

A Goddess of Liberty

By SARAH S. PRATT

Hearken, ye women of America! Has any of you ever been a *Goddess of Liberty*? I am planning to organize a society of Goddesses of Liberty, and then another, "Daughters of Goddesses of Liberty," "D. G. L." The first clause of the constitution on which I am now working provides that only those shall be eligible who have been Goddesses or whose blood relations have been Goddesses—no in-laws will be allowed to join. Our country needs now another society with dues, a president, and gavel.

The translation of a commonplace little Hoosier school-girl into a Goddess came about something like this. When the late Admiral George Dewey was in the sixth grade, or thereabouts, with Manila Bay undreamed of, his uncle, Joel Dewey was an active citizen in the small Indiana village of Delphi in Carroll County. He was planning what was to be a most sensational Republican (then "Union party") rally. These Deweys were of a strong-brained breed with strong names—George, Joel, Noah, Jerusha—not an Algernon or Lucile among them.

This rally was to close the second Lincoln presidential campaign in the County. It was to be held early in October. Joel Dewey was born a chairman. He had filled every station where there was a chair to be occupied by a presiding officer from his infancy. This great rally was to be the peak of many brilliant chairmanships. Joel had a good committee, but the members were not enthusiastic enough. "Go ahead, Joel, do anything you want—we'll get the money." An editor, a banker, the Methodist minister, and a merchant made up this committee. The members approved the chairman's plans at the very first meeting. But the minister was reading Uncle Tom's Cabin, the editor read Horace Greeley, and the other two played checkers every night after they had put on their comfortable double-gowns and slippers. Even Joel's charge that they lacked patriotism could not lure them to the stuffy back room of his general store.

Already his plans, approved by the Committee, had been printed in large type and blazoned forth from fence-posts, telegraph poles and on the sides of big barns. These advertise-

ments stated the wonders of the rally to be held at one o'clock in the Court-House yard. Governor Morton had been invited to grace the occasion and might even appear. Farmers were urged to bring their families and their dinners, the latter to be eaten under the trees in the Court-house yard, where free coffee was to be served. Joel's activities were always marked by a generous hospitality.

The *Weekly Journal* described this red, white and blue day soon to arrive in several columns of superlative language:

Processions of school children who are already drilling with flags—monster bonfires—already merchants are collecting their big pine boxes which make such crackling, leaping flames—Drum corps—Lathrop's Band—Township delegations assigned to proper places—Citizens in carriages and on foot—our patriotic farm citizens. Every patriotic citizen on the line of march is urged to have all the windows illuminated with candles—one in every pane.

Probably every window in every residence had exactly twelve panes of glass, so canny grocerymen were laying in supplies of red and white candles; blue ones were not made then. At night, too, there would be Roman candles and sky rockets.

An arch was placed over Main Street at a corner of the Court-house yard, under which the procession would pass. This arch, trimmed with evergreen, was surmounted by a large picture of Lincoln which was also encircled with greenery. On each side of the arch was a small platform. The purpose to be served by these was not known, but it was the general opinion that Joel Dewey would have something there.

Of course, all these glories had been seen at former rallies. Chairman Dewey therefore cogitated silently at home and aloud on the street. "We have just got to have something different this time," he said to himself again and again. Whether he fasted or prayed, or how inspiration came, is not known, but two days before the rally, set for October 6, 1864, Mr. Dewey came to our home very early, ringing the old tinkling door-bell with a vigorous clang. Feeling that something unusual was going on, I decided to postpone going to school for a while in order to listen outside. Joel closed the door and spoke in a low tone, but with a voice perfectly audible to the key-hole listener.

"Mrs. Smith," he said, "I've got a splendid idea for the rally. What do you think of a Goddess of Liberty?"

"It's fine, but there's no time."

"There's time if you'll help."

"Of course I will, but how?"

I could now hear the Chairman walking the floor.

"I want your daughter Sally for the Goddess and I want you to make her costume."

My mother laughed: "Why, Mr. Dewey, that slim little thing as a Goddess would be ridiculous. Ask Belle Burr or some ———."

"They couldn't get ready. Sally will look a lot bigger with draperies and things. You know how to do things and you can get all the stuff at my store."

"The trouble is to find the costume," explained my mother, "but I think our big Webster's Dictionary will show a goddess—it has everything." When the listener stole away, the dictionary was lying open at a small figure of a goddess.

On the way home from school I was greeted with the surprising news, that I, Sally Smith, was going to be the Goddess of Liberty in the rally. My Mother glowingly described how I would look on a pedestal drawn by four white horses and patriotism flared.

Two days of exciting pleasure followed. I remained away from school to be fitted. For the costume, there were delicate fairy-like fabrics heaped on the sewing table—nainsook, mozambique, mull, organdy—whatever it was, Joel had been lavish.

A pair of white clocked stockings hung over a chair. These were made of what was then called sea-island cotton, now sometimes known as Philippine, I believe. Red, white and blue strips of ribbon for the Liberty shield were being overcast by my Grandmother. By the evening before the rally, the costume was complete and the family came upstairs to see the rehearsal. Fat Nora panted up the back stairs carefully holding the gown which she had just pressed. The sandals, made from old congress gaiters and then covered with white, lay on the table. My father picked up one on the tip of his little finger and held it out admiringly, saying to my Mother: "Catharine, you can do anything with a needle."

One of my brothers was pasting thirty-four small white stars on the blue Union of the shield, while another was prancing around singing, "Oh the brother of a Goddess am I." Mother put the finishing touches on the Liberty Cap which

was a masterpiece. Then she gave a sigh of satisfaction, and said to my Grandmother, "Now, Mother, you and Nora dress her."

Never since the day I was born had I been dressed with such care and interest. The fine thin clocked stockings were drawn on carefully, the sandals adjusted, the gown put over the head, my heart beating with fervor at each step. Something the Greeks called a himation and which Hoosiers call a scarf fell across my shoulders, hiding somewhat my too slender arms and elbows. At last the cap was settled firmly.

"It must be pretty well down on your head, Sally, it might blow off if there's any wind. That's right now. Go in, Sally." So Sally went in to be greeted with rapturous admiration.

"Turn round, let's see how the scarf looks."

"I don't think her hair looks very Goddessy," came from a younger brother. A strange silence fell.

Father: "It lacks something."

Nora: "Have her wear a veil."

Mother: "Oh, a veil would never do with a Liberty cap."

Brother: "Think of Minerva or Juno with shingled hair."

Mother spoke quickly: "I know. We will get Belle Strawberry to lend us her *chignon*. I noticed her hair when she was giving Sally a music lesson last Friday. It is exactly the color of Sally's. Frank, you go over and ask her for it."

Frank: "But suppose Belle wants to go to the Rally. She couldn't go without her *chignon*."

Mother: "She has one of those blue veils. She could put it over the back of her hat—I just know she will lend it."

And Belle did make the loan though it was an act of great unselfishness. The *chignon* was the fashionable hair mode of young ladies. It was a piece of net covered with small curls. When pinned over the back hair with a ribbon tied on to hide the connecting line, the delicate ringlets played round the temples and ears—a very fetching style. It may be guessed what intense patriotism it showed in Belle to give up her *chignon* on a day when she would doubtless have been among the citizens to ride in carriages.

Dressing to be a bride is nothing compared to dressing to be a Goddess. The *chignon*, borrowed while the owner was still in bed, was sewed firmly to the back of the Liberty cap. The final pats were given as the shrill peal of "The Girl I

Left Behind Me" gave warning of the approach of the car which was to carry the Goddess. A long cooper's wagon swathed with the colors stopped at our door. A bevy of white-clad girls sat on the floor and in the middle was the pedestal for Divinity. A young soldier in uniform approached, saying, "I am to stand behind and support her, Mrs. Smith. I will take care of her."

"Remember, Sally, don't smile or bow or wave to anyone," warned Mother.

That October day in 1864 was a mellow one and as the pageant slowly proceeded, it seemed that the whole population was out. The wide, unpaved streets, bordered with their summer crop of dog-fennel, were rough, but the strong arm behind me was a good shock absorber. Up Franklin Street, across to Main, and on down that street we went. But what are ruts and jostles to a Goddess of Liberty? A most joyful procession that was. The maidens chattered and sang, the horses flaunted flags on their heads. Fifes pealed and drums boomed, while the brass band played "Bonnie Eloise"—a change from the wartime melodies that had been for too long a time so common.

As we neared the terminus of the line of march, there was a great sound of cheering from farmers' families who had come too late to get into the parades. Every hitching-post around the public square was in use, and anxious patriots were driving about seeking places for their teams.

The cheers and hurrahs of this bucolic crowd increased as the long line drew near. The throng drew back from the arch to let the procession pass under. Pillars on each side of the arch supported small platforms whose purpose now became apparent. Each one bore a large new clothes basket and in each basket stood a living statue. These statues (one of whom was the Chairman's daughter) were to represent that accumulated virtue to be found solely within the fold of the Republican party. The cheering we had heard was a tribute to these statues as they climbed up the stepladders and into their protecting baskets. The directions, given so quietly that they were heard only by the girls standing in the assigned positions, were: "Fold your arms and don't move or speak. You will only have to stand there a little while till the procession passes." Obedient to instructions, the statues stood rigid with

folded arms till the Chariot of the Goddess drew near when one of them leaned toward the other and exclaimed: "Oh, Anna, don't the girls look lovely?"

There was loud laughing and hand-clapping from the crowd, ending in cheers. The procession passed under the arch and came to a halt. As we were passing along the streets several women had leaned over gates very loudly exchanging bold remarks about our appearance. Our driver leaned back and whispered: "Don't notice them—they want to get up a fight." One woman seemed to be urging a little boy to say something to us. "Run out and say it," she told him and, with the impetus of a push, the youngster ran into the street and shouted at me: "You ain't nobody but Sally Smith."

The bevy of maidens stirred slightly while our mentor again warned the Goddess not to move. I knew that small boy spoke the truth. At least I had been the person mentioned that very morning, and I might be again that night, but now I was Joan of Arc, Moll Pitcher, or Julia Ward Howe. I was the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the American Flag. A transcendent glow of patriotism was kindling in my palpitating heart on that eventful day, and I did not smile. As well expect the statue of Liberty that looks out from New York Harbor to give heed to some childish gibe.

The whistle of a Wabash passenger train coming in from the southwest over Deer Creek bridge was the signal, and the fife and drum started, only to be overwhelmed a minute later by the full band and the cheers of the crowd as the speakers stepped off the train. Came then important Marshal Sims, the tassels of his red sash flying as he waved his sword. Citizens on foot were now crowding into the Courthouse yard. Those in carriages who could not find hitching-places, remained as near as possible. School children were everywhere. The triumphal car of the speaker being too wide to pass through the arch paused near it.

The band played as the speakers and glee club mounted the stand. A great crowd greeted His Excellency, the Governor of Indiana, that day. Veterans in old army overcoats, women nursing babies, women holding little children out of the crowd, boys on fence posts and in trees, every window filled—it was a thrilling sight.

The celebrities sat toward the front of the platform. The

pitcher of water and two goblets were ready. The male chorus occupied the rear of the stand. Chairman Dewey arose and waved his arms. The crowd gradually quieted. He announced: "Your distinguished fellow citizen, sitting at my right, will address you after a song from the Glee Club. All join in the chorus."

Finally after a long time of standing full of weary emotion, the Goddess received a message from her mother that she was to come on home and change her clothes. "Mrs. Case will send her carriage for you," the message concluded. The Goddess thought, "I will just stay for this one song."

The Glee Club rose, Mr. Graham struck his tuning fork and sounded a deep base sonorous *DO-O-O*. It was echoed by the club, and the singers then broke into song. Abram was no longer calling for volunteers, but they were still singing the first famous war song:

Six hundred thousand is the cry
Come listen to the call
For Abram says we must have them
Or else the Union'll fall.
Then surely, boys, we'll onward march
To meet the rebel band,
Six hundred thousand is the cry
Throughout our native land.

After this with patriotic uproar thrilling her, the Goddess was driven home and became Sally Smith again.

Say I'm weary, say I'm sad
Say that health and wealth have missed me
Say I'm growing old, but add—

that I was the Goddess of Liberty in the Lincoln campaign of 1864.