

AN EARLY GARDEN PARTY

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YEARS ago, when the prairies were in process of settlement, it occasionally fell to the lot of the Mounted Police to act as host for large-scale community affairs which required grounds of fairly pretentious dimensions for their fulfilment. With no other suitable premises then available, the police barracks was the logical locale for such events. The arrangement stimulated the general esteem in which the Force was held. The practice received impetus with the outbreak of war in 1914 when fund-raising organizations came into being, thereby creating a greater demand for well-attended assemblies. Pre-eminent in such undertakings was the summer-time revelry known as "The Garden Party." This was a gala affair of widespread appeal which combined the allurements of a social function with the more blatant aspects of a fair or carnival. The latter feature was an essential when the raising of money was the main objective.

To those sponsoring the garden party, the profits realized were heartening. Attendance could prove costly. It was, for example, the accepted practice to charge for the privilege of entering the grounds even before the visitor could commence to savor the joys which lay ahead. And once on the premises, only the most niggardly could resist the blandishments of those presiding at the various booths. Here was to be found an assortment of items most of which had already been donated by the same guests who would come later to the festivities, a gesture by which one might conceivably purchase for the second time the wares presented by him for the good of the cause. Such a system of double payment could not fail to ensure the financial success of the undertaking. There were games of skill and those of chance to tempt the more sporty. All attending could enjoy the satisfaction of fraternization with friends

and acquaintances.

The Regina barracks was the most favored spot for these community enterprises. Being the training depot of the Force, there was ample manpower for essential tasks—the erecting and dismantling of booths, tents and marquees, the manoeuvring of tables, chairs and other trappings. Moreover, as a provincial capital, the city was home to a large group of eminent and presumably well-heeled citizens who could be relied upon to put in an appearance when the event got under way. They were also held at other posts.

Garden parties were not noticeably popular with the rank and file of the Force. While the need for their efforts in the discharge of tasks before and after the affair was acknowledged, rarely were these hewers of wood and drawers of water bidden to the festivities. Perhaps this was just as well—usually impoverished they could do little to swell the coffers and, had they been present, the evening stable parade would have terminated their participation in the fun and games. Relegated to what was considered a menial role and denied the exhilaration of the actual revelries, they could therefore merely gaze cynically on the proceedings from afar.

When, in 1915, word of a projected garden party in the attractive grounds of the Prince Albert post filtered through to the barrack-room, there was a manifest lack of enthusiasm despite the patriotic motives of the group which was staging the affair. The gloomy prophets in our midst foresaw a repetition of the established practices at Regina—all work and no play. Their prediction was to be proved wrong.

The Commanding Officer, Supt. W. H. Routledge, had himself served through the ranks and was well aware of the role usually allotted to the NCOs and constables. When approached by a group of