

## III

## HOW IT ALL CAME ABOUT

"Wouldn't you children like to write something together so you can see how you've grown in composition writing this year?" was asked the 8A class some weeks ago.

Thirty pairs of eyes straightway looked interested, and one boy asked, "What's the idea?"

"The idea is that this class ought to be able to compose something worth-while," was the answer.

Their first suggestion was that they should write a composite story for the school paper, but the fact that the next number of the school paper would be the senior number made this impracticable. By means of questions and suggestions the class was finally brought face to face with the idea of writing a play.

After some discussion of this plan they decided to try it. Then the question arose, what shall we write? After talking over several suggestions given by pupils, they decided to plan the play on the idea of a more ideal America of tomorrow.

When the play was fairly well outlined they worked out the first scene. A puzzled, troubled Columbia there must be, and somebody to lend a helping hand. So the Spirit of Help was named and her attendant Spirits. Finally, in answer to the question, whom can this Spirit summon to fill some present-day needs? they selected the following: Spirits of Home, Music, Play, Health, Fair Play, Civic Pride, and Simplicity.

In this manner the whole play was worked out. By a bit of questioning the children were led to plan it all.

The first scene was given as the regular piece of composition that first week. The papers were given back, no one getting his own, and the pupils asked to give each an estimate of its worth. All papers graded A were then read, and any others the pupils thought worth while. After much discussion the parts for the first scene were selected. To

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This is the second article in the series "Making the Most of the School Entertainment," which was introduced under this title last month. Others will appear from time to time.—Editor.

show how critical the class was in this work, the combined work of three pupils was chosen for one of Columbia's speeches.

This method was used for all the scenes, and the class was much interested to see what per cent was really having a part in the composition. "Eight pupils wrote that scene. That's pretty good," remarked one girl.

"Whom shall we have for the different characters?" was the next question. To save time the class appointed a committee to make the selections, with the understanding the class must approve. This was done without friction, and the pupils set to work learning their parts.

As the work progressed and the class felt it might be of interest to outsiders, they decided to ask the President of the Normal School to let them give it in the auditorium. The president of the class interviewed him and received a cordial invitation to give the pageant at the chapel hour. This pleased the children very much and they worked hard so their audience would not be disappointed. It was given before a large part of the student body.

This scheme of work gave an opportunity for highly motivated composition. From the moment the pupils considered their work as a possibility for a public performance they worked with an earnestness never before seen among them.

It gave opportunity for the development of initiative. Pupils that had never expressed a pronounced opinion in the classroom talked freely and pointedly, giving helpful suggestions. One girl in particular that had been a decided nonentity proved to be one of the best general critics in the group.

The situation gave an opportunity for expression of individuality. No child in the room could have so expressed the spirit of play as the curly-headed girl chosen; no one could have made quite so attractive a Columbia as the gentle though dignified president of the class.

The pride in the work as a group production was interesting. The children felt a wholesome pride in "our work, our class." The individual for the time was lost.

"It must be a success," one girl said enthusiastically.

No amount of criticizing from the teacher could have sharpened the pupils' critical faculties as this kind of work did. They criticised each other unmercifully though kindly, rejecting, selecting, with the business-like air of a newly-installed editor.

Perhaps no one point in training children means more than to organize material. Out of a mass of unrelated material, the finished product came,—and during the process the class received valuable ideas of organization.

Righteously school children often feel that school does not deal enough with the happenings of the outside world. There could be no complaint here. The questions discussed by the class in doing this work are the questions before numbers of our most thoughtful men and women to-day.

They enjoyed doing the work—enjoyed writing it, rehearsing it, giving it. How do we know that some day some member or members of this class may not do such a thing as a piece of recreation?

The thought that runs through the pageant is good citizenship. Is it not safe to say that sub-consciously, perhaps, some of the points that make a good citizen are more firmly embedded in the children's minds because they have done this piece of composition?

The love of wholesome play must be kept alive at all hazards. And this kind of school exercise tends to keep alive that spirit that is one of the safeguards of the American people.

The pupils were made to feel that the responsibility rested upon them, and they responded with the keenest interest. They are stronger and better equipped to help themselves because of the experience. The most significant fact about it all is: *they did it themselves, to the smallest detail.*

One member of the class arranged the program, and the pupils wrote them. This furnished a situation for motivated interest in form and handwriting. No time outside of school time was used. Nothing was done not in accord with regular class work in English.

If you, O over-worked teacher of English, have been conducting your class work along the lines of hum-drum routine, try "the play way," and you will be convinced

that it is comparatively easy and a very interesting means of accomplishing ends that otherwise require a great deal of hard, dull work.

#### AMERICA OF TOMORROW

##### Act 1, Scene 1

Columbia's Home

##### Scene 2

Same as Scene 1

##### Act 2, Scene 1

A Public Auditorium

##### Act 1, Scene 1

(COLUMBIA *advances from right and walks up and down slowly. In a troubled voice she speaks:*)

The past of America has been so wonderful, so full of promise, that it is with eager yearning for the future I see the fretful fevers and uncertainties of our life to-day. What can I do to keep up our excellent standards? What can my people do to retain the old homespirit? We must keep our children's health and make them want better living conditions and better education. All this discontent between employers and the working men must be stopped. Oh, it is too much, I cannot solve these problems alone. . . .

I know what I will do. I will call my Spirit of Help.

(*Advancing to left*)

Oh, Spirit of Help, I need you.

(*Enter SPIRIT OF HELP*)

Columbia, I am here. Since I have the power to know what you are thinking, probably I can help you with the America of Tomorrow. I have some Spirits who will gladly do all they can to help you. I shall now summon the Spirit of Home.

(*Enter SPIRIT OF HOME*)

O Help, I come in answer to your call. Columbia, I am the Spirit of Home. The first thing that must be done is to improve the homes. They must be made more attractive so people will stay in them more and not go away for pleasures. Many rich children seldom see their parents because they're in the care of servants from morning till night. The homes must be improved, O Columbia.

COLUMBIA: Thank you, kind Spirit.

HELP: And now I shall summon the Spirit of Music.

*(Enter girl playing softly on violin)*

I, Columbia, am the Spirit of Music. I should be found in every American home. There are people in this country who have never heard good music, therefore have been cheated out of one of the best entertainments of life.

HELP: Next, Columbia, my Spirit of Play.

PLAY: I am the Spirit of Play. You know the saying, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." So we must give a part of our time to play; we must have strong bodies as well as strong minds. Parks and play grounds must be provided. They're just as important as books and study periods.

COLUMBIA: Your suggestion is very helpful, Joyous Spirit.

HELP: The Spirit of Health.

HEALTH: I am the Spirit of Health. America needs strong men and women in peace as well as war. We must stop crowding our tenement houses of the cities where children are put like so many sheep. We must stop rent-profiteering and have Health Boards and visiting nurses that we may have sanitary homes and schools.

COLUMBIA: No better thought than yours has been given.

HELP: Fair Play comes now.

SPIRIT OF FAIR PLAY: I am the Spirit of Fair Play. I have had many opportunities to see the people over all this broad land. And now, Columbia, I come to tell you the fault I find people guilty of everywhere. They all struggle against each other with no thought of square dealing—all for gain. Our people must learn to put honor and fair dealing before personal gain.

HELP: One of my favorite Spirits—Civic Pride.

SPIRIT OF CIVIC PRIDE: I, O Columbia, am the Spirit of Civic Pride. The American people have sadly neglected beautifying their communities. Yards and trees can be made beautiful by planting trees and flowers. Factories should not be built near a residential section. No country has more natural beauty. Let's do all we can to add to it.

COLUMBIA: Well spoken, Spirit.

HELP: Last, but not least important—my Spirit of Simplicity.

SPIRIT OF SIMPLICITY: I am the Spirit of Simplicity. America needs to return to a more simple life—simple, wholesome, well-cooked food,—simple, well-built, comfortable homes—more simplicity in the clothes we wear. The rich are setting a bad example by their extravagance. They waste enough to make the poor comfortable and happy. The children of this generation must work for the simple life.

COLUMBIA: We must have time to think over all these things and decide what is best to do.

*(Spirits pass back of Columbia and seat themselves on cushions, some to right, some to left.)*

#### Act 1, Scene 2

*(COLUMBIA advances from right; SPIRIT OF HELP from the left.)*

COLUMBIA: You have heard what these Spirits have said. What do you suggest, kind Spirit?

HELP: I suggest we have a meeting of the citizens and tell them what the Spirits have told us, and let them decide what is best to do.

COLUMBIA: Whom shall we have?

HELP: The children first of all.

COLUMBIA: By all means. They are the citizens of to-morrow.

HELP: Then naturally come the mothers. So much for the home. We must have the professional people and those who represent our government.

COLUMBIA: I thank you, kind Spirit. You may call the meeting, while I make ready.

#### Act 2, Scene 1

COLUMBIA: Dear citizens and fellow-countrymen: We have called this meeting that you may know our hopes, our plans, and our ambitions for a finer, larger and broader America. If we can have your co-operation in carrying out the suggestion just made, our country will emerge victorious, pledged to ideals of justice and law.

THE MOTHER: I speak for the mothers of this land. The mothers have a most vital

part in making this country better. We promise to spend more time with our children and strive to make our homes approach the ideal.

**THE LEGISLATOR:** The people have to abide by the laws we make. Therefore I, the lawmaker, promise to make only clean, strong, and just laws.

**THE DOCTOR:** I, the doctor, speak for my profession. We will try to prevent disease. Prevention is better than cure. We will urge the building of hospitals and sanitariums, asylums and homes for the cure and care of the afflicted.

**THE VOTER:** I represent the voters of America. That America may grow into a greater nation, her people must vote for principle and not for party. I pledge myself to follow this law of voting.

**THE TEACHER:** I, the teacher, will endeavor to teach the children that education does not mean books only; but to make America what it should be, we must train the head, the heart, the hand.

**A SPEAKER FOR CHILDHOOD:** I stand for the childhood of America. I pledge to do everything in my power to help Columbia and the Spirits to make our country better and to bring it up to a higher standard.

*(Toasts given by Citizens:)*

Here's to America of To-Morrow!

To America: May she live for justice, freedom and peace for all. May she be Light and Liberty for the World!

Here's to a better, cleaner, purer, stronger, healthier America!

A toast from the children! America, we're behind you ten million strong!

Here's to the America of to-morrow! May she be all that great country should be!

**COLUMBIA:** Is there a toast we all can give?

*(All in unison, standing at attention—)*

Here's to America of To-Morrow!

*(All sing "America" as curtain slowly falls.)*

CARRIE M. DUNGAN

Cleveland schools expect to receive \$12,000,000 for building and operating expenses next year.

## IV

## VOICES IN DREAMLAND

[Youth is a rich dreamland, and song makes life happier and sweeter—perhaps younger too—for normal people of all ages. For years past the Normal School Glee Club has annually added much to the brightness and sweetness of life at Blue-Stone Hill. One of the admiring friends of the said Glee Club is Dr. Wayland. He recently tried to express some of the appreciation that the whole community feels toward our sweet singers by writing a song and a melody and dedicating them to the Glee Club. Miss Shaeffer and Miss Hoffman supplied the necessary harmony, and the Club has sung the new song already on two public occasions. Here are the words. In time, it may be, the music will be published also.]

A whisper in dreamland—it wakes me at dawn—

Its message is "Sing! O sing!"

And morning tunes voices on hilltop and lawn,

Their chorus is "Sing! O sing!"

And so in my heart this sweet message of joy Keeps ringing the whole day long.

My soul would give answer without alloy— My soul giveth answer in song.

I sing of the warblers among the trees,

I sing of the red caroon;

I sing of the flowers that scent the breeze,

I sing of the witching moon.

I sing of the mountains where shepherd bells ring,

I sing of the billowing sea;

But ever and ever, whenever I sing,

I sing, O my love, of thee!

The mountains give echoes of horn and of bell,

The winds play a wild harmony,

And distant old ocean, in unceasing swell,

Joins full in the symphony.

My voice in the chorus may never be heard,

My best song no honor may bring,

But e'er I'll keep singing, my heart's in my word,

I love you, and therefore I sing.

JOHN W. WAYLAND