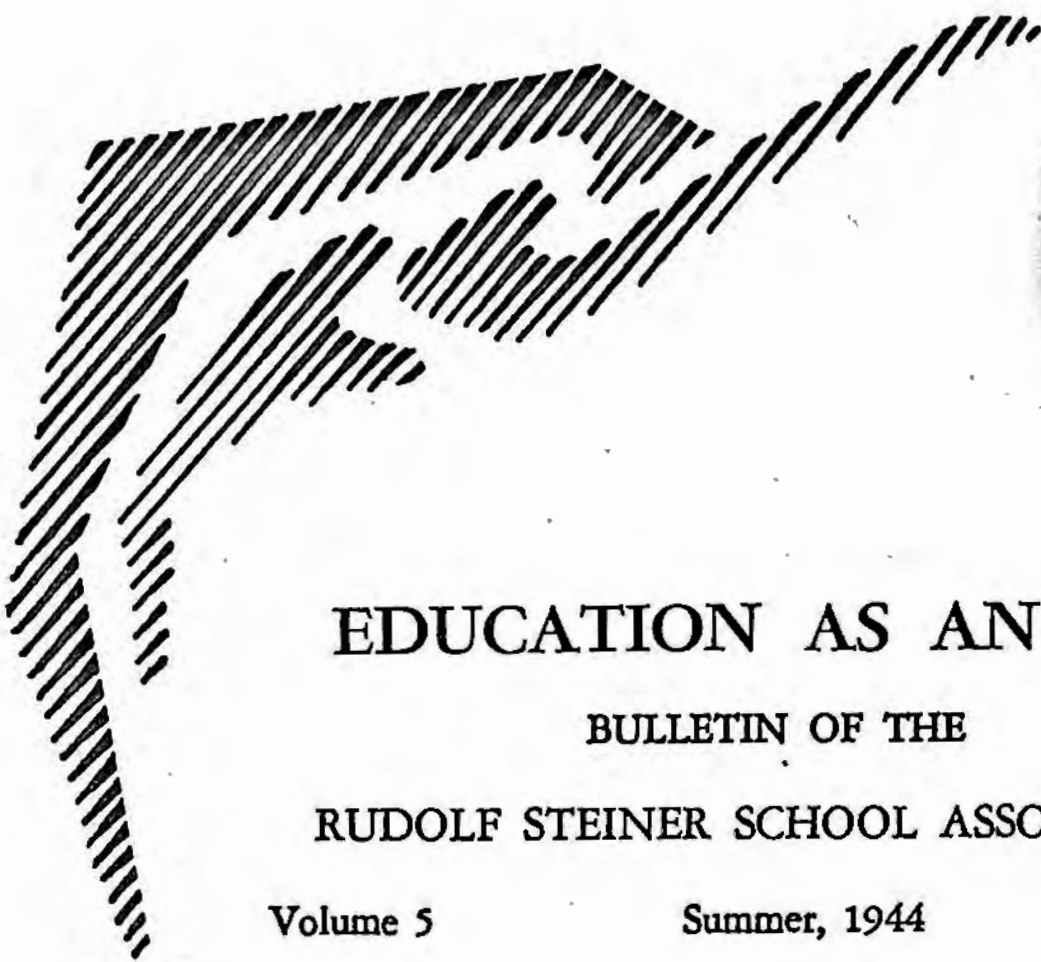




EDUCATION AS AN ART

BULLETIN OF THE

RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

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FAIRY TALES IN THE FIRST GRADE

"Tell us a story!" is the demand of the children after their first few days in school in which they have found, to their great joy, that fairy tales have a part in their lessons. Without a doubt the time they like best is the time when the teacher says, "Put your chairs in a nice round circle and get ready for a story."

At once all efforts converge to make this moment come quickly and, as soon as we are all sitting in the circle, the children settle down in a way that means, "We'd rather be here than anywhere else."

As for the teacher, this is the time when she can claim the most whole-hearted attention, and so, within the imaginations of the story, deal with the inner life of the class as in no other way. To say "whole-hearted attention" does not give an adequate description of what happens in the children as they listen to a fairy tale. They go beyond attention into a much more active state. They hardly notice the story-teller for the story. As one tells a story one sees that no matter how lively one's feeling may be for what one tells, the children are far more active in their listening than the teacher is in the telling. For instance, in the midst of a story-battle between the Prince and the seven-headed dragon, a small boy will suddenly leap out of his chair and strike the dragon's head off; or when *Hansel* says to *Grethel*, in the dark forest, "Don't cry, little sister, I will take care of you," one sees the sad tears rolling down the cheeks of a certain little girl; or again when in the story a little gnome falls down, down, down into a deep hole in the ground and lands "bump" at the bottom, another little girl turns into a gnome and suddenly falls off her chair to land on the floor in the middle of the circle, which has become for her the bottom of the hole.

And so it is that all the wonderful range of feeling that weaves in every fairy tale becomes an activity within the children. If, at first, this happens only when you are telling the stories, it gradually comes about that it begins to happen at other times as an echo of the stories, and finally it appears in the children's own imaginations to enliven them.

At the beginning of the year the children were somewhat at a loss as to what to play at recess. They played stoop-tag, they played train, some of them only knew how to play at shooting guns. All of them had little inclination to stay together in a game. It was hard for them to make up their minds what to play and then to play it all the way through. The teacher showed them how to play Nuts an' May, Red Rover, Swinging Statues. She helped them act out some of the fairy tales, but it meant that she had to hover over every character to tell each one what he should say or do. Then after Christmas there was a surprising change.

It happened most unexpectedly one rainy day when recess was indoors. The teacher looked up from some work at the desk to see the whole class standing in royal splendor on the small stage at one end of the room. Each child had draped a piece of colored cloth around him. Each child wore a paper crown, or paper wings, or carried a paper sword. There they were deep in affairs of state: Kings and Queens, Princes and Princesses, Lords and Ladies, all in order. Then with *the* Queen leading the way, they walked in stately fashion from "palace" to "garden" to "palace" again, conversing in a lofty mood.

And so it began. After that there was never any question of what to do at recess. Day after day, for the rest of the year, they made up their play themselves and roamed the park as Kings and Queens, giants and witches, messengers and gnomes. In all their eager activity one saw that through the fairy tales their imaginations had been touched and awakened in much the same way that the Prince once awakened the Sleeping Beauty.

Why do the fairy tales do this more than any other sort of story?

When a fairy tale has been told by the teacher, the children are asked to retell it the next day. A comparison was made between their memory of Grimm's fairy tales and those well-thought-out "here and now" stories which describe *real life* in a way suited to children. No matter how long the fairy tale is the children can remember its colorful pictures and its rhythmically recurring events and they can retell it almost word for word. When they have been asked to retell a story that rises from a logical thought pattern, they answer again and again, "Oh, that's a hard story, we can't remember it."

Take, for instance, a typical story of a little boy who goes to visit his grandfather on a farm. He sees the dog, the cat, the pig, the calf and all the other farm animals and they are described realistically. Then follows some sort of adventure during the course of which the little boy is kind to animals. Compare all such realistic, moralistic stories with any one of Grimm's fairy tales, and what do you find? In the fairy tales all the human qualities of courage, honesty, warmth of heart, kindness are opposed by trickery, treachery, cruelty and folly. These qualities appear as Kings and soldiers, witches and dwarves, giants and dragons. Event after event unfolds in which these beings play their part to carry the children with them through all the adventures of the realm of human moral feeling.

The story teller, parent or teacher, can develop a sense for the difference between stories which create an inner activity and those which don't. In stories which have a rhythmic repetition of events that follow one another in a pictorial and often *un*-logical way the children are enlivened. Stories which have the effect of going on and on, in which situations develop for logical purposes, in which thoughts are called upon to make sense, such stories clearly baffle the children. The rhythmic and pictorial qualities of the fairy tale rise directly from the realm of feeling. This reality of the fairy tale claims the children at an age

when feeling is their guide. In comparison, the "here and now" stories which describe the "real" world in a scientific way have the effect of keeping the children out of the story, for is it not true that the scientific view (no matter if it is in three-letter words) must be impersonal? And when you are tempted to tell a moralizing story, just remember that it will make children with healthy feeling want to run away.

The unpleasant effect of moralistic stories arises because thought is trying to take the place of feeling as a basis for moral education. The fairy tales avoid this, and in the way in which they exercise and educate children in the human moral realm they bring to the first year of school work something which must be recognized more and more as a necessary element of education. In an age when brilliance of mind has failed to create any understanding of the connection between moral feeling and knowledge, it is of great importance for the future that education should make this connection by planting in the fields of a knowledge-of-the-world the seed which is the knowledge of the human being as a moral being.

The fairy tales do this. At the heart of each fairy tale lies a kernel of wisdom about man. And this wisdom nourishes the children. They are truly hungry for it.

One can point to this as the inner content of the work of the first grade in the Rudolf Steiner School, and at the same time show how the fairy tales lend themselves to the teaching of the three R's, as well as to painting, modelling, and dramatics.

The forms of the letters of the alphabet are taught in such a way as to show how they emerge out of picture shapes. The *W* is a *Wave* in the sea where swims the Prince, enchanted as a fish. The *Butterflies* asleep in the palace gardens, while Briar Rose sleeps, give the shape of the letter *B*. The seven *Mountains*, which are travelled by the witch and the seven dwarves in the story of Snow White, become *M*'s. One sees how these imaginations of things are better teachers than the things themselves would be. Small children pay scant heed to the shapes of actual objects in comparison with the rapt attention they give to the story of the wicked witch who comes over the seven mountains to bring Snow White a poisoned apple.

In arithmetic, stories like the Seven Ravens and the Twelve Dancing Princesses, can be used to dramatize various number relationships.

In painting and in modelling with colored plasticine the fairy tales give an unlimited variety of subjects for developing artistic skills.

The teacher learns from the fairy tales too. She learns a great deal about the children through these stories; learns how closely thinking, feeling and willing are connected at this age of childhood, and how feeling, especially, plays the leading role in all the child's learning experience.

There is no reason why mothers and fathers, as well as teachers, should not make some of these discoveries for themselves by telling fairy tales to their children. It is not the same thing to read to them, for when reading the book separates you from the child. For those who have tried telling these stories, but have found it difficult to remember a story, there is a way of learning how. Read the story to yourself as often as you have to, but while reading it visualize it as you go along. See the characters, the places, the weather, the action, as pictures in your mind's eye. Then when you start to tell the story look for these pictures to guide you, and you will find that you can remember.

Dorothy Jeffery

THE BLIND BRETHREN

A Play in Five Scenes

*Written for the Children of the Sixth Grade of the Rudolf Steiner School
in New York City after a Period of Study in Minerology.*

By FREDERICK HIEBEL

Due to regrettable lack of space it is possible to print here only the last two scenes of this little play. A brief summary of the first scenes will therefore be given. Any one desiring the full text of the play should communicate with Dr. Frederick Hiebel, The Rudolf Steiner School, 15 East 79th Street, New York City.

In the first scene the young Prince takes leave of the King and Queen to go in search of the Castle of the Sun and is told by his mother the secret of his lost sister whom he must find. The Queen also gives him a ring which will protect him from all harm and tells him never to part with it.

In scene two the Prince asks Gravel, Sandstone, Lime, and Granite the way to the Castle of the Sun, but being blind none of them is able to tell him. At length he meets with the Black Spirit of Carbon who says that she will tell him if he will only give her his ring. He refuses, but is at length persuaded to lend it to her. The moment she has it, however, she mocks him and lays a spell upon him so that he becomes blind.

In scene three the King and Queen lament the long absence of their son. They call upon Quartz to tell them what has become of him. Quartz in turn asks Mica, Feldspar, Pyrite, Sulphur and at length Carbon. When the Black Spirit of Carbon appears the Queen realizes that a curse has fallen upon her son and she swoons.

SCENE FOUR

Prince: (*blind, enchanted as black coal, enters slowly and stumbles over a gnome.*)

I fall again—woe is me—oh you have hurt me!

Gnome: Hi—watch your step.

Prince: Who are you who hinder me? I hurry—

Gnome: To Hades!

Prince: Heavens, where am I?

Gnome: Certainly not at home—secure on earth.

Prince: Who speaks?

Gnome: Who asks?

Prince: Who are you?

Gnome: Not yourself.

Collect your bones—and put them on a shelf. (Exit.)

Prince: (*walks further, meets another gnome, falls again.*)

What language do you speak? Oh impish trick!

Another Gnome: The prince is lost—his mother deathly ill!

Prince: Dwarf, creature, flighty fellow, listen, stand!

Where is the way to my desired land?

Another Gnome: Closer than you might dream, deep in a mine.

The metals there will answer through their shine.

Prince: Tell me more, you grow now friendlier, gnome.

Another Gnome: You better watch your step and hurry home.

Prince: He also mocks at me—

Another Gnome: And mocks in vain. (Exit.)

Black Spirit: (*appears*) Has no umbrella in the midst of rain!

Prince: Why do you follow me, so near, so far?

Black Spirit: Try—run away from me—to another star!
(The seven metals now appear and build a semicircle behind the Prince and the Black Spirit.)

The Metals: Be silent, goblins, gnomes, ye mocking dwarves!
 The time has come for him to break the spell.

Quicksilver: I am quicksilver, the air among metals.
 I lend you my breath,
 the speed of my running,
 the gaiety.

Prince: Oh wonder, what a breath from stars in heaven!

Black Spirit: (*like an evil echo*)
 Breathe it—the air. I will poison all your lungs.

Copper: I am copper, the warmth among the metals.
 I give you my red blood,
 the fire within your veins,
 the piety.

Prince: I feel the warmth, it blesses me.

Black Spirit: I change the blessing to a curse, oh coward.

Iron: I am iron, the strength among the metals.
 I give you my will power,
 the aim of your life,
 the constancy.

Prince: This is the sword I need to kill out evil.

Black Spirit: And turn the iron spear against yourself!

Tin: I am tin, the flash among the metals.
 I give you my feeling,
 the heartbeat,
 the solemnity.

Prince: Oh I feel strength and courage growing more and more.

Black Spirit: To kill you surely with your iron weapons.

Lead: I am lead, the heaviness among the metals.
 I give you gravity
 within your bones,
 the measure.

Prince: I stand now on my own—in constancy.

Black Spirit: I scarce can catch you—stand—remain, be silent!

Silver: I am silver, the brain among the metals.
 I lend you force of thinking,
 within your eye
 the wisdom.

Prince: I understand your word, your sacred tongue.

Black Spirit: What do you say—repeat it—what—how—why?

Gold: (*in the midst of the seven metals, which build the semicircle.*)
 I am gold, the heart and the sun among metals.
 I show you the way and the life
 if you will go with me,
 for I am the truth.

Prince: I will follow you. Oh rescue me, redeem me!

Gold: Stretch out your hand and touch me.

Prince: (*touches gold.*)

Black Spirit: (*crying out*)

It hurts me—oh I cannot stand it!

This radiance, this light—quick away—away—
that no one catch me and my ring.

(*Runs away.*)

Prince: Redeem me from my curse

Gold: Bring back the ring you lost

Prince: How can I bring it back. Oh I am blinded.

My blinded eyes will never glimpse the ring.

I wrestled day and night with gnomes and demons
in vain—in vain.

Gold: You must fight for me.

Prince: How can I?

Gold: If you perceive that which I am.

Prince: Reveal your secret, Gold!

Gold: (*coming into the foreground of the stage*)

Become as strong as I, that no one break you.

Become as ductile as I am,
as malleable and insoluble.

Be genuine and true.

Stand upon your own,
unchanging in mind and colour.

Do not tarnish!

Prince: I promise you that I will strive to become as you.

Gold: You speak a holy oath.

Know, now, your mother swoons and lies
in slumber, dangerously ill.

Hurry to bring the ring in safety back to her
or she will die and all of you shall perish.

SCENE FIVE

Prince: (*guided by gold.*)

Where am I? Everything is strange about me.

I feel the misery of loneliness.

Has everyone now left me, father, mother

and all the rocks, the minerals, the metals?

You, Gold, alone still lead me on my way.

Gold: Behold the realm of crystals and of gems.

The metals are your steps which lead to heaven—
to your own home.

Silver: (*from the left*) The portal of the moon.

Quicksilver: (*from the right*) The staff of mercury. (*Gives him a staff.*)

Copper: (*from the left*) The belt of Venus. (*Gives him a belt.*)

Iron: (*from the right*) The sword of Mars. (*Gives him a sword.*)

Tin: (*from the left*) The sceptre of Jupiter. (*Gives him the sceptre.*)

Lead: (*from the right*) The shield of Saturn. (*Gives him the shield.*)

Gold: (*from the center*) The crown of the sun. (*Puts the crown on his head
and takes away the black veil from the head of the prince while the
precious stones appear about him.*)

Prince: What's happened, what strength now lives in me?

My eyes are open, oh I see again!

I see the crystals all around in heaven:

(The precious stones appear one after the other as disenchanted dwarves.)

Rockcrystal with your transparency.

Amethyst with your chastity.

Turquoise with your warmth.

Agate with your measure.

Malachite with your dignity.

Garnet with your fire.

Topas with your strength.

Zirkon with your radiance.

Emerald with your wisdom.

Sapphire with your blue faithfulness.

Ruby with your brightness.

Korundum with your hardness.

All the Twelve Precious Stones:

Behold we are the eyes of earth, the glittering windows
through which the spirits of the world can look
and wait for wonders—always growing, forming.

We twelve, we need you, the thirteenth,
harder than we, more splendid than the others
and formed and built only by yourself.

Prince: *(kneels down)* You make me humble, precious stones, indeed.

I feel not worthy that you look on me.

I am black carbon, a mere piece of dust.

Black Spirit: *(suddenly appearing)*

He kneels in humbleness, he prays in awe!

Now is the time to kill him, take his crown,

His sword and belt, his sceptre and his staff.

Prince: Kneel down with me.

Black Spirit: I shall not kneel with you.

Prince: I praise and worship you, divine Redeemer.

Black Spirit: Oh, who will rescue me?

Prince: *(looking at her)*

You ask me for redemption, you, my shadow,

my cursed companion? *(Stands up.)* Oh I see you now!

Oh likeness of myself! *(He embraces the Black Spirit.)*

I care not that you have a blackened form.

I love you

Black Spirit: Oh brother mine—you can now see.

And I am still so blind?

Prince: Sister, oh sister, blessed is this hour of disenchantment.

(All the precious stones come and encircle them both. While they speak in chorus, the black garment of the Black Spirit falls off and the white brilliant form of the Diamond appears.)

All the Precious Stones:

Oh see the wonder—carbon changes now,
transforms in crystal light. O all you stars
give radiance and light and all your colours.

The diamond, the queen of all the gems—
behold her now, pure disenchanted carbon!

Princess: (*disenchanted Black Spirit who now appears as Diamond.*)
 Here is your ring—oh faithful brother mine.
 Prince: (*gives her his crown*) And here your crown.
 (*King and Queen appear on the stage in happy reconciliation.*)
 Queen: Oh children you have now returned unto the castle of the mother sun.
 King: You rule now both together in your kingdom.
 Queen: And it shall last as sign and sacred symbol
 for all of us until the end of time.
 King and Queen: Black carbon can become a diamond.
 So can the lowest darkness grow to light.
 So can the gravity of heavy earth,
 the dark and dusty one, become a sun.
 All Stones, Metals and Crystals: (*together*)
 Clear as a crystal transparent and white
 Shines God's wisdom from eternal height.

Dear Readers,

Having taken the momentous step of buying a new building for our school, we want to tell you our reasons for doing so and also to describe the building to you.

Because the owner wished to sell the building at 49 East 91st Street we were forced to make a change. The building was too small in any case; therefore we looked to see what we could rent. We found that the rental price of any building that complied with the fire laws for a school was prohibitive. And the cost of fire-proofing a building, as the tenant would have to do, made it more practical to buy a fire-proof building. After deep consideration we decided upon 15 East 79th Street. This is on a cross town bus-line and is also accessible for students coming from up town or down town. It is near Central Park where our children go for recess. The building itself has dignity and charm. It has large rooms for Kindergarten, Eurythmy, and assemblies. Besides this there is a room for a shop and a dining room, both of which we missed sorely at 49 East 91st Street. Behind the building is a small yard for the Kindergarten children. There is ample class room space and the whole building has a spacious air. I wish all of you might see it.

We are so happy to have found such a suitable building in which the school can grow and where Dr. Steiner's pedagogical work may find a worthy background. With such a setting we look to the future with confidence.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Holliday Mitchell

Membership in the Rudolf Steiner School Association, including the quarterly Bulletin, is \$2.00 per year. Single copies of the Bulletin, 15c each; for more than 10 copies 10c each, postpaid.

Address Secretary Rudolf Steiner School Association, 15 East 79th Street, New York.

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