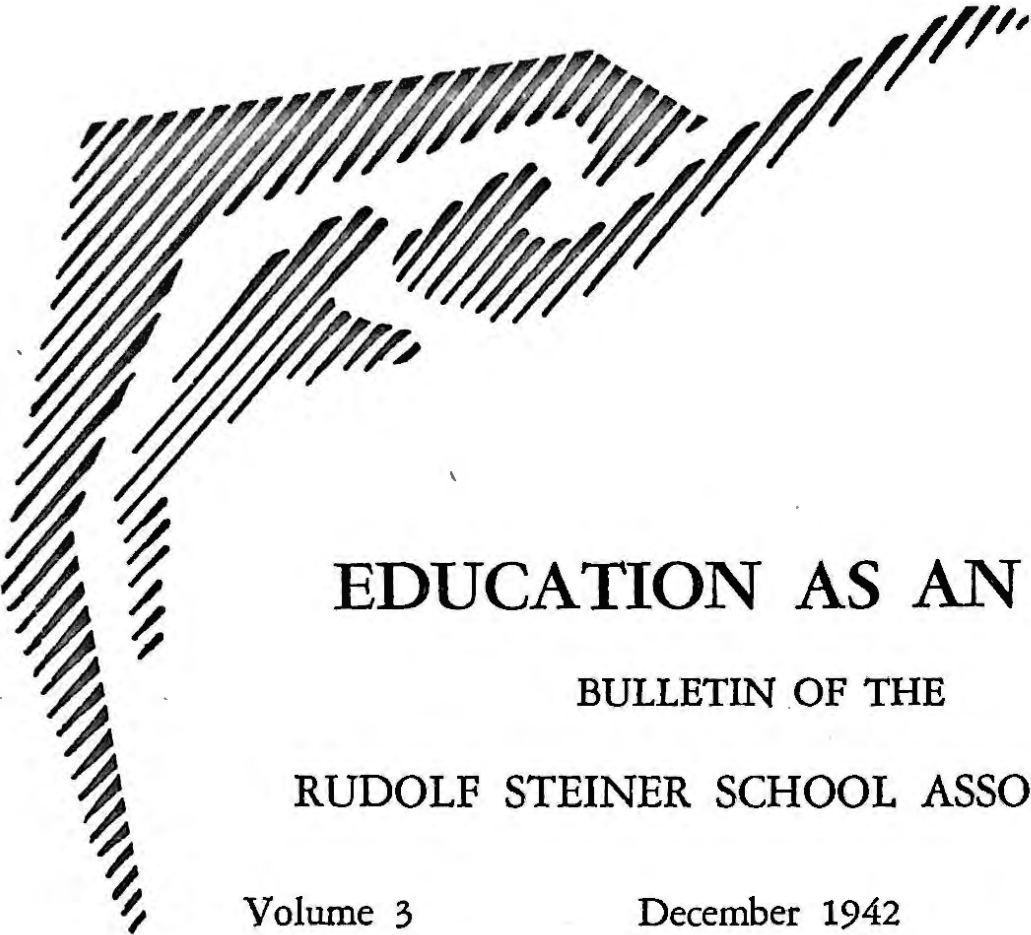




EDUCATION AS AN ART

BULLETIN OF THE
RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

Volume 3

December 1942

No. 3



CHRISTMAS SHEPHERD PLAY

Introductory Words

No experience goes so deep with children as that of participation in a play. And, of all plays, there are none which more truly satisfy them than the original, simple dramas of the human race, such stories, for instance, as those of Adam and Eve, of Mary and Joseph and the Shepherds, and of Herod and the Three Wise Kings. If they are fortunate enough to hear them told year after year, to see them performed, and to take part in acting them themselves, these stories become part of their own lives. They are like seeds which will grow up with them. This is true for children of all races and creeds, for these stories do not belong to any sect and have nothing to do with any dogma. They belong to mankind as such.

In the Middle Ages, grown men and women lived with these plays in the spirit of childhood. As spectators, they entered into the performance with devotion and with whole-hearted joy and humor. To act in them was a privilege which was given only to those who showed in their own lives that they were ready to play the role for which they were chosen. For several weeks before

Christmas the village, and especially the actors, prepared for the production. Rough talk and quarreling were put aside to make way for a quality of simple reverence.

As adults today we no longer find it easy to approach the stories and plays in the naive spirit of the Middle Ages. Only by learning to understand their meaning can we again awaken similar feelings of devotion. This is something which every adult can only do for himself. But our children can still approach these things directly and simply and such experiences in childhood, especially under present conditions, will mean genuine strength for them in later life.

Every parent and teacher today will feel that they can no longer rely on naive acceptance of past tradition. They will want to make the effort to reach their own understanding of what comes to them from the past, and then try to find a form in which they can present it anew. Although some of the perfection and quaintness of the traditional forms may be lost in this attempt, the sincerity and conviction behind the effort will help to deepen the impression on the child.

It is for this reason that, at the Rudolf Steiner School, we feel ourselves fortunate to have the older children give a Nativity Play, based upon the traditional plays, but re-created especially for the children by Arvia MacKaye, one of their own teachers. The little play which follows was written for children of a third grade who had been hearing the stories of the Old Testament in their Main Lesson. In bringing Adam to the stable in Bethlehem, the author has tried to connect, in a very free way, the story of Adam and Eve with the birth of Christ, which was done in medieval times when the Nativity Play was immediately preceded by the Paradise Play. The boys and girls for whom this play was written were pupils at Michael Hall, a Rudolf Steiner school in London, England. The poem which is printed here after the play was written by one of the children in this same class. How one of the teachers in the Rudolf Steiner School in New York has handled the Christmas story over a period of several years, with a group of the younger children, is described later in this same issue.

Christmas Shepherd Play

Chorus:

Adam has wandered the wide, wide world
Since out of God's paradise he was hurled.
And no man could tell him all he would know,
But many walked with him, on the way he must go.
Kings and princes, even beggars and thieves,
Each has sought to set his soul at ease.
Full weary well may this wanderer be;
God grant, Adam, His mercy to thee.

Adam: My feet have borne me o'er the face of the earth
 In search of the secret of death and of birth.
 All ways have led me to this lonely place.
 May God now have mercy and give me His grace.

Adam lies down and sleeps.

Enter three shepherds.

First Shepherd: Aye, friends, 'tis bitter cold this night.
 I no longer can tell me left from me right!

Second Shepherd: And I'm one great icicle from me head to me toes,
 Nor know I what's happened to the end of me nose!

Third Shepherd: Brothers, I'm weary in every limb.
 Old Crispin's a-coming. Let's wait here for him.

Fourth Shepherd: *(from afar)*
 Oh, oh, oh, me legs are old,
 And me back is bent;
 Me friends all forgot me
 And away they went!
 What ho, you old scoundrels,
 Did you leave me to die?
 Or do you think I'm a sheep
 That in the fold I shall lie?
 The wolves might have ate me
 And then where'd you be
 Without poor old Crispin, to put sense into ye?

Second Shepherd: Nay, Crispin, good Crispin,
 From the noise that ye've made
 No wolf would come near ye.
 They'd be far too afraid!

Third Shepherd: Nay, Crispin, ye're safe from the wolves, I wot.
 They'd take but one bite
 When they'd found
 What a mouthful
 Of bones they had got!

First Shepherd: Come, friends, let an old man be;
 But stay! Look . . . what is this that I see?

Third Shepherd: A wanderer weary of life would he seem,
 Who lays himself down on the cold ground to dream.

Second Shepherd: How thin is his cloak,
 And his shoes, see, how worn!

First Shepherd: His dress, too,
Look friends,
See how it is torn.

Second Shepherd: This skin shall he have
To cover his cold.

Third Shepherd: My kerchief also,
Though it be old.

First Shepherd: This lamb's skin I'll give him
That warm he may keep.

Fourth Shepherd: And of this wool make a pillow
That soft he may sleep.

Third Shepherd: Now let us also for sleep prepare,
And bid God to take our souls in His care.

All Shepherds (*kneeling*)

Father in Heaven, hear us, we pray,
As we kneel to thank thee for another day.
Guard us now with Thy hand this night
That we may find mercy and grace in Thy sight.

Shepherds sleep. Music sounds, growing stronger as the angels appear.
Angels make E' V' O' E as a greeting.

Angels: Shepherds, God calls you,
And all men on earth,
To welcome with joy
His little son's birth.
He in darkest night descending,
From Heaven to earth his way is wending.
His Being life and light is spending,
And in love all creatures tending.
His seeing strength to men is lending—
The power to forge the sword of light,
The courage to pierce the lonely night,
The truth to open wide men's eyes
To build on earth a new paradise.

Angels withdraw. Shepherds awake.

Second Shepherd: Brothers, heard ye aught this night?

First Shepherd: Aye, my heart did leap up in delight.

Third Shepherd: Angels hovered o'er my sight.

Fourth Shepherd: And I did hear them sing with all their might!

First Shepherd: But see, the stranger too is risen.
Let us ask if aught for him in this night was hidden.

Third Shepherd: Stranger, didst thou hear aught this night?

Adam: Aye, friends, angel voices have I heard,
Messengers of God and His glad word.

Shepherds: Then 'tis true what we have dreamed.

Second Shepherd: Let us then go and find this child.

First Shepherd: Shall we not bring
Gifts to this King?

Second Shepherd: Aye, that we shall do,
And gladly, too.

Fourth Shepherd: I would gladly bring my lambkin,
But Brothers, you must help me catch him!

Third Shepherd: Stranger, wilt thou with us go,
Home and love for this child to show?

Adam: I thank you my brothers,
And gladly will I go
The secret of this child to know.

*They all wander together. The curtain opens, revealing Mary and Joseph,
later the angels behind them.*

Shepherds: Little child, we pray, receive us here.
Though rough shepherds we be,
Thou needest not fear.
Accept the gifts that we can bring.
Our heart's love we bring Thee, little Childling.

Angels: Little King of Heaven now entering earth,
A gift of God's light we bring to Thy birth.
Thy guardian host we now will be
To go along life's road with Thee.

Adam: Long have I wandered alone in the world,
Since out of God's paradise I was hurled,
Seeking, seeking, early and late,
To lift from my heart the deadening weight
Of sorrow and pain and encompassing night
Which have blinded my eyes to the heavenly light.
But now in this Child I can live again,
And with me shall live the whole race of men.
To Thee, little Lordling, I bring my burden of pain,
For Thou alone canst make my heart light again.

Henry Barnes

P O E M

*Written by a child of eight, a pupil
in a Rudolf Steiner School
in England.*

The earth doth bear me,
The sun doth cure me,
Men do love me,
And to God above
I send my love.
The rain doth fall,
The air doth rise,
And I do call
To God in the skies:
Praise me ye God
That I may live to see
Man and the flowering tree—
The world.



NATIVITY PLAYS

in the
Rudolf Steiner School

With the lighting of the first Advent candle, the thoughts of the children turn to preparations for Christmas. For the older classes this means rehearsing for the yearly Nativity Play, and the smaller children are much excited by glimpses of stately angels or rough shepherds passing their classroom doors. The little ones enjoy these half-secret activities and look forward to the Christmas Festival, when all will be revealed to their eager eyes. Some of them have already seen the play and are delighted to boast of its wonders to the less fortunate.

But there is one group in the school to whom the coming Nativity Play is a complete mystery. This is the new Kindergarten Class. Christmas itself is still a new and shining event in their lives, for the most part associated with Santa Claus and thinking about the presents they will get. This is a natural, childlike attitude, yet these same small children have a great warmth of heart and natural reverence, which is only waiting to be called upon. For this reason one of our teachers began a custom in the Kindergarten which has been carried further through the first three years of school life.

During the days of Advent, the Kindergarten children listened to the story of the first Christmas with the same rapt joy which they had given to their fairy stories. Their imaginations, already stimulated by the beauty of fairyland, had no difficulty in seeing the wonder and beauty that shone upon the simple shepherds as the angel spoke to them from the heavens. They were themselves the shepherds going to Bethlehem to see the greatest wonder of all in the light shining from the "Jesus Baby", lying in a manger and watched over by the Mother in her rosy garment veiled in blue. Hearing the story and inwardly feeling it, their thoughts easily turned from receiving gifts to giving them, as the shepherds had given their simple offerings of a glove, a cap, and a lamb. All the small boys and girls were shepherds, dressed up in their own caps and mufflers, with crooks transformed from witches' brooms and princes' swords.

The teacher, however unworthy she might feel, was the angel; and when all the little shepherds lay sleeping on the hill, one watcher saw her come, with arms raised for wings, and woke the others to listen to the beautiful words from St. Luke, "Behold I bring you tidings of great joy!"—Then the shepherds quietly rose, cupping imaginary gifts in small hands, and moved in solemn procession to lay their gifts before a picture of the Nativity, drawn in shining colors on the blackboard. This simple play, unwatched by anyone, was repeated with continued joy day after day and when at last the Christmas tree appeared, the tiny manger scene of colored wax, made by unskillful little hands, was as important a part of Christmas as the presents to be received.

The next year, in the first grade, the nativity play grew up a little. Now Mary and Joseph were chosen, the Mother to care for the Child and Joseph to protect them both. The tallest blonde girl, who naturally led the "multitude of the heavenly host", was entrusted with a star on a stick and the angels made their own paper wings. The shepherds made their crooks and the whole class created the hill and starry sky with colored chalks on the blackboard. There were many offers of "best" dolls to lie in the little pasteboard manger, but the teacher's suggestion that the "Jesus Baby" was too wonderful to be represented by even the "best" doll was readily accepted. Then she told them that, although other stories were told, not read, she would read the Christmas story from the Bible, because this is a very special book written down by very wise old men in very beautiful words. Nearly every morning St. Luke was read and Mary entered with Joseph's arm protectingly around her. When they knocked at the door they found no room in the inn, so they rested near the manger. Meanwhile, nearby, the shepherds slept before the pictured hill, until wakened by the Angel to travel to Bethlehem across the familiar schoolroom floor, quite unaware of it, to give their gifts to the "Jesus Baby". At last the Angel led them all away rejoicing and singing "Away in a Manger".

This naive class-room Nativity Play, with its daily repetition and recurring yearly rhythm, works deeply into the hearts of the small actors. The beauty of Bible language speaks to them in a special way. Like poetry, it gives them a feeling for the true meaning behind the words and in later years this feeling becomes an understanding which is there to be called upon in such times as the present, when the youngest child knows that war and sorrow have come to the world. It is clearer to these children than it is to many adults that the Christ Child not only received gifts from simple shepherds and proud kings, but that he brought greater gifts to them, and to all men of good will.

On a particular day when the children came to school full of the distress and confusion at home, caused by war news, the teacher was able to comfort them by calling on the inner feeling which their experience of the Christmas Story had brought them. When she spoke frankly of the new sorrow in the world and of the fact that there is no peace anywhere about us, she also recalled to them that the Christ Child's gifts of peace and love could live on in their hearts when they were grown up and be carried out into the world to help rebuild it for the children of all peoples.

Margaret Peckham



"No teaching takes the right course which is not accompanied by a certain reverence for the older generation. Although this must remain essentially a *nuance* of feeling and sentiment, it should nevertheless be cultivated in the children with every possible means. The child should look up with reverence, with respect, to what the older generations have already achieved, and to what he, too, through the school, is one day to achieve. This attitude of looking upon the culture of the surrounding world with a certain respect should be awakened from the very beginning, so that, in those people who have already grown older, the child really sees somewhat higher beings, as it were. Without the awakening of this feeling we shall not progress in teaching and in education."

Practical Course for Teachers.

Rudolf Steiner



SCHOOL FAIR

The Christmas Fair at the Rudolf Steiner School, on Saturday, December 5th, once more proved to be a gay and successful event.

The bright yet business-like atmosphere which pervaded the school on this afternoon struck the visitor right at the entrance, when starting his rounds at the flower table, decked in appropriate Christmas style. Here there was displayed, by soft candlelight, besides a great number of green and flowering plants, the well-known dark green of the pine, which upon closer inspection proved to be wreathes and sprays, with colored pine-cones, to hang at the front door this Christmas season. There were even entire trees, roots and all, hung with pieces of suet and cranberries to be planted in the garden as a Christmas offering to the birds.

Upstairs the cake table invited one to purchase immediate refreshment, as well as a special dessert for the week-end. The toy table showed many a hand-made toy, among which the charming wooden trains excelled. A father and two boys had worked on these with all the love and zeal of craftsmen. The more than reasonable price—a feature of the entire fair—made these dainty things sell rapidly. Unfortunately the demand for more of them could not be satisfied, for, we were told, it would have taken up too much of their maker's time. This also accounts for the fact that no orders could be taken, and stamps the ones purchased as unique specimens.

Another table caught the eye with many a beautiful piece of cross-stitch work, done in the manner of the old samplers and more recent examples of embroidery, charming pieces of lace to wind becomingly about the head, and odd pieces of beautiful silk and cotton material of manifold patterns, which proved good buys and found an eager public.

The art table looked distinguished with a decorative piece of stained glass for a center. Mme. Montuex's fresh, sparkling water-colors formed an artistic background for a wealth of hand-painted Christmas cards, partly Miss Violet Maxwell's, taken from her illustrations for the well-known children's book "The Sinatons". Another feature was the Portuguese candles adorned by delicately colored flowers sculptured in wax, of which twice their number could have been sold had they been available. Also Mrs. Farnum's charming little hand-painted boxes, by now a traditional feature at our fairs, sold rapidly.

The entire front room was dedicated to children's books, sold for McMillan's, with a nice discount for the school. An attraction for the adults was a special corner where the literary works of several friends of the school could be found, together with a few of Rudolf Steiner's books. Here a busy atmosphere prevailed. Buyers old and young were seen choosing from the well-filled tables and shelves or giving their orders. At some moments the book room proved a refuge for dignified gentlemen, who were able to find a quiet corner there for an important talk, or just came to rest peacefully and

watch the lively spectacle, away from confusing details.

People eager to take some refreshment or to have a quiet talk found a delightful place to do so in the tea room down in the Kindergarten, where a surprising supply of tasty bits with tea, or even coffee, served on dainty white table-cloths, refreshed both the eye and the palate.

The children, who had come in great numbers, pupils as well as outsiders, found various special enjoyments on the third floor. After a fascinating story was told there by kind and charming Miss Anne Eaton, teacher at the Lincoln School, games, for which small prizes were available, were ingeniously initiated by Miss Dillingham and Mr. Harrer and joined in with enthusiasm by representatives of all ages.

The appearance of Saint Nicholas (whose birthday eve it happened to be) and of his servant, thrilled the little ones and even, for awhile, kept the others in awe. After his individual remarks had been taken to heart the Saint lavishly distributed apples, whilst his servant made everybody dive down with delight to grab for candies on the floor.

The forever-popular grab-bag was greeted with joy and its contents, which seemed inexhaustible at first, soon proved to have all disappeared; so had most of the toys and all the cakes, a fact that can teach us that, if possible, even more donations should be sought for next time. The results, however, more than justify the undertaking with all the energy and zeal which were involved in it. And a feeling of sincere gratitude goes out to all those who showed by their coming, as well as by their donations and various efforts, their sympathy for the strivings of the Rudolf Steiner School.

Marie Rief

PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE SCHOOL

In October, a lecture was given at the Rudolf Steiner School. The purpose of the lecture was to interest new people in the pedagogy. An attendance of eighty was gratifying and another lecture is being planned for a date in January.

For many years, the school has looked forward to becoming a Training School for Teachers, as well as the demonstration school which it has been for the visitors who come each year from many parts of the country. Both of these activities help to carry the pedagogy to a new and wider public. This year, three student teachers are working at the school, two giving full time and one part time. They visit classes, assist and do some practice teaching. A weekly seminar under Dr. Hiebel is attended by these students and others who are studying the pedagogy and preparing to go out as teachers.

Last June, Miss Peckham and Mr. Barnes accepted an invitation from a member of the Board of Education of the Public School at Essex Fells, N. J., to speak to parents, faculty and members of the board, who have shown an interest in the pedagogy. Two teachers from this school later visited the

Educational Conference held at Spring Valley last summer.

In order to be of better service in the task of spreading the pedagogy beyond the narrower confines of the school itself, the teachers have been aware of the necessity of keeping in touch with other educational movements in this country. Miss Dillingham and Mr. Harrer, who have recently taken courses at Teachers College, have been helpful in keeping the teachers in contact with current trends in the educational world. Last year, Miss Spock was invited to speak to the faculty from the standpoint of a student at Teachers College. Dr. von Baravalle, through his wide contacts in the educational field, has been very helpful from time to time. His résumé of the methods and aims of leading educational movements has been most useful. This fall Miss Peckham and Dr. Hiebel were invited to speak at panels of The New York Private Schools Association Conference, which met at the Spence School. Miss Peckham was able to accept. Her talk at this meeting was received with lively interest, and at the close of the panel the chairman urged that no one fail to look at the unusual and interesting children's notebooks from the Rudolf Steiner School. Several members of the faculty attended other panels, the general meeting and the luncheon. The School and its work seemed to be more generally known than in former years, and during luncheon conversations many questions were asked about Rudolf Steiner's pedagogical methods.

Miriam Wallace

My dear Fellow Members:

The meeting of the Association on December 9th was the last meeting of our third year. Some figures compiled by Miss Luttmann will be of interest:

In 1940, there were 174 memberships, as well as 11 faculty members and 38 parents of children in the school.

1941—102 new memberships, 8 additional faculty, 9 additional parent members.

1942, through May,—26 new members.

Total Membership—368, plus 27 Scholarship Fund Donors for the three years.

In May, 36 of our 1941 members had not renewed their subscriptions, but renewals have been coming in since then.

Withdrawn during the three years,—Resignations 6, Deaths 3, No address 4. This gives us a total of 382 members including contributors to the Scholarship Fund.

I take this opportunity to voice the thanks of the Association to Mrs. Naumann for her work as treasurer from February to June of this year, and also to Miss Luttmann for her faithful services for three years. Our best thoughts go with her in her new work.

Under the constitution, the Executive Committee is composed of a Chairman, a Treasurer, a Secretary, three members of the Faculty, and the Editor of the Bulletin—chosen by the Executive Committee prior to the Annual Meeting. Those serving on the Committee now are, myself as Chairman, Mr. Joseph Wetzl as Treasurer, Dorothy Jeffrey as Secretary and the three members of the Faculty are Henry Barnes, Alice Jansen, and William Harrer.

Mrs. Laughlin's resignation as Editor of the Bulletin has been received with deep regret. Our warm appreciation for her three years of hard work and the excellent standard she has set for the Bulletin are hereby expressed to her with our sincere thanks. The Executive Committee has appointed Miss MacKaye to carry on the Bulletin.

Our plans for 1943 begin with asking Lacy Van Wagenen to enroll new members. I hope each of you will think of some one person whom Miss Van Wagenen may interest in our Association. Please send their names to the Association, 49 East 91st Street, New York City.

We are planning lectures to be given at the School. Dates will appear later.

Several articles of particular interest to teachers will be published as soon as we can make the necessary arrangements.

As I write this notice to you in our lovely, sunny Association room, the School is filled with preparation for the play which the older children give every Christmas. This year there will be an extra performance, so that others besides parents may see it. And the "Brick Church", our near neighbor, has asked that our children give it before their Sunday School. Here war is not quite so close, and we feel the well-spring of life and the hope for the future in the children as they practice the play of the birth of our Saviour.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Halliday Mitchell

It will be of interest to members of the Association that the first work of Dr. Steiner's to be published in this country in Braille, for the blind, is *The Education of the Child*. This has been accomplished through the initiative of Miss Katherine Phelan.

Miriam Wallace

Membership in the Rudolf Steiner School Association, including the quarterly Bulletin, is \$2.00 per year. Single copies of the Bulletin, 10c each; for more than 10 copies 8c each, postpaid.

Address Secretary, Rudolf Steiner School Association, 49 East 91st Street, New York.

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