

## TYPES OF SCHOOL FESTIVALS

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As one travels north from Naples through Italy and Germany, he is impressed, on the one hand, by the change in conditions of life and, on the other, by the continuity of the festival spirit under the changed conditions. The life at the south is so strikingly open, simple, direct. Farther north much of this aspect is lost, while there is more evidence of elements that make for cleanliness and progress. Yet throughout there is a greater reality to the festival side of life, whether it be of church or state, than one finds in America, where we have broken with the older tradition and as yet have not found a new life.

This festival spirit is so fully in accord with various phases of social and industrial activities in the best American schools that we may look to them for help even more than we can expect it from other social institutions. Our hope for a deeper enjoyment of the meaning of activities on the part of adults lies in making use of the fact that some value is attached by the adults to this phase for children in the plastic period. If we work out what we can for the children, the grown-ups may find that their own period of growth, and consequent enjoyment, are longer than they had thought. We need careful studies of the significant motives of what has been done. Dr. Dopp's *The Place of Industries in Elementary Education* has many illuminating suggestions. Someone of equal energy and experience ought to devote himself to "The Place of the Festival in Education."

Even a hasty view of the kinds of festivals now in use would be helpful, showing, as it would, the lines of least resistance or of chief interest in elementary, secondary, and higher schools. I wish that the *Elementary School Teacher* or some other leading journal would open a department in which reports of current endeavors could be recorded and evaluated. The difficulty

in many schools is that a type of festival is learned or worked upon, and then, whatever is done, is made to conform to this type. Thus, in some places, the pageant is found to present less of subjective requirements than do other forms, and the entire supply of energy is spent upon certain spectacular effects. A study of the Venetian pageant and its influence upon art would help to prevent this one-sidedness which often results in nothing but display, or else leads either to the abandonment of the festival as an "extra," a "vanity," a "folly," or to a revolt in favor of plays with bare stage settings and no effort at costume effects, etc. I believe that both the pageant and the bare stage have their place, and each will be the better because of the use of the other.

In both these forms there is a high degree of participation and of product execution on the part of the performers. I have been giving some attention to the possibilities of more use of the process and of agents through which the performer works. This appears in the little pantomime plays in which objects cut out of paper or other material are used to make the shadows. The highest development we have of this method is seen in the marionette theater. After a performance in an Italian theater and an inspection of old models of the eighteenth century, now in a museum, I could better understand what these puppets meant to Goethe in his childhood. (I know of no book worth more to the student of the festival in aiding him to get the spirit of this phase of life than *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*.) There seems to be a utilizing in the puppets of one's tendencies to work through means, and a consequent objectification which is closely related to the socializing for which the school exists. This tendency is seen in normal boys and girls in playing with dolls, soldiers, paper animals, as well as with boats, engines, etc. "that will go." When there is added the element of improvisation, the value is even more evident, for by this means there is an avenue for that tendency to communicate oneself through a social situation so often seen in children and so often repressed. When there is this repression, the tendency feeds itself, in many cases, on day-dreams, poor love-stories. and cheap adventure tales. There is, of course, a danger in too great absorption in one's dolls or in

pantomime or puppets or machines, yet an advance is made upon mere subjective fancies.

Another interest met is that which oppressed finds its main feeding in the serial pictures of the Sunday newspaper—Buster Brown, Happy Hooligan, the Katzenjammers, *et al.* One may well regret the devotion of many children to these unworthies, yet the need they depend upon for their vogue is natural. They are live characters, and week after week in new situations appear these old friends. It is often said that following them does no harm because the children are not led to act upon the suggestions they offer. While we certainly do not wish to have the tricks of the newspaper pictures become the acts of our children, yet there is some danger in cultivating the attitude of appreciation and enjoyment without participation and consequent relating of reader or seer to the material.

The festival work in most schools is still unrelated to other work, and is dependent largely upon chance opportunities and influences. It offers one of the most valuable tools available for the reconstruction now sought for. It deserves (1) careful study as a factor in social life past and present; (2) recognition as a definite factor in the curriculum and not as an “extra;” (3) division of labor so that all members of a school have experience both as doers and observers; (4) development of a variety of types; (5) relation to larger wholes of action, thus taking account of social and ethical possibilities (compare 1, 2, and 3).