



For One Memorial Day

➤ MOST SUCH holidays are frankly more celebrations of past victories than a taking thought of the heroic dead. July 4, our first national holiday, tells its story in its official name: Independence Day. We celebrate it by reproducing, as peacefully and safely as possible, the noise and fire and smoke of battle. November 11, Armistice Day, usually called for a military parade. Presumably we shall presently be celebrating V-E or V-J Day, or both.

Only one of these holidays, however, is given primarily to thoughts of those who died for their country. That is Memorial Day, celebrated in most of the states on May 30, but still observed in some of the states of the old Confederacy on other dates of their own choosing.

It is perhaps natural that this particular holiday should center its attention on the dead rather than on the battles they fought and the victories they won. In the South there were the hardship and bitterness of defeat, but in the North there was little rejoicing. In a civil war there are no winners: all lose.

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H. G. Wells

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While the different dates of Southern Memorial Days may have resulted in the first instance from unwillingness of the losers to share the victors' holiday, there is another good reason in the ecology of flowers. Most of the Memorial Days in the South come earlier than May 30, enabling people to have spring flowers to place on the graves of the Confederate soldiers. It is quite natural to have an earlier date for this in, say, Georgia or Texas than in Maine or Minnesota.

However, since an increasing proportion of the flowers used on Memorial Day, as well as on all other occasions, are not home grown any longer, the question of having a single agreed-on date naturally suggests itself. It is a long time now since Appomatox; in three wars since then descendants of the wearers of both Blue and Gray have fought side by side, and have buried their dead in hasty battlefield graves. That which unites North and South today is many fold stronger than the things that once severed them. We are one in substance now; only the symbols remain at variance. What could better symbolize that unity than walking together to the graves of those who died for their whole country, with flowers in our hands?

Science News Letter, May 25, 1946

GENERAL SCIENCE

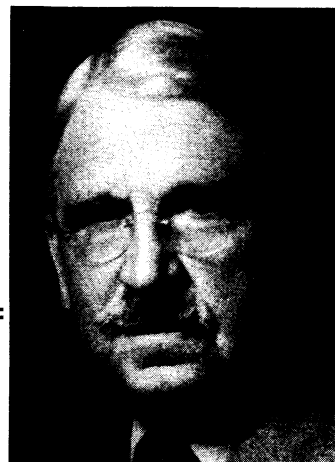
Scientists Must Learn Politicians' Characteristics

➤ SCIENTISTS, plunged into public affairs through their concern over atomic power control, will need to learn something of the mental adaptability and willingness to compromise that characterize the politician if they intend to continue such participation, Dr. Isaiah Bowman, president of the Johns Hopkins University, intimated in an address before the first postwar meeting of the National Academy of Sciences.

Such adjustments will not be easy for many thorough-going scientists to make, Dr. Bowman pointed out. Scientists are accustomed to reaching clear-cut solutions to their problems, and can prove that their conclusions are right. If they are right, compromise will be likely to seem absurd, even immoral. Such logical rigidity, desirable in science, can result only in deadlocks if attempted in government.

Science News Letter, May 25, 1946

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