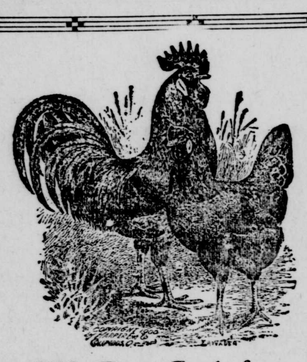

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OUR CHILDREN AND THE LAND OF "MAKE BELIEVE"

By Elizabeth A. Perkins

When you weere a little girl did you lie on the floor of the hall, by the front door, while your mother was working in the room behind, and watch the clouds, and see great castles, and kings and queens, and little children floating about in the air?

When you were a little girl, did you sit on the steps at twilight beside father and mother, and look over towards the little grove just a few rods away, and see Indians coming out, marching close together, and carrying dreadful tomahawks?

When you were a little girl, after you had ben taken for an outing at the seashore, did you, for days and days, with dolly in your arms, walk up and mother's sitting room, picking up the pebbles, (buttons from mother's button box) and wade and wade and wade in the water?

Didn't you find this land of "Make Believe" a wonderful place? And now your children are "making believe" and passing through this same wonderful land.

It is difficult to tell just how early in life children begin to wander through this beautiful land although psychologists have studied this problem, and mothers have watched their little ones trying to discover it exactly; some writers tell us they have known two year old babies make believe to be kittens and dogs and horses; but though we are not sure of the exact time, we know it is very early in life.

Kirkpatrick in his Fundamentals of Child Study says, of the development of the power to image "True images are formed only when an object not present is represented; as when a child recognizes that some person or object is not in its usual place. Language is probably an important factor in developing such images; the sound of the word "dog" being closely associated with the animal, calls up a visual image of him just as his barking does.

After a child has gained the power of forming mental images, he takes much the same pleasure in forming them, that he showed a little earlier in getting sensations of all kinds. His first interest in stories is largely the pleasure in forming mental pictures of all the familiar objects and acts named.

By the short time the child is three or four years old the parts of short stories are connected so as to give a pretty good understanding of the story as a whole. This means that the mental grasp and power of constructive imagination is developed so that he can combine mentally several acts and images, according to verbal directions. Soon the child recognizes his powers and begins to combine mental images according to his own ideas.

Then the child begins to make his own stories, and he likes them even better than those which are told him. They are disconnected, crude, but even marvellous indeed, and in a small undefined way suggest the thought of the child as he views the world about him.

Fascinating indeed to both child and mother are the years between three and slx, when the fairy stories and myths and legends are told. Fairy stories are adapted as is nothing else to the individuality of the child, and to the cultivation of imagination, of his conception of right and wrong, of deals of virtues, and of true conduct in his simple every day life.

By means of fairy tales, myths and legends, our ancestors gave to their children qualities of courage, strength, kndness, truthfulness; all these, so woven into the stories, that the children wished to emulate the heroes and heroines.

Felix Adler writes "Fairy tales exercise and cultivate the imagination, and the imagination is a most powerful auxilliary to the development of the mind and will.

Early in the third year, the child will begin to enjoy " dressing up" and acting out the fairy and other stories told him, and the dramatic instinct stronger and stronger grows. All life is to the child, a drama, and every bit of drama real life.

Just as much earnestness is used by the child in making the mud into a pie, as by the mother in the kitcheen who is making the real pie. To the boy a stick may be anything or everything; it is a wild jumping horse; it is the automobile which goes chug-chug; it is the sword with which to face the roaring lion.

Who is walking beside the child in this land of "Make Believe" during these early years? The mother is the happy companion and guide. She tells the fairy stories; she listens to the wonderful stories "made up" by the little son and daughter; she happily watches while they use the living room and dining room for the houses and caves for fairies and roaring animals.

One summer, long ago, a dear little girl who had been told in springtime, "whenever you find a dandelion blossom turned white you will know that your mother wants you", ran into the house day after day, with the white blossom, crying, "What do you want mother?" Instantly the mother would answer" Yes, mother wants her little girl to. . . . . " Not once did the mother fail. The child knew it was a little game of make-believe, but to the little girl, in college now, it is a beautiful memory, and it is a very precious one to the mother.

Goethe n his Memories, speaks of his early years,

"From my father I have my stature,
My earnest aim in living,
From little mother, my joyous nature
My love of story weaving."

Continuing he tells of the story hours and the play hours. "Sometimes I was a prince and sometimes a peasant. Now I was rewarded for being a bountiful and considerate king, then punished according to the deserts of a wicked and revengeful giant; and always as I played these parts I was learning the unchangeable laws of life."

As the child grows older, the day school-teacher, the Sunday School teacher, the Group leader become the companions with the mother, of the child in the land of "Make Believe" for teachers and leaders are recognizing the great power and value in dramatization, and that this great creative element and instinct in children may be put to great constructive use.

Children dramatize spontaneously and after they have heard an interesting story, will eagerly and joyously act it out. Do not consider it time just given to play, but know that it is a real mental and social development. Every child likes to be a hero, and in acting the hero, he must show himself a model of that kind. The moral nature of the child is largely determined by the persons he places high in his land of "Make Believe."

As a group of children come together to dramatize their life stories; recitation of life stories thrill the child and the hearers; wonderful Bible stories may be dramatized, raising the children's spiritual experiences and aspirations and making the Book a lamp unto their feet.

Alice Heniger in her book "The Kingdom of the Child" gives this beautiful program to be given on the occasion of Lincoln's birthday, asked my help with an immigrant boy of fifteen who had been chosen to recite Lincoln's address at the dedication of the cemetery on the battlefield of Gettysburg.

The teacher said to me when she consigned the child to my care, "It is very hard for him to give expression to the words because, you see, he has had so little time at school that he knows very little about the rules of grammar. I doubt whether he knows an adverb from a noun." I did not tell her that I was in no way troubled by his lack of knowledge in this direction; but after talking with the boy for ten minutes I found that he knew practically nothing about the character of Lincoln or the effect of his personality upon his time, although he could tell the dates of Lincoln's birth and death, and all dates of the important battles of the Civil War.

He recited Lincoln's epoch-making speech in exactly the same way he recited these dates, and he knew every word of the speech "by heart." Our first lesson together was spent in recounting anecdotes of Lincoln's boyhood in which I found the Russian lad greatly interested, and before our second meeting he had voluntarily secured a book on the "Life of Lincoln" from the public library, so that as early as our second lesson we were prepared to look for his having uttered them. Gradually as the reason of the words became clear the boy was seized with a new ide; his eyes glowed, his shoulders became erect, and his head was thrown backwith determined action as he said, "I'll take off for Lincoln, and say the spech like as if I was him." "That's just right," said I, "Begin."

No written description that meager print affords can place before the mind any adequate idea of the passionate patriotic fire with which that immigrant lad delivered the oration on the appointed occasion. After his dramatic instinct had given his imagination the clue of actually becoming, for the time, the hero whose thought he was to expound, there was little left for me to do, except for suggestions here and there.

I can see him now as he first came to me, a rather stooping, round shouldered lad with his worn coat buttoned tightly across his chest. As he began to swell with pride in his seif-suggested characterization of Lincoln, two insecure buttons burst their holding on his coat front and flew across the room. Then, with a splendid, natural gesture, indicative of impatience at all hampering physical restraint he grandly unfastened the third and last button as he reverently uttered the phrase, "Government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

I watched the effect of the boy's characterization upon seven hundred men and women in the auditorium, mostly parents of the children, and I saw that they were profoundly touched by the expression of intense feeling which colored the words with purpose and meaning. The simplicity and nobility of the immigrant boy's rendition brought tears to many eyes. That boy did not need the "words and grammar" of literature, he wanted the life of the author's revelation; and in this he is no different from any other child, for every child inherits this divine kingdom of imagination, and every child wants thoughts instead of words."

Mid-western Folks Lose Lives in Sea Plane

Mr. August Bulte

Mr Lawrence Smith

Robert Moore, pilot

A determination to live up to the letter of his responsibility in caring for his passengers is the reason seaplane-pilot Robert Moore lives to tell of a thrilling 56-hour struggle in the gulf stream off the Florida coast, in which five pleasure seekers from mid-western states lost their lives.

Mr. and Mrs. August Bulte, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Smith of Kansas City, and Mrs. J. S. Dickson of Memphis were those lost after a heroic effort against waves, storm and exposure.

They were passengers on the seaplane "Miss Miami" which made 40-minute trips between Miami, Fla., and Bimini, West India Island. When within three minutes of their destination on Wednesday, a propeller blade broke, forcing the seaplane down.

The craft landed within a mile of a fishing boat, but, caught in the gulf stream, it was carried north, signals for help being unheeded. One of the seaplane's pontoons sprang a leak, and in the heavy sea the plane was overturned. The passengers were thrown into the sea. Moore succeeded in getting Mr. and Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Bulte back on top the wreckage, but Mrs. Dickson and Mr. Bulte were lost.

Then started the battle against wave and a storm which came in the night. The two women died from exposure. Smith died on Thursday, Moore was found Friday by a passing fishing boat, strapped to the wreckage, and unconscious.

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Statement of the Ownership, Management, Circulation, etc., Required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912,

of The American Union published weekly at Denton, Md., for April 1, 1922.

State of Maryland, ss.:
County of Caroline

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared G. H. Rue, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Editor and Publisher of The American Union and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the name and address of the publisher, editor, managing editor and business manager is:
G. H. Rue, Denton, Md.

2. That the owner is: G. H. Rue, Denton, Md.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are:
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4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as stated by him.

G. H. RUE,

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 31st day of March, 1922.

WILLIAM S. CROUSE,
Notary Public

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