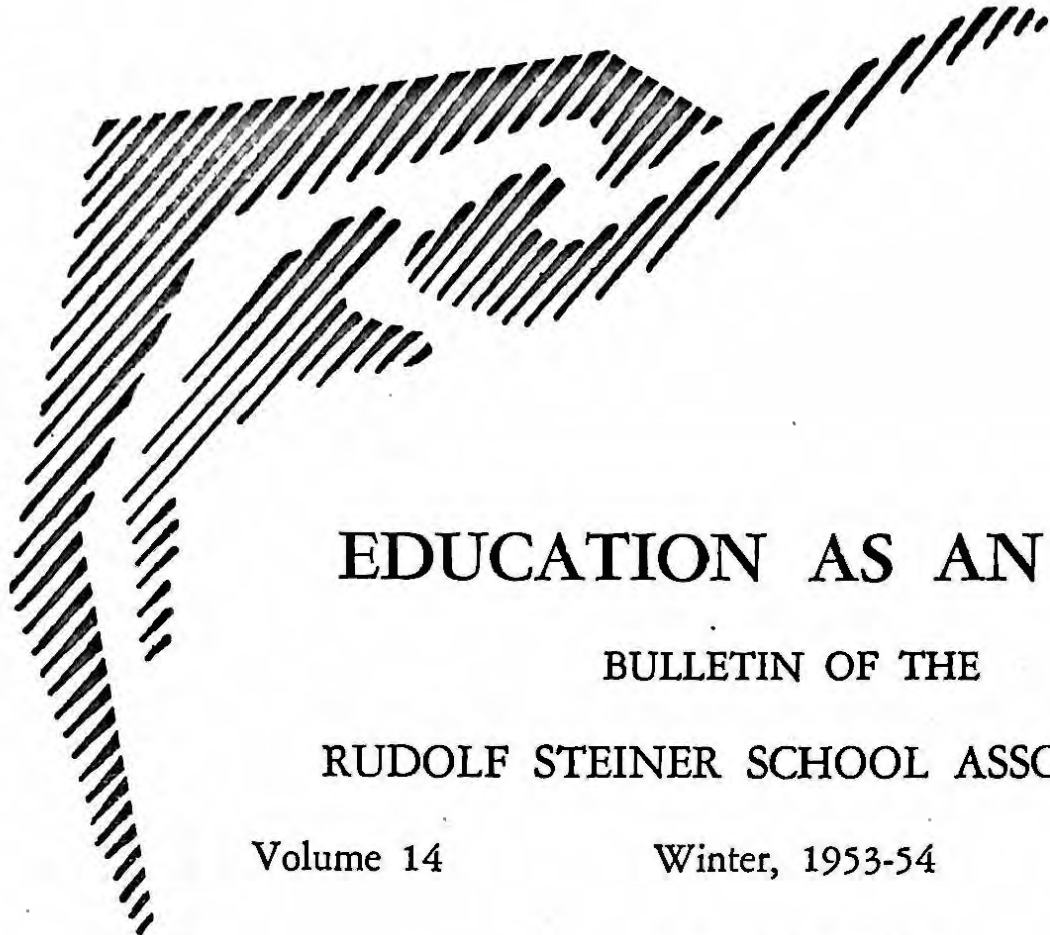




EDUCATION AS AN ART

BULLETIN OF THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

Volume 14

Winter, 1953-54

Number 4

CONTENTS

- The Waldorf School — Albert Steffen*
Ballet and Eurythmy — Kari Van Oordt
Benefit and Fair — Helen Simon
The Snowflake — Dorothy Harrer
Poems for Children — Henry Barnes



*I can see when I look upwards
Deep into the sun's bright orb
The world's great glowing heart.
I can feel when I look inwards
Deep into the heart's warm beat
The soul-bright human sun.*

—Rudolf Steiner*

THE WALDORF SCHOOL

Of all his creations Rudolf Steiner certainly loved the Waldorf School the best, because the future lies with the children. He once said that he thought about each child in it every day. The children feel this and love him for it. They already feel the reverence for him which future generations will pay.

When Dr. Steiner was asked by Emil Molt, the director of the Waldorf Astoria Cigarette Factory, to found a school for the children of his employees and staff, the circumstances were most unfavorable. Stuttgart being a fair-

* Translated by Arvia MacKaye Ege.

sized industrial town, the formation of a country school was out of the question, nor was it known with what kind of pupil they would have to deal. They were not in possession of any suitable site and, above all, there were no experienced teachers to take over the work. Rudolf Steiner could count on one thing only—the spirit. But this he had tested throughout his whole life.

He had had more opportunity than any man of getting to know children of all kinds, in his youth as a tutor, later as a lecturer in a working-class college, and lastly as leader of the anthroposophical movement, in which position hundreds of parents consulted him about their children.

Anyone who is familiar with Rudolf Steiner's writings and lectures on educational questions must have realized that he is the greatest educational reformer since Pestalozzi.

In an article on "Steiner and Education," Michael Bauer gives the following instance of his work as a tutor:—"Along with three normal boys he had to educate a fourth who was mentally so backward that although he was eleven years old he had no knowledge of school subjects. He had been lately suspected of telling lies and when Steiner took him over he had been some weeks in a mood of morbid obstinacy, refusing to speak a single word. Steiner succeeded not only in awakening the child, but in bringing him on so well that in a few years he had made up all the ground lost." Bauer adds: "From this remarkable result we can see that Steiner must be reckoned as one of the few born educators. This would be interesting in itself but not necessarily of importance to educational theory. It is quite another matter to give to others the guidance necessary to turn them from keepers of schools into real educators."

This, however, is what Dr. Steiner has accomplished with the Waldorf School teachers. When he chose them he did not so much pay attention to the amount of their knowledge as to whether they possessed a real love for children. He sought for those who had for a long time cherished in their hearts the chief qualification for a teacher, the desire to educate themselves. In the long course of lectures which he gave to them he imparted a method rather than a programme. He taught them first and foremost to understand the different epochs of a child's life, and out of this knowledge to give their lessons to their pupils in such a manner that the growth of their bodies and souls should be helped and not hindered.

What struck me particularly when I heard some of the lessons of these teachers was the creative manner in which they dealt with their subject. Since each is left to himself he can be entirely free in his teaching. Indeed, one gained an idea how fruitful both for teacher and pupils the life of the spirit can be when unfettered by bureaucratic state regulations.

The first condition of all instruction is that the teacher should approach the class in a sympathetic frame of mind. If he arouses antipathy the inner harmony of the class will be destroyed, no matter how excellent his method. In fact, it is almost worse for the children's nerves when a hated or feared teacher is precise than when he is desultory in his teaching. It is a maxim with the Waldorf teacher to go on striving to make himself worthy of love.

*Selected from Albert Steffen's Introduction to
Lectures to Teachers by Rudolf Steiner.*

BALLET AND EURYTHMY

"Oh, Mother!" little Nancy came skipping in, embraced me in excitement and told me joyfully that she had seen trees which danced the most beautiful ballet. "Come with me tomorrow and let me show you."

We started off the next day. Uncle Ted took us in his car and the neighbor's children came along with us. We went to that big, beautiful park where everything is so well cared for that each little grass blade seems in its right place. The park is known as one of the most carefully tended and well kept in the whole country. And really, there they were: the lawns as straight and even as the carpet in the living room, the flowerbeds symetrically formed and the colors arranged in a lovely pattern of artistic design, or like letters in words or whole sentences. All the flowers were straight and regular in height. We were quite enchanted by its beauty and orderliness.

The trees stood evenly spaced in straight lines, in rows, or in circles and semicircles, or in symmetrical groups and all the trees in the different groups were clipped into the same shape; some like round balls, some in triangles and squares, others in a combination of the two: a ball on top of a triangle. There were other combinations but always the same shape throughout each group.

It was among these trees that Nancy became so excited and called out: "Do you see the ballet! See how they dance!" The other children looked and looked. They could not quite understand what she meant. Nancy was learning to dance ballet herself, therefore she could see it. She recognized herself in line with the other children, dressed in the same dresses and all in the same poses, ready to start the next motion together, all at the same time in the same way.

Richard had run around by another path. He had found the gardener and now they both came towards us. We could hear Richard's childish voice asking with great importance, "What kind of trees are those growing so straight and in such geometrical regularity?"

The gardener smiled at him and said in a very friendly way: "Those are different kinds of trees, my boy. They have been taken while they were small and cut into shape. Afterwards, they were tended and cut to prevent the branches from growing where they were not wanted. In that way you can get them to develop dense short branches in one part and thin long ones in another. You can do that with almost any kind of tree or bush. It is the same with them as it is with children." He looked meaningfully at me. "You can make them develop into whatever shape you want if you only cut the right branches."

With these words, he left us and Richard turned again to Nancy: "Where are the trees that dance ballet?"

"Here they are! Everywhere! Can't you see?"

"But how can they dance ballet when they have no arms? All the branches are cut off to the same length and not even the wind can play with

them and make them move. They all stand there as stiff and frozen as artificial store trees!"

"But can't you see they are standing in poses all together, exactly the same! That's the wonderful part about it! The next moment they will start to move. Wait and see, isn't it beautiful?" But Richard didn't see anything but stiff trees. He didn't want to see, that was the trouble, and they were all disgusted with him and didn't enjoy the sight of these beautiful trees quite so much afterwards.

Uncle Ted had not shown much enthusiasm during the whole walk through the park, but now he seemed to be interested and said in his quiet manner: "I think Richard is right. These trees cannot move naturally when their branches have been cut off and all the different kinds clipped into the same shape."

Didn't he understand that it was done for purposes of beauty? Couldn't he see how lovely it was just the fact that they *had* the same shape, size and color, and how wonderful it was that one could make them stay that way?

"Doesn't it look pretty at least?" I asked, "and isn't that the most important thing?"

"Yes," Uncle Ted had to admit that it looked very pretty. "But," he said, "I'm of the opinion that for trees as well as for people it is more important that each should grow naturally and freely in its own way and develop its own special qualities. There is individuality in trees as well as in children," he said, "and if you will come with me, I will show you *my* favorite park where the trees are doing eurythmy." Uncle Ted had often tried to explain to me what eurythmy was, but I could never understand it. If he could now really show it to me, even if only in the form of a park, I would be very glad to see it.

The first thing we saw when we came to that other park was a big pine tree, stretching out its strong branches and letting them sway in the wind. Little Tom was now full of joy. "Listen! Do you hear how the wind talks with the pine tree?"

The children ran from tree to tree and heard the wind sweeping through all the various kinds of trees. How different was the response of the rustling little aspen tree from that of the murmuring fir tree or the sighing cedar. The poplar again had another tone from the maple and the oak. Each tree sang with its own voice and together they sounded like a whole orchestra playing in delightful harmony.

The gardener, attracted by the happy voices of the children, had joined us and he now told little stories about the trees and said: "Of course, they must have different voices and different songs and movements as different as they are in themselves. Each tree has its own shape, its trunk and branches are different from every other tree! See how they move!"

The wind went softly through, the branches swayed according to their shapes and the treetops bent forward and backward, some more, some less. How graceful they were, and what harmony in their movements in spite of their differences!

Tiny Evelyn stretched upon tip-toe and whispered to the gardener: "Is that eurythmy?"

The gardener smiled: "I don't know what one would call it in Greek, but there certainly is a beautiful rhythm in these living beings here, if that is what you mean." He told us how the branches grow rhythmically from the trunk in harmony with one another and in a different way in each tree. Richard thought of the park with the clipped trees and he now wondered whether these trees also had to be cut in order to grow so beautifully and naturally.

"Yes," said the gardener, "we have to cut away the dry branches and the things which disturb the tree in its own growth. I will show you there in that corner what would happen if we didn't do that." He took us to the edge of the park, and there, outside the fence, in an old deserted garden, was a rosebush without any roses on it. It was overgrown in all directions with wild shoots so thick that they had strangled the growth of the cultivated part of it with their healthy boldness. It reminded me suddenly of the Smith's Nelly who has been allowed to do whatever she liked and is now so wild and obstinate that her parents are helpless with her. This overgrown rosebush was to me an exact image of Nelly.

"You see," said the gardener, "the plant itself cannot even breathe under this jungle of wild shoots, and far less bring roses to blossom. It is the same with the trees as it is with children." He also looked meaningfully at me. "You can help them develop into the shape which is their own, if you cut away the futile shoots and lead them in the right direction."

We said good-bye to the gardener and walked slowly along, passing the flowers growing freely all over the lawns which were neatly kept without any withered leaf, dry stalks or untidiness. The wind played with the flowers and the beautiful soft grass, and the children rejoiced, "Look, the flowers do eurythmy too!"

That night I had much to think about in connection with the two parks and what the two gardeners had said. I asked myself many a time whether it was really so important for Nancy to look pretty and posed and to grow into a standard formality, or whether it wouldn't be better if I could help her to develop into her own shape, her own individuality.

Next morning I decided to send her to a eurythmy course and leave out the ballet for a while.

Kari Van Oordt

SCHOOL BENEFIT AND FAIR

From the time early in the summer when our theatre benefit committee planned a benefit performance of *Escapade*, to the end of December when the Christmas Fair committee met to make a final tally of fair receipts, the Rudolf Steiner School has been in a ferment of activity as these groups of diligent workers sought to raise as much as possible for our scholarship fund.

Our first venture, the theatre benefit, was a great success, netting us the handsome profit of \$3,750, as well as a great deal of valuable publicity. The occasion was a memorable "First" for the school, attended by an impressive audience—all well wishers of the school. Our thanks go to Mrs. Antoinette Johnson and Mrs. Alfred de Liagre, Jr., co-chairmen, as well as to the many sponsors, parents and friends who supported this undertaking.

On the heels of the benefit, came our annual Christmas Fair. Under the chairmanship of Mrs. Bert Clarke, the Fair proved to be a visual delight, well organized and planned. Outstanding at the Fair was the quality of the merchandise for sale, much of it hand made and contributed by many members of the Rudolf Steiner Association, parents of the school and their friends. An innovation this year was the Steiner Little Theatre and the converting of our third floor into a Paris street scene, with a French cafe, accordionist, fortune teller, quick sketch artist, and a flea market where used clothing and white elephant merchandise was sold.

Although we had no raffle or journal in connection with the fair, we still were able to raise the amount of \$2300.00, a real accomplishment and one for which we are extremely grateful to Mrs. Clarke and her committee.

So far, these combined efforts have netted the scholarship fund about \$6000.00. To all of you who have helped us achieve this result, we extend our sincere thanks.

*Helen Simon,
President of the P. T. A.*

THE SNOW FLAKE*

A clear, glistening Little Drop of Water was rushing and playing and racing down the hill with all his brothers to the sea. A great wave rose and caught them all and threw them into the air so fast that they all shouted and laughed with joy. High in the air the Little Drop of Water hung for a moment, but didn't have time to fall back into the sea, for three bright sun-fairies fanned him with their wings, and up—up—up he rose, so far and so high that he was soon in the sky, way above the highest mountain. It was cold up there, so cold that the Little Drop of Water froze. He couldn't run and spill anymore! He tried to—go down, up, forward, backward, right and left, and each time he moved in each direction he froze in that direction until he was like a tiny six-pointed star.

All around him his many brothers likewise had become six-pointed stars, just like him, and yet *not* like him, for every single one was formed in a different pattern, and they all admired each other so much that they couldn't decide which one was the most beautiful. And what's more, they could float in the

* A nature story for a second grade, adapted from *Snow* by Marcia Dodwell in the *Christian Community Bulletin*, November-December 1952.

air like feathers. Here and there—wherever the Wind blew them—they floated. They let the Wind carry them a long way, until he bumped into the Big Old Mountain who always refused to get out of the way. If the Wind wanted to get by him, he had to blow either around him or over him. Nor did the Mountain ever say, "Excuse me!" With a shriek and a whistle the Wind blew up one side and down the other, and in passing left all the beautiful six-pointed snowflakes on the mountain top. The Mountain suddenly looked like an old, old giant with very white hair, for piles and piles of snowflakes covered his head.

There they lay and rested for many days, but at last they wished they could be on their way. They all knew that they didn't want to stay there forever. Sure enough, the Sun rose very much earlier one morning and said, "The days are going to be longer now for a while, and my child, the Earth, is going to be warmed and comforted."

As the Sun's light fell all over the snowflakes, they suddenly slipped down from the mountain top. They began to run and roll and, sure enough, they had turned into drops of water again. All together they poured down the Mountain in a pure, sweet stream of water, laughing and gurgling with joy and gladness. Those who could listen heard the voice of the water singing "Gloria, gloria . . ."

Now, what do you suppose the Little Drop of Water, who had been a Snowflake, did next? He slipped under ground until he was out of sight. There, under the earth, an old, old gnome picked him up and carried him to a little Seedling who was thirsty.

"Drink," said the old gnome. "This pure, clear drop of water will help you to grow."

"I will carry him up to the beautiful Sun," answered the Little Wheat Sprout.

So the Little Drop of Water entered into the plant and slowly, slowly rose up in her as she grew taller and taller, until at last he entered into a tiny grain of the wheat that formed at the end of the stalk—up in the sunshine, above the ground. He felt very proud and noble, because the plant had wrapped him round with a beautiful, green jacket, and as the Sun shone down on him the green turned to a glorious gold, the very color of the Sun himself.

One day the harvesters came to harvest the wheat. All the wheat in the field was filled with joy that now the time had come for it to be made into bread which would bring life and strength to human beings. In each grain of wheat, bearing the pureness and goodness of Heaven from which they came, many little drops of water lay waiting to enter into the bread.

... and there ... grains were

POEMS FOR CHILDREN

These verses were written by a class teacher for individual children in his class. They were given to each child in the class on his or her birthday and were later learned by heart and were spoken from time to time for the class as part of the opening exercises in the main lesson. In each case the teacher tried to express, in a poetic, and objective form, something which he felt to be an essential element in the child's nature. In some cases the object was to strengthen the child in his self-confidence, in others, to bring form and clarity where there was a tendency to vagueness and confusion; in others, to bring to consciousness an attitude which needed to be overcome or transformed. In every poem, the quality of reverence for the divine in human beings and in nature was expressed and the child's inner will force was called upon to strive toward what was highest in his own nature.

*A true word
Is a bird
That flies from my heart to God.*

*A true friend
Can mend
A broken heart.*

*I will be true
In all I do.*

*God's heart is as wide
As the whole wide world
And in His warm life*

*My heart is unfurled.
Secure in His love
No harm can come near
For there is the strength
Which overcomes fear.*

*Above my head there shines a star
Whose secret calls me from afar.
Within my heart there sounds a voice
Whose speech makes heaven and earth rejoice.
The word that sounds from heart to star
Is the word that tells what true men are.*

Henry Barnes