade before the President of the United States and his Cabinet, as well as other officials, including foreign diplomats, Governors of States, Senators, and Representatives. Only a small number of the 200,000, or so, men who took part in that great parade remain to-day. At the time it took place the participants constituted only about a seventh of the million and a half men in the Union armies at the end of the war, and less than a fourteenth of the total number that had, at one time or another, served in the war, for the records show that during the Civil War 2,859,132 men in all had been called to military service. The big parade was held at the suggestion of the then Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, in celebration of the closing of the war. The review lasted for two days, taking place on May 23 and 24. A description of the event is given in the *Kansas City Star* as follows:

Washington was brilliantly decorated for the occasion, both public and private buildings floating flags and bunting, and at all prominent points there were arches and floral embellishments of various designs. Four stands were erected in front of the White House, which were decorated with the regimental battle-flags and flowers. On the principal stand were President Andrew Johnson and his Cabinet, diplomats and envoys of foreign nations, and Governors of States. Lieutenant-General Grant occupied a position near the President.

All the school-children of the city, the girls dressed in white and the boys in black jackets and white trousers, were massed on the terraces and balconies of the Capitol and sang patriotic songs as the soldiers passed. Upon a strip of canvas along the front of the Capitol was a huge banner inscribed with the legend, "The Only National Debt We Can Never Pay Is the Debt We Owe Our Victorious Soldiers." It was estimated that over a hundred thousand people, coming from all the Northern States, witnessed the parade.

## *The Big 1865 Parade*

The order of march the first day included the Army of the Potomac, those who had fought with Grant at Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg. First in the line came General Meade, riding ahead of his escort and the headquarters division. Then came the cavalry corps with Sheridan, Merritt, and Custer. Then followed the provost-marshal's brigade, commanded by Brigadier-General Massey, and the engineers brigade, under Brigadier-General Benham. Then Major-General Parke's 9th Corps, Dwight's 19th Corps, Griffin's 5th Corps, and the 2d Corps in command of Major-General Humphries.

The soldiers presented a kaleidoscopic picture. Their uniforms were soiled and faded, there had been no brushing up for the occasion — they marched in the uniforms that they had worn in the field. Many of them carried their camp utensils, and there were the pet animals of every description, donkeys, dogs, goats, pet wolves, and even eagles, that had been adopted by the various regiments as mascots—tho the word was perhaps unknown in that day. Freed negro slaves who had been picked up in the field added motley color to the scene.

And General Custer furnished an unlooked-for thrill to the occasion. His horse ran away and plunged wildly down the avenue through the scattering throngs, Custer's long yellow hair streaming in the wind, while women screamed and men shouted, expecting the General to be dashed to his death. But he suddenly brought his horse to its haunches, leaned over, and picked up his hat from the ground and rode back to the head of his column amid the plaudits of the crowd.

The second day was devoted to Sherman's Army, which included the Army of the Tennessee and the Army of Georgia. When General Sherman appeared at the head of the column he was greeted by tumultuous cheers. The Army of Tennessee was in command of Gen. John A. Logan and the Army of Georgia under General Slocum. Sherman's detachment presented a picturesque sight. There were black men armed with picks and spades, baggage ambulances loaded with the forage of "Sherman's Bummers," pigs, goats, army mules and even milch cows marched solemnly in the parade. Sherman's armies were seven hours passing the reviewing-stand. Sherman, in his memoirs, gives a vivid description of some of the incidents of the parade.

"When I reached the Treasury Building," he wrote, "and looked back, the sight was simply magnificent. The column was compact and the glittering muskets looked like a solid mass of steel, moving with the regularity of a pendulum. We passed the Treasury Building, in front of which, and of the White House, was an immense throng of people. As I neared the brick house opposite the lower corner of Lafayette

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Square some one asked me to notice Mr. Seward, who, still feeble and bandaged from his wounds (Seward was stabbed the night of Lincoln's assassination), had been removed there that he might behold the troops. I moved in that direction and took off my hat to Mr. Seward, who sat at an upper window. He recognized the salute, returned it, and then we rode steadily past the President, saluting with our swords. All on his stand arose and returned the salute. Then, turning into the gate of the Presidential grounds, we left our horses with the orderlies and went upon the stand. I took my post by the side of the President, and for six hours and a half stood while the Western Army passed in the order of the 15th, 17th, 20th, and 14th corps.

"It was, in my judgment, the most magnificent army in existence—sixty-five thousand men, in splendid physique, who had just completed a march of nearly two thousand miles in a hostile country, in good drill, and who realized that they were being closely scrutinized by thousands of their fellow countrymen and foreigners. The steadiness and firmness of the tread, the careful dress of the guides, the uniform intervals between the companies, and the tattered and bullet-riven flags festooned with flowers, all attracted universal notice. Many good people, up to that time, had looked upon our Western Army as a sort of mob, but the world then saw and recognized the fact that it was an army in the proper sense, well organized and well disciplined, and there was no wonder that it had swept through the South like a tornado."

Then, as to-day, there were witnesses of that parade, who looked beyond the moving figures into the invisible ranks of those who marched only in spiritual presence in that grand review. This phantom army was celebrated in a poem written by Bret Harte, from which the following stanzas are taken:

I read last night of the Grand Review  
 In Washington's chiefest avenue.  
 Two hundred thousand men in blue.  
 I think they said that was the number—  
 Till I seemed to hear their tramping feet,  
 The bugle blast and the drum's quick beat,  
 The clatter of hoofs on the stony street,  
 The cheers of people who came to greet,  
 And the thousand details that to repeat  
 Would only my verse encumber—  
 Till I fell in a reverie, sad and sweet,  
 And then to a fitful slumber.

And I saw a phantom army come,  
 With never a sound of fife or drum,  
 But keeping time to a throbbing hum,  
 Of wailing and lamentation:  
 The martyred heroes of Malvern Hill,  
 Of Gettysburg and Chancellorsville,  
 The men whose wasted figures fill  
 The patriot graves of the nation.

And all night marched the Nation's dead,  
 With never a banner above them spread,  
 Nor a badge nor a motto brandished:  
 No mark, save the bare uncovered head  
 Of the silent bronze reviewer:  
 With never an arch of the vaulted sky,  
 With never a flower save those that lie  
 On the distant graves—for love could buy  
 No gift that was purer or rarer.