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The Dramatization of Bible Stories

ELIZABETH ERWIN MILLER

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THE DRAMATIZATION OF BIBLE STORIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

THE BAKER & TAYLOR COMPANY
NEW YORK

THE J. K. GILL COMPANY
PORTLAND, OREGON

THE CUNNINGHAM, CURTISS & WELCH COMPANY
LOS ANGELES

THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

THE MARUZEN-KABUSHIKI-KAISHA
TOKYO, OSAKA, KYOTO, FUKUOKA, SENDAI

THE MISSION BOOK COMPANY
SHANGHAI

A SHEPHERD

THE DRAMATIZATION OF BIBLE STORIES

AN EXPERIMENT IN THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

By

ELIZABETH ERWIN MILLER

The School of Education
University of Chicago

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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Published April 1918

APR -6 1918

Composed and Printed By
The University of Chicago Press
Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.

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no 1

TO MY LITTLE FRIENDS, THE CHILDREN IN THE
DRAMATIC CLUB OF THE HYDE PARK CHURCH OF DISCIPLES,
THIS BOOK IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED

GENERAL PREFACE

The progress in religious education in the last few years has been highly encouraging. The subject has attained something of a status as a scientific study, and significant investigative and experimental work has been done. More than that, trained men and women in increasing numbers have been devoting themselves to the endeavor to work out in churches and Sunday schools the practical problems of organization and method.

It would seem that the time has come to present to the large body of workers in the field of religious education some of the results of the studies and practice of those who have attained a measure of educational success. With this end in view the present series of books on "Principles and Methods of Religious Education" has been undertaken.

It is intended that these books, while thoroughly scientific in character, shall be at the same time popular in presentation, so that they may be available to Sunday-school and church workers everywhere. The endeavor is definitely made to take into account the small school with meager equipment, as well as to hold before the larger schools the ideals of equipment and training.

The series is planned to meet as far as possible all the problems that arise in the conduct of the educational work of the church. While the Sunday school, therefore, is considered as the basal organization for this purpose, the wider educational work of the pastor himself and that of the various other church organizations receive due consideration as parts of a unified system of education in morals and religion.

THE EDITORS

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INTRODUCTION

By Edward Scribner Ames

This book is its own best commendation, for it is a most convincing record of an important experiment in education. It is the more interesting because it is a real contribution to educational method from the field of religious education, which too often only appropriates and imitates what has been achieved elsewhere.

This experiment is founded upon the powerful dramatic impulse of children and upon the educative value of the natural expression of that impulse under the mutual self-criticism of the participating group. The function of the leader has been that of an unobtrusive member of the group contributing such suggestions from a wider experience and deeper insight as would naturally elicit and guide that criticism. That this fine art of teaching has been realized with unusual skill in this experiment will be apparent to the discerning readers of this record, as it has been by those who have watched the progress of the work itself.

Too much emphasis cannot be given to the fact that the primary aim of this use of dramatization is the education of the children and not the

entertainment of spectators, although, when such dramatization is rightly estimated, nothing could be more genuinely entertaining. Those who are expecting to find here ready-made plays for children, with directions for staging them, will be properly disappointed, while those who are seeking illustrations of vital methods of education through the cultivation and use of the dramatic impulse will be amply rewarded.

The latter will appreciate the frank portrayal of the early and cruder efforts of the children and their own critical reactions due to further reflection and experimentation. These will understand something of the ability and patience that Miss Miller has employed in allowing the native impulse to develop naturally and to mature through the reactions of the children themselves. They will realize that the little people actually formulated the scenes and the lines of the dramas even if it required many weeks in some cases to do so; that it is better for the actors to make their own costumes and stage properties, however simple they may be; that it is more educative for each child to be familiar with all of the parts, and thus with the drama as a whole, than to be coached ever so cleverly to impersonate a single character; and that facility and power in dramatization are thus attained which are permanent sources of pleasure and understanding.

It need scarcely be added that the biblical stories are exceptionally well suited to such use and that when so employed they yield their profound religious quality directly in deep and lasting impressions. The children who have been so fortunate as to belong to this dramatic club not only "know" these stories, but they have lived them in an intimate and durable experience.

CHAPTER I

EDUCATIONAL AIMS IN DRAMATIZATION

Dramatization is not commonly recognized as a means of vitalizing the religious education of children. The public school has found it to be one of the most effective methods for enriching the pupil's ideas of given units of subject-matter and for leading to the establishment of permanent interests and of habitual modes of action.

The use of dramatization in the school in order to accomplish these ends finds its justification in certain fundamental principles of teaching. Subject-matter is so presented that the important ideas stand out clearly. These ideas are mastered by utilizing them in some form of activity which leads to self-expression on the part of the children. Judgments are formed and conclusions are reached when children enter actively into a situation which presents a problem; ideas become their own through experience. Through dramatization children give expression to these ideas in the light of their own interpretation. The formulation of standards, the placing of values, and the realization of truths and ideals follow as direct results of actively entering into the life-experience of others.

From a psychological point of view ideas and ideals, whether religious or secular, are developed according to the same general laws. Furthermore, the principles of teaching which are effective in the daily classroom must be equally significant in religious training. It follows, therefore, that dramatization and other forms of self-expression are as valuable in attaining the aims of the Sunday school as they are in teaching the curriculum of the day school. Through dramatizing a Bible story children come into a comprehension of the life-experiences of a highly religious people; they are forming their own standards and ideals through meeting and solving the simple life-problems of the Hebrews. Each child has as great an opportunity for self-expression through dramatizing a Bible story as that afforded through dramatizing any other story. He not only develops his individuality, but through this kind of work he must necessarily come into the realization of his place within the group, as is the case in all well-directed dramatization.

The period is rapidly passing in which dramatics is looked upon by church members as being sinful and not in any way to be connected with the church. This view is a relic of a conception of religion in which all forms of freedom and pleasure were considered evil. People interested in religious education are now realizing that dramatization

is not an activity foreign to children, but that it is an outgrowth of the play interest which is natural to all children. They are aware of the fact that dramatization becomes evident in the earliest stages of childhood through the desire of children to imitate in play the surrounding social activities. Many churches have already made use of these natural tendencies by incorporating organized play as one of their activities. Since dramatization is but a specialized form of organized play, and inasmuch as it can be used very effectively in vitalizing the religious training which all children should receive, it deserves a wider recognition and adoption.

This book contains a description of a children's dramatic club which has been conducted as a part of the work of the Sunday school of the Hyde Park Church of Disciples, Chicago, Illinois, for the purpose of accomplishing the ends stated above. Before this dramatic club was organized a small amount of dramatization was attempted in certain of the classes during the Sunday-school period. The enthusiastic response from the children to this new phase of the work revealed the need for more of this kind of activity, and as a consequence it was decided to devote one hour each Sunday afternoon to the dramatization of Bible stories. The membership of the club included children ranging from six to fourteen years of age. The

average attendance has been from twenty to thirty children each Sunday throughout these four years of the club's existence.

This organization was attempted more or less as an experiment with the hope that definite results could be accomplished. The practical problems which have arisen, the details of method of procedure, and the results which have been secured will be discussed in the following chapters.

Several of the stories are given in the dramatic form which the children have worked out. This is done for the sake of showing what kind of a result may be secured. It is hoped that these plays, as they are written here, will not be given to children to learn and act; such a procedure would be entirely contrary to the spirit and purpose in which this experiment is set forth.

CHAPTER II

THE METHOD OF DRAMATIZATION

Two very different aims are revealed in the present-day employment of dramatization. Children are often required to give a dramatic production at some entertainment or social event. For this purpose a story is selected which has already been put into dramatic form. The parts are assigned by the leader, and the children are asked to memorize these parts in exact form and order. The children are then trained to give their parts according to directions. Throughout the preparation of the play the finished production is the goal of endeavor. In such instances as this the children are a means to an end, and their own training and development are usually sacrificed in the leader's attempt to secure a highly finished product.

In contrast to the case just mentioned, dramatization is looked upon as an important educational factor in the development of children. From this point of view dramatization is utilized in developing on the part of the child intense and permanent interests in the words and deeds of noble characters, in developing power of natural

expression in them as individuals and as members of a group, and in raising standards of action to higher levels by giving forceful expression to worthy ideals. These aims are realized through the use of informal methods which give the children abundant opportunity for initiative and choice. The children themselves prepare their dramatization under the guidance of a leader who has a vision of the results which may be secured and who is skilful in directing the activities toward these ends.

The little dramatic club herein described adopted at the outset the point of view outlined in the preceding paragraph. Its organization was based on the belief that the development of boys and girls is a much more vital consideration than the development of a dramatic production. Throughout its history the chief purpose of the club has been to promote the growth of children through the free, spontaneous dramatization of Bible stories. In order to accomplish this aim, an informal method of working out dramatizations has been used. The public presentation of a play is only incidental to the children; there is no need for them to act out a story that has been dramatized by someone else. Their aim is realized in the joy of actually living the story over each time they play it, though this may result in the highest form of entertainment. That children should "speak lines" given them to memorize for the sake of

entertainment is deadly—to the child as well as to the audience.

There is some difference of opinion as to the value of the classic language of the Bible for children, and many advocate the use of modern or simplified versions. If, however, the children have made their own efforts to dramatize the story, using first of all their own words, it is easy to help them to adopt much of the beautiful classic language in putting the work into its final form. The biblical wording helps to give the play its proper dignity and atmosphere, at the same time acquainting the children with the exact language of a piece of good literature.

The method of procedure which is followed in leading children to work out their own dramatizations varies slightly according to circumstances but in the main is as follows:

A story is chosen by the leader which includes the elements essential for a good dramatization, and it is told to the children in such a way that the action or events are emphasized. Direct discourse is used in the telling, and an effort is made to develop simple and vivid mental pictures. The children divide the story into its most important pictures or scenes. They then suggest in detail what should take place in the first scene, and some of them are asked to act it out as they think it should be done. This first presentation is

sometimes stiff and more or less self-conscious. The leader raises such questions as, "Which parts did these children do best?" "Why?" "Where can they improve it?" "What would you do to make the part better?" "What do you think should have been said here?" This leads to constructive criticism of the scene by the children themselves rather than by the leader in charge. Each child is eager to offer suggestions at this point and is anxious for an opportunity to give his own interpretation of the part by acting it out. He formulates his words as he acts. He forgets himself in the genuine interest which arises as he relives the experience of someone else. Each scene is developed in a similar manner.

The leader encourages freedom in individual interpretation, yet she is ever keeping before the children the fact that they are trying to give a true portrayal of the characters or conditions. It is often valuable to have a discussion of individual characters for the purpose of securing clear ideas concerning them. After all have tried various parts and have offered many suggestions, they may be led to choose that interpretation which seems most adequate, or they may all work out the interpretation of a part which will involve the ideas of many. After the story has been played through a few times, each child should be able to assume any character. It is an essential part of

this method to see that every child has a different part each time.

Very often, when the play develops to this stage, some one child, or several, will suddenly become aware of repetitions in the scenes and will suggest that some scenes are unnecessary. It is then the time to refer to the number of scenes in a good drama, and to lead the children to realize that in any good play much is left to the imagination of the audience, and that only the essential scenes need be shown. By means of discussions the play is worked over again, and it is finally reduced to the three or four scenes that seem absolutely necessary.

In many instances the dramatization needs no further development. None of the words have been accepted as definite, for, although the thought given is the same each time, exactly the same words are never said twice. The story is interpreted slightly differently with each performance. This interpretation, without obtaining a highly finished result, is best for short stories or incidents. Fables and parables may be used well in this way. The action follows continuously with the development of the thought.

In the case of a story which has a more detailed plot and which involves more complicated situations the development may go further: the wording is carefully worked out by the children and the language of the Bible is employed. The words

which are finally used by the children may be composite results developed by the group as a whole, or after they have gone as far as they can with them the leader, or a committee composed of several children with the leader, may suggest a final form which is good from a literary standpoint.

Children either volunteer or are chosen by the others to take finally certain parts. There is a marked socializing influence evident in the fact that a child is chosen by the other children for the good of the group and not for self-aggrandizement or partiality toward a friend. It is always the case after a few rehearsals that each child knows every part and can easily adapt himself to the part of any character. There is no trouble about a substitute when one or two children fail to arrive. Each child has lived the story until it has become a very vital part of him. The finished product belongs to the children; they have developed it; it is not the production of someone else which they have learned by heart.

At the final presentation of the play the children invite parents and friends. This is not thought of as a climax toward which they have been working; it is hardly more important than any of the rehearsals; it is simply an opportunity for others to enjoy the story with them. The encouragement of this attitude toward the public presentation

of a play is important in that it does away with the self-conscious feeling of a child that he is acting before people, or that people are interested in him rather than in the character that he portrays. Much harm can be done by allowing a child to feel that he is "showing off" on a stage.

This mode of procedure in developing a dramatization illustrates the general method which is employed in order to secure the results herein discussed. It should be helpful as a method which may be varied or built upon according to the circumstances. Detailed descriptions of exact modes of procedure in presenting different kinds of Bible stories to the dramatic club will follow. Costumes and stage settings have always been of the simplest nature and will be discussed at length in a separate chapter.

In order that this method may be of greatest practical value to those who are unfamiliar with it, a summary may give the steps in logical sequence. This outline is not to be taken as unchangeable, but merely as a working basis for the beginner.

1. Select a story with care; then adapt it for telling.

2. Tell the story, emphasizing the essential parts.

3. Let the children divide the story into pictures or scenes.

4. Have a discussion of what should take place in each scene.

5. Let volunteers from among the children act out one scene as they think it should be done, using their own words.

6. Develop criticism by the other children with suggestions for improvement.

7. Have a second acting of the scene for improvement.

8. Let each of the other scenes be worked out in the same manner.

9. See that every child has the chance to try out many parts.

10. Play the story through many times. Change it often according to the criticism, until the children recognize the result as a product of their best effort.

11. With the help of the children change the words into biblical form.

12. Let the group assign definite parts to be learned for the final performance.

CHAPTER III

THE DRAMATIZATION OF *JOSEPH*

As will be noted in the following chapter, it is well in beginning dramatic work with children to use for the first efforts very simple stories. *Joseph* is too long and complicated for an early experiment. We may begin our exposition of method with this story, however, as it illustrates especially well the details of the developing process.

At the first meeting the story was told in terms that followed closely the Bible version. The children were asked to select the big events, or pictures, in Joseph's life. They readily spoke of his life in Canaan as a boy; his being put into the pit and sold to the merchants; his life in Egypt with Potiphar; the prison experience and the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream; the change of fortune in becoming ruler of the land; the famine and the visits of his brothers; and, finally, his kindness to his father and brothers in giving them a home in Egypt.

The story was told to the children very much as follows:

Jacob was an old man, too old to care for his large flocks. He sat in the door of his tent day after day, and sent his twelve sons off with the sheep and goats to find grassy fields.

Now of all the twelve sons Jacob loved Joseph, a lad of seventeen years, the best. Joseph was next to the youngest and often stayed with his father while the older brothers went away. Jacob gave Joseph a coat of many colors and showed him often that he was the favorite. This made the older brothers very jealous of Joseph, and they began to dislike him.

Once Joseph dreamed a dream, which he told to his brothers, and it made them hate him all the more. He said to them, "Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about and bowed down to my sheaf." Then his brothers said to him, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou have power over us?"

Then Joseph dreamed yet another dream, and he told it again to his father and brothers, and said, "Behold, the sun and moon and the eleven stars bowed down to me." And his father said unto him, "What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee?" And the brothers remembered what their father had said, and they wished that harm might come to Joseph.

It happened soon after this that Jacob sent his ten older sons with the flocks to Shechem, a place some distance away where there was good grass. Now the brothers were gone for so long a time that their father became anxious and decided to send Joseph after them. He said to Joseph, "Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren and well with the flocks; and bring me word again." So Joseph took money and food in his bag, and his staff in his hand, and went out to find his brothers.

At Shechem there were no brothers to be seen. Joseph was wondering what he should do next, when he saw a man

coming toward him over the field. "What seekest thou?" said the man. And Joseph answered, "I seek my brethren; tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks." "They have departed from here," said the man, "and have gone to Dothan." Then Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

Now when the brothers saw Joseph afar off, they knew that it was he from his coat of many colors, and they plotted against him. One of them said, "Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come, now, let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say unto our father that some evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams." Reuben, one of the brothers, felt more kindly toward Joseph than did the others and said to them, "Let us not kill him, but let us cast him into this pit that is near." Reuben thought that he would come back later after the brothers had gone and help Joseph out of the pit and take him to his father.

When Joseph came to his brothers, they quickly took the coat of many colors from him and bound him and cast him into an old well which was dry. Then they sat down to eat bread. They had hardly become settled when one of them cried out, "Behold, I see a caravan! It is a company of Ishmaelites, with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going down to Egypt." Then Judah said, "Why do we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to these Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." The brothers were content to do as Judah had said. They drew Joseph up out of the well, and when the Ishmaelites came near they sold him to them for twenty pieces of silver. And the brothers went away to kill a goat so that they might dip Joseph's coat into the blood, that their father might think that he had been killed by some wild animal.

Reuben did not know that Joseph had been sold, and returned unto the pit after the brothers had left. When he saw that Joseph was not there, he rent his clothes, and ran after the others, crying, "The child is not, and I, whither shall I go?"

And when the brothers brought Joseph's coat to their father, they said, "This we have found; thou knowest if it be thy son's coat." And Jacob knew it, and said, "It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him." Then Jacob put on sackcloth and ashes and mourned for Joseph many days.

Now the Ishmaelites brought Joseph down into Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, a captain of King Pharaoh's guard. And Joseph was faithful and served the Lord, and Potiphar saw that he could be trusted with great responsibility and made him ruler over his household. But Potiphar's wife grew jealous of Joseph and disliked him, and told Potiphar things which were untrue about Joseph. After awhile Potiphar began to believe his wife and he decided that Joseph was not a good man, so he had Joseph cast into prison.

And it came to pass that the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt were put into prison at the same time that Joseph was there, and they were placed in his ward. One morning Joseph found them both very sad and he said unto them, "Wherefore look ye so sadly today?" And they said, "We have dreamed a dream and there is no one to interpret it." Then Joseph said, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams, I pray you." And they told him their dreams, and he gave them the meaning thereof. To the chief butler he said, "Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head and restore thee to thy place." But to the chief baker he said, "Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and

shall hang thee on a tree." And it came to pass that on the third day Pharaoh gave a feast to his servants, and he restored the chief butler to his place, but he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted.

At the end of two years Pharaoh dreamed a dream. He was greatly troubled, and sent for all the wise men of the land to tell him the meaning of his dream, but there was none that could interpret it unto Pharaoh. Then the chief butler spoke to the king and said, "I do remember this day, that when Pharaoh was wroth with his servants and put both me and the chief baker into the prison, that we each dreamed dreams in one night; and there was a young man there, a Hebrew, who interpreted to us our dreams, and they came to pass as he interpreted, for the chief baker was hanged and I was restored to my office."

Then Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and they brought him in hastily out of the dungeon. And Pharaoh said, "I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it, and I have heard say of thee that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it." And Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Then Pharaoh said, "In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of a river; and there came up out of the river seven fat cows, and they fed in a meadow. And, behold, seven other cows came up after them, lean and ill favored; and the lean and ill-favored cows did eat up the fat and well-favored cows. Then I dreamed again, and, behold, seven full ears of corn came upon one stalk, and then seven ears, withered and thin, came up after them, and devoured the good ears."

And Joseph said to Pharaoh, "God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. This is the thing which he is about to do: Behold, there will come seven years of plenty throughout the land of Egypt; and there shall rise up after

them seven years of famine, and the famine shall consume the land. Now, therefore, let Pharaoh look out a man, discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt, and let him gather up all the food during the years of plenty and lay it up in the cities, so that the land shall not perish in the famine." And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and he said, "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is? Forasmuch as God has shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art; thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled." Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand and clothed him in fine linen and put a golden chain around his neck.

Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went over all the land of Egypt. He gathered up the food for seven years, and laid up the food in the cities. And the seven years of plenteousness that were in all the land of Egypt were ended, and the seven years of famine began, and there was famine in all the lands. Then Joseph opened the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, and other countries sent to buy grain from Joseph because they had stored none.

Now in Canaan Jacob and his eleven sons were suffering from the famine. They heard that there was food in Egypt, so Jacob sent down all the brothers, except Benjamin, to buy food. When they came before Joseph and bowed themselves to the earth, they knew him not. But Joseph saw his brothers, and he made himself strange unto them, and treated them roughly, that they should not know him. And when they bowed before him Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them. "Ye are spies," he said, "ye are come to see the bareness of the land." They answered him, "We are true men, we are no spies. Thy servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man

in Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not." "Hereby ye shall be proved," said Joseph, "if ye be true men; let one of your brethren be bound in the prison while ye go and carry grain to your father's house, but bring back your youngest brother to me."

The brothers took the food back to Canaan, to their father's tent, and told him what the ruler in Egypt had said. Jacob mourned and was loath to let Benjamin, his youngest son, go back to Egypt with them. "My son shall not go down with you," he said; "for his brother is dead and he is left alone: if mischief befall him, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." But the famine was great in the land, and they had eaten up all the grain which they brought from Egypt. The brothers would not go down again until Jacob had consented to let them take Benjamin with them. And Judah said unto his father, "Send the lad with me and we will rise and go, that we may live and not die. I will be surety for him; if I bring him not back unto thee, then let me bear the blame forever." Then Jacob answered, "If it must be so, do this: take the best of the fruits in the land, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds and take double money, and take also your brother, and arise and go unto the man; and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send you away with your other brother and Benjamin."

And the men took the present and double the money and Benjamin, and went down into Egypt, and stood before Joseph. When Joseph saw Benjamin, he ordered that the men be brought to his home, and that a feast be made ready, and that the other brother be brought out of the prison. But the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's home, and they bowed themselves to the earth before him and presented their gifts. Then Joseph was

greatly moved and said unto them, "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?" And they answered, "Thy servant, our father, is in good health; he is yet alive." And they bowed down their heads. Then Joseph lifted up his eyes and saw Benjamin, his mother's youngest son, and said, "Is this your younger brother of whom ye spake unto me?" And he said to Benjamin, "God be gracious unto thee, my son." Joseph was so overcome by his love for Benjamin that he hastened out of the room where he could weep alone. And he washed his face and composed himself and commanded that the food be served. They all ate and were merry, and Joseph helped Benjamin to five times as much as he did the others.

Then Joseph commanded the steward to fill the men's sacks with food, and to put each man's money back into his sack, and to put his silver cup into the sack of the youngest. As soon as the morning was light the men were sent away. And when they were gone out of the city and were not yet far off, Joseph sent a servant after them to search their sacks for his silver drinking-cup, and he sent word that the one who had it should be brought back to him.

Now the brothers were greatly distressed and protested that they knew nothing of the cup. What was their astonishment at finding their money in their sacks and the cup in Benjamin's sack! Then they rent their clothes and returned to the city. And Judah came to Joseph and fell on the ground and said, "What shall we say unto my lord? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out our sin, behold we are my lord's servants." Then Joseph said, "Get up and go in peace unto thy father; I shall keep for my servant only the man in whose sack the cup was found." And Judah came near to Joseph and besought him that he allow Benjamin to return to their father; he told him that he had promised his father to bring the lad back safely, and that it would kill the old man if they returned without

Benjamin. "Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide as a bondman, instead of the lad." Then Joseph could not refrain himself, and he wept before his brothers and made himself known to them. "I am Joseph, do ye not know me? Is my father yet alive?" And the brothers were troubled, and they did not know how to answer him. "Come near, I pray you." And they came near, and he said again, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve your lives. Haste ye, go up to my father, and tell him that Joseph, his son, still liveth, and bring him down unto me." And Joseph fell upon Benjamin's neck and kissed him, and he kissed all his brothers, and they were astonished, for they knew now that this was Joseph whom they had sold.

Now the word was spread over Pharaoh's house that Joseph's brethren had come, and it pleased Pharaoh greatly. He came in where they were and said unto Joseph, "This do ye: Say to your brethren that they are commanded to go back into Canaan, and to pack all their household goods, and to bring their father and their families, and all their flocks, and to return into the land of Egypt, for all the good of the land shall be theirs."

Then the brothers were joyful, and gave thanks unto Pharaoh and to their brother, Joseph, and they left the city to go back to their father. And when they came unto Jacob and told him all, and showed him the wagons which Joseph had sent to bring him down into Egypt, his soul rejoiced, and he said, "It is enough; Joseph, my son, is still alive: I will go and see him before I die."

The children decided that it would take a great many scenes in order to act out the story adequately. At first they mentioned seven or eight.

One child was asked to describe the first scene as he thought it ought to be, and several others added to the description. Volunteers were then called upon to act it out then and there.

The first scene was placed in front of Jacob's tent. Jacob is anxiously awaiting the return of his ten sons with the flocks. He becomes worried because they do not come, so he sends Joseph to seek his brothers. Joseph accepts the command and leaves the tent.

This scene was acted very naturally and spontaneously by several groups of children. Each time it was changed, for no two groups of children interpreted the action or words alike.

The children who were not acting were made to feel their responsibility also, for they were asked to make note of the best parts. A general discussion was held at the end of each presentation, in which the good points were emphasized and suggestions were given as to improvement. The criticism in all of this work comes for the most part from the children; the leader in charge directs it, but keeps from imposing her opinions.

As the meetings of this dramatic club last but one hour, nothing more could be done than work out one scene at this first time. The children were asked to think the story over and to come the next Sunday prepared to suggest the second and third scenes in detail.

At the next meeting the second and third scenes were worked out in the same manner as the first.

The second scene places Joseph at Shechem. Here he meets the man who tells him that his brothers have gone to Dothan.

In the third scene the brothers are seated on the ground eating and resting, with their shepherd staffs beside them; they begin to talk about Joseph and to tell of his dream and their hatred of him. Just at this point Joseph runs in and gives his father's message. He also tells of his experience in Shechem in not finding them there. Then the brothers take him and bind him and throw him into the pit. The caravan comes along and Joseph is sold and taken away. After the brothers depart, Reuben, not knowing that Joseph has been sold, comes back to the pit, hoping to help him out. When he finds the boy gone, he weeps and goes sorrowfully away. (A doorway which leads off from the stage at the back was used for the pit. There were no camels in the caravan; the men walked by.)

During the next hour scenes which describe Joseph's life in Egypt were roughly blocked out. The children made up their words as they acted the parts. The language at this stage was very modern, but for the time being the emphasis was placed upon the thought expressed and upon the action.

Several of the older girls volunteered to write out the first few scenes in order to bring the language into better form. At the fourth meeting these were brought in and discussed by the children. The following is a version of the first scene just as it was written by a girl of twelve years. It is given here that the contrast may be seen between this as a piece of work which may be made better and the final play at the end of the chapter.

SCENE I

Jacob: It is time my sons are returning with their flocks. See if thou canst see them coming.

[*Exit servant.*]

First Lady: Yes, they have been gone a long time. We have only Joseph and Benjamin with us.

[*Enter servant.*]

Jacob: What didst thou see?

Servant: Master, I saw nothing of your sons.

Jacob: I shall send Joseph after them. Bring Joseph hither. [*Turns to another servant.*] Bring a bag of food for him to take with him on his journey.

[*Servants leave.* JACOB *looks away, hoping to see his sons.*]

Jacob: I do not see them. What can be the matter?

[*Enter* JOSEPH *with servant.*]

Second Lady: Joseph will be sure to find them.

Jacob: Joseph, my son, I am sending thee after thy brethren. Take this food to Shechem and bring thy brethren back to me.

Joseph: I will do as thou bidst.

[JACOB *stands and puts his hand on Joseph.*]

Jacob: May the Lord go with thee.

END

The third scene was written by a girl of eleven years and was as follows:

SCENE III

[*All brothers look down the road.*]

All Brothers: What shall we do with him?

Seventh Brother: I know; let's kill him!

All except Reuben: Yea! Yea!

Reuben: Nay, do not kill him; let's put him in a deep pit.

Tenth Brother: Well, all right.

[JOSEPH *appears; exit* REUBEN.]

Joseph: Ah, I have found ye at last, my brethren.

[*All grab* JOSEPH.]

Joseph: What have I done to deserve this?

Fourth Brother: Get some rope!

[*Exit sixth brother and brings some rope back with him. Eighth and ninth brothers bind* JOSEPH *with ropes. All take hold of him and push him into the pit.*]

Tenth Brother: But what shall we tell our father?

Eighth Brother: Let's tell him that Joseph was killed by a wild beast.

Ninth Brother: We will take his coat of many colors, which our father gave him, and dip it in the blood of a goat.

All: Yea! Yea!

[*Seventh brother sees some merchants.*]

Seventh Brother: I see merchants in the distance. Let's sell Joseph to them.

[*One brother goes after the merchants, while the others bring* JOSEPH *from the pit. Merchants enter.*]

Tenth Brother: What will ye give us for this lad?

Merchant: I guess we can give ye about twenty pieces of silver.

[*Merchants take* JOSEPH *with them. Brothers go on their way. Enter* REUBEN *after his brothers have gone. He runs to the pit.*]

Reuben: Joseph! Joseph! Where art thou? The lad is gone. Whither shall I go?

[REUBEN *goes away, sobbing and wringing his hands.*]

END

At the meeting when these were read the children began to criticize the length of the play. One little boy made the remark, "We keep telling the same things over; why can't we leave out that second scene? It is so short, and Joseph could tell his brothers in the third scene that he didn't find them at Shechem." This suggestion was readily accepted, and as a consequence the second scene was omitted. Then the entire group consciously worked on the play to see what parts were unnecessary. Several children had recently been to the theater and had seen some good plays. They told the others that there were few scenes and that there was much left to the imagination of the audience. The result was that this long-drawn-out play was cut down to three essential scenes. The first scene was placed at Dothan, and was much the same as the original scene iii. The second scene was placed at Pharaoh's palace where Joseph was brought to interpret the king's dream. The third represented the brothers coming to Joseph with Benjamin, the youngest, ending with

Joseph's forgiveness of them and his sending for Jacob, their father.

After these three scenes were decided upon, the older children were asked to begin writing them out in final form.

At the fifth meeting of the club all the children sat in a circle with Bibles and pencils and paper and, together with the leader, they formulated the speeches, making them conform as nearly as possible to those in the Bible. The work that had been done outside was discussed and built upon. This part of the procedure did not take as long a time as it may seem, because the children knew so well what thoughts they wanted to express—they had lived the story so many times. They practiced after this, using the words they had decided upon.

For the next meeting or two the children acted out the play, trying each time to improve it by better interpretations of the parts. The fact that they had learned definite words did not in the least check the freedom of the action or cause the play to lose the spontaneity which first characterized it, for the reason that the story had quite become a part of the children before they decided upon the set speeches.

The question arose as to which children should take certain parts. In some instances several wanted to learn the part of one particular character. They were each given the opportunity of

learning it, and then at the next meeting each acted it as best he or she could before the group. The other children were judges and decided upon the one who seemed to represent the character best. Whenever this method of choosing characters has been employed there has never been any hard feeling on the part of a child because he was not chosen. The justice of the choice is quickly recognized when it comes in this way rather than from the leader.

There were many little children in this club who were scarcely old enough to learn a part or to say very much. They were easily worked into the caravan, or they took such parts as servants in Pharaoh's court. Each child was made to feel that one part was just as important as another and that those who had nothing to say were very essential elements because of their acting.

Eight or nine meetings were needed before the play was entirely finished. The children had very simple slips for costumes which they had been wearing at each rehearsal. Bright-colored sashes and headdresses they brought from home. Pharaoh was more gaily dressed than the others. The child who took the part made for himself many ornaments from gilt paper.

Very little attention was given to stage setting; what was used was extremely simple. A few of the older girls made designs from the Egyptian

lotus to stand around the walls of Pharaoh's palace or to be carried by the servants. Colored illustrations of Bible stories by Tissot were suggestive helps in these details. The ten brothers made themselves shepherd staffs from limbs of trees. This small amount of stage setting and costuming was used at many rehearsals and was all that was necessary to produce the right atmosphere.

As soon as the children felt that the play represented their best effort they invited their parents and friends and presented it before them one Sunday afternoon at the time for the regular meeting.

It happened that a few days before the final presentation four of the principal characters were taken ill with measles and chicken-pox. Four others, who had not given special attention to these parts, but who had minor parts, assumed the important rôles and went straight through the play with no trouble whatever. The audience never knew the difference and the children thought that it was entirely natural that they should be able to do this. The play all the way through was characterized by a spirit of dignity and seriousness.

As direct results of this work in dramatization it was noted that all the children had acquired a certain freedom of expression, a self-confidence, without conceit or too much sureness, and the ability to work harmoniously with the group.

One or two timid children learned to forget themselves, and one overconfident child was helped by seeing that others could learn to do the part even a little better than herself.

The children who took part in this little play of *Joseph* will never forget it. Several years after the play was given they were frequently referring to it with great happiness. Joseph is one of their favorite characters because they have lived through his experiences with him.

The following is the play as it was given in its final form. It is not to be taken as a play which may be given to children to be learned as it is; it is given here that there may be some idea of the standard which may be reached.

JOSEPH

SCENE I

PLACE: Dothan.

CHARACTERS: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, Several Ishmaelitish Merchants.

[*The ten brothers are sitting and lounging on the ground, eating bread.*]

Reuben: Shall we stay longer in this place? Our flocks have fed well in Shechem and Dothan. Let us return again unto Canaan and to the tent of our father, Jacob.

Judah: Oh, why should we go back? Our father loveth us not! It is Joseph, our younger brother, that he favoreth!

Levi: Yes, this Joseph! This dreamer of dreams! He thinketh he is greater than we. He thinketh he shall rule over us!

Judah: Ye heard him when he said, "Hear this dream which I have dreamed: Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and bowed down to my sheaf."

Simeon: Ha! Shall he indeed reign over us? Or shall he have dominion over us?

Levi: Yea, and he dreamed yet another dream, for he said, "Behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars bowed down unto me."

Dan: What is this dream which he has dreamed? Shall his mother and father and eleven brethren indeed come to bow down themselves to him?

Simeon: Joseph and his dreams are hateful unto me! I was glad when our father said to us, "Take the flocks to feed in Shechem," for now we are free of him.

Levi: It seemeth to me that I see this Joseph, this dreamer whom we hate. He is yet afar off, but he surely approacheth us!

Reuben: Can it be he?

Dan: Yes, for I see the coat of many colors, the coat our father made for his favorite son.

Levi: Why should he come to us? Cannot our father trust the flocks to our hands without sending this Joseph to spy on us?

Dan: It is he! It is Joseph!

Simeon: What shall we do?

Judah: Our time is come. We despise him; let us slay him.

Reuben: Nay, thou dost not mean to slay him!

Several: Nay! Nay!

Judah: We must surely slay him. We must rid ourselves of this dreamer. Think how he said he should reign over us! Let us be rid of him!

Simeon: Yes, thou art right—we must slay him.

Several: Yea, yea, slay him! Destroy him! He shall dream no more such dreams!

Simeon: Behold, this dreamer cometh near! Come, now, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, "Some evil beast hath devoured him," and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

Reuben: Let us not kill him. Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him.

[REUBEN *goes away.*]

[JOSEPH *runs up.* GAD *lays one hand roughly on his shoulder.*]

Gad: How comes it that thou art here? What is thy business?

Joseph: My father commanded me and said, "Go, I pray thee, and see whether it be well with thy brethren and well with the flocks; and bring me word again." So he sent me out of the vale of Hebron, and I came to Shechem. And you were not there, and I came on after you and found you here. What troubleth you? Hath ought happened to the flocks?

Simeon: Hear his tale! This dreamer of dreams! So he would reign over us, would he! Strip him of his coat of many colors! This favored son!

[*Brothers bind* JOSEPH *and cast him into the pit.*]

Joseph: What have I done to deserve this?

[*Brothers sit down again to eat their bread.*]

Gad: Behold, I see a caravan!

Simeon: From what country?

Gad: It is a company of Ishmaelites, from Gilead, with their camels, bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going down into Egypt.

Judah: What doth it profit if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to these Ishmaelites and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.

Several: So be it.

Gad: Hail the caravan, and bargain with these men.

Simeon [*salutes the head man of the caravan; the brothers listen attentively;* GAD *brings* JOSEPH *out of the pit*]: What wilt thou give us in exchange for this lad? We would sell him.

Merchant [*looks* JOSEPH *over, then consults with his men*]: Twenty pieces of silver will we give for him.

Simeon [*to the brothers*]: These merchants will give us twenty pieces of silver for this dreamer.

All: Sell him! Sell him!

[JOSEPH *is taken over by the merchants and they all move on. The brothers are dividing out the money.*]

Gad: The lad is gone with the merchants, but what excuse shall we make unto our father?

Simeon: Say unto him that a wild beast hath devoured him. Here is his coat of many colors—we will kill a goat and dip the coat in the blood! Then our father, Jacob, will grieve for his son!

All: As thou sayest, so let us do!

[*Brothers move off stage, discussing the money.* REUBEN *comes back. He runs and looks in the pit. He tears his clothes when he finds that* JOSEPH *is not there.*]

Reuben: The child is not, and I, whither shall I go?

SCENE II

PLACE: Egypt. In Pharaoh's palace.

CHARACTERS: Pharaoh, Joseph, Wise Men, Chief Butler, Servants.

[*Pharaoh is sitting on his throne; many wise men come in and bow down before him.*]

Pharaoh: Arise, O wise men of Egypt! I have sent for you this day because of a dream which troubleth me.

[*Men stand up.*]

Wise Men: What is thy dream, O King?

King: I dreamed, and, behold, I stood by a river, and there came up out of the river seven fat cows, and they fed in a meadow. And, behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ill favored and lean. And the ill-favored and lean cows did eat up the seven well-favored and fat cows. Then did I awake, but the second time I slept and dreamed. And, behold, seven good ears of corn came up upon one stalk, and, behold, seven thin ears sprung up after them, and the seven thin ears devoured the seven full ears. And I awoke again, and, behold, it was a dream. Now, is there one among you who can tell me the meaning of these dreams, for my spirit is troubled because of them?

[*The wise men in turn come out and bow before the king and say*]:

First Wise Man: O my lord King, thy dream troubleth me, but I am not able to interpret it.

Second Wise Man: O King, also, I cannot tell thee the meaning of thy dream.

Third Wise Man: Most gracious King, I, also, am unable to interpret thy dream.

Fourth Wise Man: O great Pharaoh, I regret that I am unable to help thee.

Pharaoh [*angrily*]: Are ye called the wise men of Egypt, and yet are ye not able to interpret a dream?

[*The chief butler comes forward and falls before the king.*]

Butler: O great King, I am only thy chief butler, but I beg of thee allow me to speak.

King: Speak, butler, what wouldst thou say?

Butler: O King, I do remember my faults this day. When Pharaoh was wroth with his servants and put me in prison, both me and the chief baker, behold, we dreamed a dream in one night, and there was a young man, a Hebrew, and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dream. And it came to pass as he interpreted unto us, for I was restored unto mine office and the baker was hanged.

Pharaoh: Send for this young Hebrew; bring him into my presence. [*Servant goes out for* JOSEPH.] Butler, who is this boy that interpreted thy dream?

Butler: His name is Joseph, O King. He was brought down from Canaan by a caravan and was sold to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. But he displeased Potiphar, so he was thrown into prison at the time thy servants were there.

[*Enter* JOSEPH. *He falls on his face before* PHARAOH.]

Pharaoh: I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it, and I have heard say of thee that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

[JOSEPH *rises.*]

Joseph: It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

Pharaoh: [*Repeats his dream to* JOSEPH.]

[JOSEPH *comes nearer to* PHARAOH.]

Joseph: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh: Behold, there will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. And there shall arise after them seven years of famine. And all the plenty shall be forgotten throughout Egypt, and the famine shall consume the land, and it shall be very grievous. Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise and set him over the land of Egypt, and let him appoint officers over the land. And let them gather all the food of those

good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh. And let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be stored against the seven years of famine, that the land may not perish through famine.

Pharaoh: This plan seemeth good unto me. Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is?

The Wise Men: Nay, O King, he is most wise.

Pharaoh: Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled, only in the throne will I be greater than thou. See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. [*To his servants*:] Bring a golden chain, and fine raiment for this man.

[*He puts a ring on* JOSEPH'S *hand. When the clothes are brought they are put around him, the chain on his neck, etc.*]

Pharaoh: Thou shalt ride in the second chariot and all my people shall bow the knee unto thee. [*All people in the room bow.*] I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

Joseph: May the Lord God give me power to do his will.

SCENE III

PLACE: Pharaoh's palace.

CHARACTERS: Joseph, His Eleven Brothers, Servants, Pharaoh.

[JOSEPH *is seated on his high seat. A servant comes in.*]

Servant: Master, the men that came down from Canaan to buy food of thee have returned and would have a word with thee.

Joseph: Bring them in. [*To another servant*]: Go see that a feast is prepared for these men.

[*The brothers enter bringing* BENJAMIN. *They all fall on their faces.*]

Joseph: Arise! And have you returned bringing with you your youngest brother?

Reuben: O sir, we have brought our youngest brother; he is here.

[BENJAMIN *is led forward.* JOSEPH *goes near and puts his hand on* BENJAMIN.]

Joseph: And is this your younger brother of whom ye spake unto me? God be gracious unto thee, my son! [*To the brothers:*] Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?

Levi: Thy servant, our father [*all bow heads*], is in good health; he is yet alive.

[JOSEPH *turns away and begins to weep; he leaves them abruptly and walks to the other side of the room.*]

Joseph [*to the servants*]: Cause every man to go out from me! [*All begin to leave the room, brothers included.*] [*To the brothers. He walks quickly after them and holds his arms out toward them.*] Stay! I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? Come near to me, I pray you. [*They come somewhat nearer and fall to the ground.*] I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me thither, for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land; and yet there are five years more. God hath sent me before you to save your lives. Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, "Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt. Come down unto me, and tarry not. And thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children, and thy flocks, and thy herds and all thou hast." Oh, do you not see that I am Joseph that speak unto you? [*He weeps again and turns away.*]

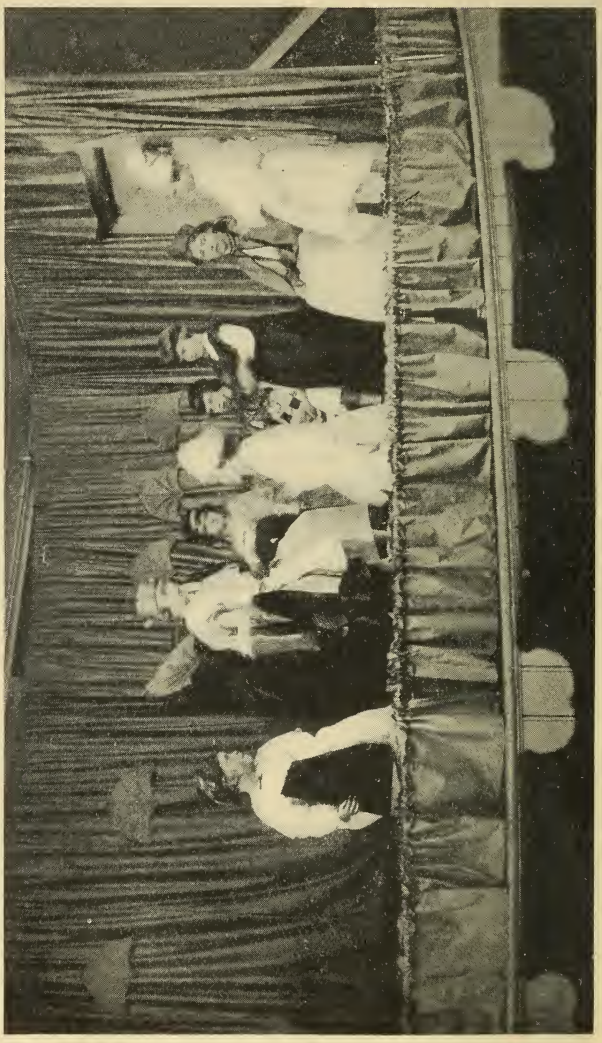


FIG. 1.—Pharaoh's court

Brothers: Joseph, our brother Joseph! Can he forgive us?

[PHARAOH *enters here.*]

Joseph: O King, these are my brethren, and from my father's tent.

Pharaoh: Say unto thy brethren: "This do ye: Go back unto the land of Canaan and take your father and your household goods, and come unto me. And I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat of the fat of the land. Now ye are commanded: This do ye: Take ye wagons out of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come, for the good of the land shall be yours."

One Brother: We thank thee, O great Pharaoh, and our brother Joseph. This is greater than we deserve. We will bring our father down straightway.

Joseph: Praise be to God who has done this good thing!

END

CHAPTER IV

THE DRAMATIZATION OF *DAVID AND GOLIATH*

When beginning dramatic work with a group of children who have never had the training before, it is always well to select as the first story to be dramatized one that is short, simple in structure, and full of action. If children undertake a long story which involves complicated situations, they easily become discouraged and lose the joy and spontaneity which are essential elements in successful dramatizations. Fables, such as "The Boy and the Wolf" or "The Fox and the Grapes," are excellent to begin with, because they contain the necessary qualities which make up a good short story. Situations as simple as those which are presented in these fables are entered into with great freedom, and they seem to pave the way for more ambitious dramatizations.

The story of *David and Goliath* is short, simple, and yet contains vivid action. It was chosen as one of the first stories to be given to the dramatic club because of these qualities. After the children had gone through the experience of dramatizing it they had gained a self-confidence and a realization of their own power in interpreting a story through dramatization.

The methods employed in presenting *David and Goliath* were much the same as those described in connection with *Joseph.* The point that must be kept in mind in all of this work is that the dramatization of a story begins with the action and that the words are developed. The play is never written first and acted afterward.

While telling the story the leader placed much emphasis upon the activities and ideals of the shepherd life of the Hebrews in the time of David. The children made their own armor—helmets, swords, shields—from cardboard and colored papers. Pictures and descriptions which they secured helped them to get correct ideas as to shapes and decorations.

The costumes were simple little slips that could be belted in at the waist, and came only to the knees. The children helped to plan and make them. David made his shepherd staff from a limb of a tree, and the soldiers made their spears by fastening gilded points to long sticks.

A question arose as to how the sling was made. The children found, upon looking up this point, that the sling was woven from different colored wools. From a good picture they constructed looms from cardboard and actually wove several slings like David's. Fig. 14 shows a diagram of the loom as the children worked it out.

A very great value was derived from this construction work, in that it came entirely from the children; it was an outgrowth of their genuine interest in the subject. They were reliving the same experiences and solving the same problems that had confronted David.

The gentle spirit of David had a direct influence upon the whole group. It made no difference what part a child interpreted—whether that of Goliath or of one of the brothers—it was evident that David's high ideals and sweetness of character called forth admiration.

Fig. 2 gives one of the scenes from *David and Goliath*. The play follows as it was given.

DAVID AND GOLIATH

CHARACTERS: David, David's Three Brothers, King Saul, Goliath, Israelite Soldiers, Philistine Soldiers.

SCENE I. THE CHALLENGE

PLACE: On the battlefield.

First Brother: Have ye seen this Philistine who is come up, this giant who has defied the armies of the living God?

Second Brother: Who has seen him?

Third Brother: I have seen him; he is verily a giant. His height is six cubits and a span. He weareth an helmet of brass upon his head, and he is armed with a coat of mail, and he hath greaves of brass upon his legs, and the staff of his spear is like the weaver's beam; and one bearing a shield goeth before him. Our soldiers are truly afraid. They flee as he approacheth.

FIG. 2.—A scene from *David and Goliath*

Goliath [*apart from the king and soldiers*]: Why are ye come out to gather your armies to battle? Am I not a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then shall ye be our servants and serve us. I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.

[*Some of the soldiers turn and flee.*]

Saul: Hear the words of this Philistine. I know not what we can do. Have we no man among us with the strength or boldness to fight this giant? I will enrich him with great riches.

Second Brother: In truth, he is a mighty giant, O King. Our soldiers are greatly dismayed; no one will accept this challenge.

[*The king and two soldiers go out. Enter* DAVID. *He runs up to his brothers and salutes them.*]

First Brother: This is David, our younger brother! How cometh it that thou art here?

Second Brother: I thought we left thee tending the sheep.

Third Brother: What news dost thou bring of our father? Is all well with him?

David: My father commanded me, saying, "Take now for thy brethren this parched corn and these ten loaves, and run to the camp of thy brethren; and carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare." And I rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and came as my father commanded.

[*Brothers take food from* DAVID.]

Goliath: Why are ye come out to gather your armies to battle? Am I not a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul?

Choose you a man for you and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me and to kill me, then will we be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then shall ye be our servants and serve us. I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together. [DAVID *listens. The soldiers seem disturbed and frightened.*]

David: What meaneth this?

Soldier [*walks up to* DAVID]: Have ye seen this man who is come up? Surely to defy Israel is he come up. And it shall be that the man who killeth him the king will enrich with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.

David: Who is this Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?

First Brother [*showing anger against* DAVID]: Why camest thou hither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thy heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

David: What have I now done? [*He turns from his brothers and speaks to the people.*] What shall be done with the man that killeth this Philistine and taketh away the reproach from Israel? For who is this Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God? I will fight him, and if I prevail against him and kill him, then will the Philistines be our servants and serve us. The Lord God of Israel will deliver him into my hands.

Soldiers: Saul, the king, shall hear these words!

SCENE II. DAVID BEFORE SAUL

PLACE: Saul's tent.

David [*comes in and salutes the king*]: Let no man's heart fail because of this giant; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

Saul: Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

David: Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and when there came a lion or a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after him and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I caught him by the beard and smote him and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. The Lord that hath delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.

Saul: Go, and the Lord go with thee. [*To soldiers*]: Bring forth armor; this youth must be ready to meet the foe.

[*The soldiers bring armor.* SAUL *puts the armor, a helmet and a coat of mail, on* DAVID. DAVID *puts on his sword, then walks a few steps. He suddenly throws the sword down and begins to take off the armor.*]

David: I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them. [*He takes the armor off and keeps only his shepherd's staff and sling.*] The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.

[*He bows to the king and goes out.*]

SCENE III. THE BATTLE

PLACE: The battlefield.

[DAVID *picks up five smooth stones and puts them into his shepherd bag.* GOLIATH *comes toward him. He is dressed in armor, and the man that bears his shield comes before him.* GOLIATH *looks surprised and disgusted when he sees* DAVID.]

Goliath: Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves? Come to me and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air and unto the beasts of the field.

David: Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thy head from thee; and I will give the bodies of the Philistines unto the fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the field, that all may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with the sword and with the spear, for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hands!

[DAVID *puts his hand into his bag and takes out a stone and slings it, so that it hits the giant in the forehead. The giant falls. The Philistines flee.* DAVID *stands with his foot on the body of the giant.*]

Israelite Soldiers with David: The battle is the Lord's!

END

CHAPTER V

THE DRAMATIZATION OF *MOSES IN THE BULRUSHES*

The method of presenting the story of *Moses in the Bulrushes* differed somewhat from that employed with *Joseph*. There was little need to tell the story at the beginning, for every child already knew it in detail. Consequently the leader had the children tell most of it, while she supplemented and directed attention to important parts.

In this case the entire play was planned roughly before any of it was acted. The story was criticized by the children as to its organization and unity, and as a result they made up an ending (Act III) which they felt was needed to make the story complete. Experience with the other plays had led the children to feel the necessity for having a satisfactory ending after the climax.

At the second meeting several girls brought in the scenes as they had written them out. They had tried to embody the points which the children had decided upon as the general plan of the play. The final play varies very little from these scenes thus written by the girls themselves.

There was no difficulty in solving the problem as to what they would do for a baby in the first

part of the play. Many dolls were brought in, and the choice fell upon the one that received the largest number of votes because of his likeness to the baby Moses. A woven basket served for the cradle of bulrushes. There were many rehearsals when there was no doll or cradle, but the children never felt the lack. Their imaginations can supply all needs.

A few big Egyptian designs were made for the first and last scenes, which were placed in the king's court. These were fastened on the walls and around the king's seat, as was done in the play of *Joseph*.

Before the play was given before parents and friends the children decided to call it *The Childhood of Moses*. An older boy in the church printed programs for the occasion that the audience might better understand the play. They read as follows:

THE CHILDHOOD OF MOSES

Dramatized and Presented by the Children's Dramatic Club of the Hyde Park Church of Disciples

CHARACTERS

PHARAOH.....King of Egypt
PRINCESS.....Pharaoh's Daughter
MOSES.....A Hebrew Boy
HEBREW WOMAN.....Mother of Moses
MIRIAM.....Sister of Moses
AARON.....Brother of Moses
WISE MEN.....Advisers of Pharaoh
Soldiers, Attendants to the Princess, Servants

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I. Pharaoh orders the killing of Hebrew boys.
Act II, Scene 1. In the home of a Hebrew family.
Scene 2. A Hebrew mother hides her child among the bulrushes.
Scene 3. The child is found by Pharaoh's daughter.
Act III. Moses is brought to Pharaoh's court.

The following is the play as it was given:

THE CHILDHOOD OF MOSES

ACT I

CHARACTERS: King, Wise Man, Chief Adviser, Queen, Maids, and Soldiers.

King: Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us do wisely with them lest they rise up and make war against us.

Chief Adviser: What more can we do than we have already done? We have made their lives bitter with hard service, and we have made them carry our brick and mortar and work in our fields.

Wise Man: O King Pharaoh, I beg thee to let me speak.

King: Speak, Wise Man.

Wise Man: O King, I pray thee to be kind to these people. When these Hebrews first came down from the land of Canaan, a young man named Joseph saved our land from great famine. These Israelites are his children's children and we should treat them kindly.

King: Treat them kindly! We have been kind to them long enough; we must destroy them. I will command that every Hebrew boy baby be killed!

[*Exeunt* KING *and courtiers followed by soldiers.*]

Princess: O most gracious father, have mercy upon them.

ACT II

SCENE I

PLACE: The home of a Hebrew family.

CHARACTERS: Moses, Mother of Moses, Miriam, Aaron.

[*The mother is singing to the baby in her lap.* AARON *is playing on the floor.* MIRIAM *runs in.*]

Miriam: O mother! The king has commanded that all the boy babies be thrown in the river! How can we save our baby?

Mother: Where shall we take him? I have hidden him for these three months, but he is so big now and his cries are so loud that they will be sure to find him wherever we go.

Miriam: Come quickly, mother; we will go to the river and hide him nearby. Pharaoh cannot find him there, for he will think that he has been thrown in the water.

Mother: O my poor baby!

[*The three run out.*]

SCENE II

PLACE: The river bank.

CHARACTERS: Moses, Mother of Moses, Miriam.

[*The mother appears with the baby in her arms.* MIRIAM *follows.*]

Miriam: O mother! We can hide him in these tall grasses!

Mother: But I must have something to put him in. Gather these rushes and I will weave a little cradle for him,

[*They both pick bulrushes and the mother weaves the basket.*]

Mother: How can I leave him here alone? My little daughter, will you stay and watch and bring me word quickly if anything happens? We will hide the baby in this basket among the flags, here at the edge of the water.

Miriam: Good! Mother, I will hide nearby and see that no harm comes to our baby.

[*The mother kisses the baby and puts him in the basket, then rises and turns away.*]

Mother: Keep watch until I return.

[*Exit mother;* MIRIAM *hides.*]

SCENE III

PLACE: The river bank.

CHARACTERS: The Princess, Her Maidens, Soldiers, Moses, Mother of Moses, and Miriam.

[*Several soldiers walk across the stage. Enter* PRINCESS *and her maids.*]

PRINCESS [*looking around*]: What beautiful clear water for my bath!

First Maid: Yea, Princess. Will you bathe here?

[*A baby's cry is heard.*]

Princess: What is it I hear? It sounds like a baby crying! Look about, maidens! Is there something here?

[*All look about.*]

Second Maid [*finds baby; all come running up to her*]: See what is here!

Princess: A baby hidden in a basket! Bring him to me!

[*Third maid hands basket to* PRINCESS, *who takes the baby out.*]

Princess: Oh, what a beautiful baby! He is mine, for I have found him! A Hebrew baby! His mother has hidden him in the bulrushes to save his life.

[MIRIAM *runs out.*]

Miriam: Lady, would you like a nurse for that baby?

Princess: A nurse for him? Yes, I do need a nurse.

Miriam: I can get you one very quickly.

Princess: Go bring her, child; I will wait here.

[MIRIAM *goes away running.*]

Princess: He is my boy, and I will call him Moses, for I drew him out of the water.

[*Enter the mother and* MIRIAM.]

Miriam: Here is the nurse, lady.

Princess: Will you take good care of this baby for me until he becomes a youth? I will pay you wages. I am the Princess, King Pharaoh's daughter. I will see that he is educated as a prince in my father's court.

[PRINCESS *and her maids go out.*]

Mother: My boy is saved! My boy is saved!

ACT III

SCENE I

PLACE: Pharaoh's palace.

CHARACTERS: King Pharaoh, Princess, Maids, Soldiers, Wise Men, Mother of Moses, Moses, Miriam, Aaron.

[*King sits on his throne, wise men and soldiers around. Enter messenger.*]

Messenger: O King, the Princess awaits without and would have speech with thee.

King: Bid her enter.

[*Enter* PRINCESS *and a few attendants.*]

Princess: O gracious King and father, I have a request, and I beg that you grant it.

King: Speak, my Princess; do I not always grant what you ask?

Princess: Yes, father, and I know that you will grant me this. Several years ago I adopted a son and I ask that you allow him to be educated in your palace.

King: Adopted a son! What can be the meaning of this? I never heard of this! Where did you get the boy?

Princess: I found him, a little baby, hidden among the rushes by the river bank.

King: Why was he hidden? That is strange!

Princess: He is a Hebrew boy, O father.

King: A Hebrew boy! Did I not command that every Hebrew boy should be killed?

Princess: I must take the blame; I had his life spared. Will you not let him be brought here?

King: No, I will not! No Hebrew boy shall be brought here!

Princess: If you would only see him, he is so beautiful, you would love him as I do. He is without; permit me to show him to you.

King: Bring him in.

[*Maid goes to get* MOSES. MOSES *enters with his mother*, MIRIAM, *and* AARON. PRINCESS *leads him to the* KING.]

Princess: This is my son. Is he not a wonderful boy?

King: He is fair to look upon, but yet he is a Hebrew.

Princess: O my father, forget that he is a Hebrew and remember only that he is my son.

King: O my Princess, for your sake, I accept this boy. I leave his training to you. May he grow up to be a prince worthy of the house of Pharaoh.

END

CHAPTER VI

THE DRAMATIZATION OF *RUTH*

Ruth was dramatized by the club during the fall of the year because it is a story of the Hebrew harvest time. In order fully to interpret the life of Ruth it was necessary for the children to secure information concerning the barley harvest in ancient Palestine, and also to become familiar with the old customs involved in the story. Many children brought pictures which illustrated the points under discussion, and some of them contributed by telling what they had been able to read at home. Independence on the part of the children in looking up data was always encouraged by the leader; the information which she had to give enriched and supplemented that which was brought in by them.

During the process of this dramatization constant comparisons were made with our own harvest time, and the study of the Hebrew harvest feasts and festivals served to increase the understanding and appreciation of our one harvest festival at Thanksgiving.

The method of procedure in presenting this story for dramatization follows closely that described in connection with *Joseph*. The Bible version of

Ruth is so simply and beautifully told that it needed very little adapting. When it was first given to the children parts of it were read and parts were told by the leader. Many scenes were then planned, but these were soon cut down to the three necessary scenes. From the first the children used much of the Bible language as they acted the story. The beauty and the poetry of it caused them to remember readily the exact wording in many cases.

Seven meetings were required before the group was satisfied with the play as a product of their best effort. As was the case with the other plays given by the club, the children who were to take the parts in the final presentation were selected by the group and not by the leader in charge. Every child knew each part and could represent any character, but children were chosen for specific parts because they seemed to represent certain characters unusually well.

The dramatization of this story called for much construction work. The reapers made their sickles of cardboard and covered them with gold or silver paper or painted them. They found pictures which gave the shape, and from these they cut the patterns (Fig. 15). One little girl brought a real sickle which had once belonged to a Filipino. It gave her happiness to reap with it, but the others were just as content to use the sickles from cardboard.

The need for a harvest song was felt, and in consequence a little song that most of the children knew was decided upon. The reapers sang it as they reaped and while Boaz was walking through his grain field. There was no real grain nor anything to represent it, the children deciding to leave this to the imagination. The action of the reapers and the words that were spoken gave evidence enough that grain was growing there.

There was very little stage setting used in the play. The stage was bare in the first scene in order to represent the road from Moab to Bethlehem. In the second scene a big earthenware jar was needed from which the reapers could drink. The third scene required a box which represented a seat by the city gate; the door which led off the stage at the side was used for the gate.

The action and the grouping of people in the third scene required careful planning by the children. Women came through the gate and passed down the street with water jugs on their shoulders; men gathered in groups to discuss bits of news; Boaz walked toward the gate and sat waiting for his kinsman. Finally, when the cousin appeared, Boaz hailed him and had him sit down. The citizens who were standing near were asked to be witnesses in this business transaction. That one man should take off his shoe and hand it to another was a custom that created much interest among the

children. They began to examine pictures for the kinds of shoes that were worn, and this led many of them to wear their own sandals, which approached most nearly to those seen in the pictures. The children who did not own sandals tried to make them with cardboard and strips of cloth (see Fig. 26).

The costuming was very simple. The reapers wore the same little brown slips which had been worn in every play that had been given. Boaz enriched his costume by wearing brighter colors in his headdress and girdle and by wearing a slip that was longer than the others.

The play follows as it was finally given.

RUTH

SCENE I

PLACE: In Moab, on the road to Judah.

CHARACTERS: Naomi, Ruth, Orpah.

SETTING: Naomi, Ruth, Orpah, are on the road going toward Judah.

[NAOMI *stops and faces about.*]

Naomi: Turn back, my daughters-in-law; return each of you to your mother's house. You have come with me far enough. I must take the rest of my journey alone.

Orpah and Ruth: Oh, do not send us back! We will not leave thee!

Naomi: Yea, you must leave me now. I am going home to my own country and my own people, to Bethlehem, Judah! It is ten long years since I left there to come to dwell in your land of Moab. But now that the famine is over I must return.

Orpah: But, Naomi, our mother-in-law, we love thee. Do not thou leave us!

Naomi: I must go. I came to this country happy—with my husband and two sons—but misfortune has dealt bitterly with me. My husband first died, and now my two sons, your husbands, are taken from me. I am old and sad. I have no one left to comfort me. I must go back to mine own people. Leave me, my daughters, and God bless you! [*Both daughters weep.*]

Orpah [*weeping and kissing* NAOMI]: If thou wilt be happier, then thou must leave us. I will return to my mother's house as thou sayest. [*She goes off slowly, weeping.*]

[RUTH *still stands by weeping. Takes hold of* NAOMI'S *hand.*]

Naomi: Behold, Orpah, thy sister-in-law, has gone back to her people and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law.

Ruth: Intreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.

Naomi: Since thou art so steadfastly minded to go with me, Ruth, I will cease urging thee. Come, thou mayest go with me to Bethlehem.

SCENE II

PLACE: In the barley fields of Boaz.

TIME: The harvest season.

CHARACTERS: Boaz, Ruth, Head Reaper, Reapers, Gleaners.

[*The reapers come in with their sickles, followed by the gleaners.*]

Head Reaper: Truly we have a wonderful harvest this year!

First Reaper: Yea, we will have food enough for ourselves and for all the poor in our city of Bethlehem.

Head Reaper: It is the great God that hath given us this bounty.

[*All sing harvest song as they reap. While they are singing* RUTH *comes in and begins to pick up the grain.*]

Second Reaper [*looking toward the entrance to the field*]: The master is coming, the great Boaz!

[*All reapers look in that direction as they stand, resting their sickles on the ground.* BOAZ *enters.*]

Boaz: The Lord be with you!

Reapers: The Lord bless thee!

[*All go to work again, singing as before.* BOAZ *walks among them; he sees* RUTH *and watches her.*]

Boaz [*to the* HEAD REAPER]: My good man, I would speak a word with thee; come hither.

Head Reaper: Speak, O master!

Boaz: Whose damsel is this that gathereth grain after the reapers?

Head Reaper: My master, she is Ruth, the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi, thy kinswoman. She hath been gleaning here since early morning.

Boaz: Go, bid the reapers not to harm her, and bid them let fall purposely some of the handfuls of grain for her.

[*The* HEAD REAPER *bows low and goes back among the reapers.*]

Boaz [*to* RUTH]: Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, but stay here by my reapers. Let thine eyes be on the reapers, and do thou glean that which they leave behind. When thou art athirst, go unto the vessels and drink that which the young men have drawn.

Ruth [*bows to the ground*]: Why have I found such favor in thine eyes, seeing that I am a stranger in the land?

Boaz: It has been told me of thy great kindness to thy mother-in-law, Naomi; how thou didst leave thine own people to come with her and be among strangers; and how thou didst leave thy gods to take the God of the children of Israel. The Lord will bless thee for this.

Ruth: I thank thee, O great Boaz, for thou hast comforted me and thou hast spoken friendly words unto me.

Boaz: Come hither at meal times and eat of the bread and dip thy morsel in the vinegar with my reapers.

[*The reapers have departed.* BOAZ *goes off.*]

Ruth: The Lord God is truly good unto me!

SCENE III

PLACE: At the gate of the city.

CHARACTERS: Boaz, a Cousin of Naomi, Ten Citizens, Ruth, Naomi.

[*Several citizens stand in groups, talking.* BOAZ *enters.*]

Boaz [*speaks to one of the group*]: Hast thou seen my cousin pass this way? I am seeking him.

First Citizen: Nay, good sir, I have not seen him.

Boaz: I must speak with him; I will wait here by the city gate; perchance he will come soon.

[*One or two citizens pass by and speak to* BOAZ, *saying, "Good-day, sir." Enter* KINSMAN.]

Boaz: Ho, Kinsman, turn aside! I would have a word with thee. Sit thee down.

[KINSMAN *sits down.*]

Kinsman: What wilt thou, Cousin?

Boaz: I would speak about a matter of importance; wait thou here until I can bring witnesses. [*He turns to*

citizens.] A piece of land is about to be sold; will ten citizens witness this deed?

Citizens: Aye, indeed. [*They come forward.*]

Boaz: Sit ye down here. [*They sit down.*] [*To* Kinsman]: Dost thou remember Naomi, our kinswoman, who went with her husband and two sons to the land of Moab?

Kinsman: Yea, I do know Naomi.

Boaz: She selleth a parcel of land which was her husband's. Now, thou art nearest of kin to Naomi, so I thought to advise thee that thou mayest have the first chance to redeem the land in the presence of the elders of the city. If thou dost not care to redeem it, then the right to redeem it cometh to me, for I am next of kin. What wilt thou do?

Kinsman: I will buy the land from our kinswoman, Naomi.

Boaz: On the day that thou buyest the field from the hand of Naomi, thou also takest Ruth, the Moabitess, for thy wife, according to our custom and law.

Kinsman: Then I will not redeem the land, for I cannot take Ruth for my wife. Take thou my right to redeem it and buy it for thyself.

Boaz [*taking off his shoe and giving it to the* Kinsman, *he says to the witnesses*]: Ye are witnesses this day that I have bought this parcel of land from Naomi and that I buy also, as my wife, Ruth, the daughter-in-law of Naomi. Of all this ye are witnesses.

Citizens: We are witnesses. [*Bow.*]

[Kinsman *returns shoe to* Boaz *and walks off.* Ruth *and* Naomi *come through the street.*]

Boaz: Ye are well met, Naomi, my kinswoman, and Ruth. I have good news for you; I have bought your land

and I can now take Ruth for my wife. Come, all ye fellow-citizens, for the wedding feast is prepared at my house! [*Takes* RUTH *by the hand.*]

Naomi: Blessed am I that I should live to see this good thing come to pass! The Lord hath been most gracious unto me!

END

CHAPTER VII

THE DRAMATIZATION OF *QUEEN ESTHER*

The story of Esther involves a much more complicated situation than any of the others here described. It is not too difficult for dramatization, however, if it is taken after such stories have been worked out as *David and Goliath* and *Joseph.*

In the case of this dramatic club the story of Esther was told to the children after they had had much experience with other plays. The interesting plot and the beauty and richness of the court made so great an appeal to them that they were eager to begin the dramatization. The story was first simplified and adapted by the leader, and then told in such a manner as to emphasize the main events. The method of procedure followed that described in chapter iii in connection with the story of Joseph. After the telling of the story the scenes were selected. These were acted out very freely at first, little thought being given to the words. Many pictures were brought in, and descriptions of the court of King Ahasuerus were read by the children from the Bible and from books of Bible stories.

In the second scene the children decided to have the maidens dance before the King. Several little girls who were trying out the part of Esther made up dances for themselves. This feature made this scene especially attractive.

This play was longer than those that had previously been dramatized, and it therefore took a longer period of time to bring it into final shape. There is no reason to hurry a dramatization. If the aim of this kind of work is kept in mind, there will be growth on the part of the children at each meeting. The value lies, not in how many stories can be dramatized during a year, but in how thoroughly the children are reliving a few good stories.

The play of *Queen Esther* made it necessary to construct several articles. Gold dishes of various kinds were made by covering cardboard with gold paper. These were used at the Queen's banquet. From the many scepters that were submitted the King chose the one for final use. Elaborate gowns and headdresses were gathered; beads and jewels of all descriptions were made from brilliantly colored papers.

The children took the responsibility of the costuming. The majority of them planned their own garments and either brought things from home or selected some suitable costume from those which the club had on hand. Two of the older girls

took entire charge of the younger ones and saw to it that each had some simple slip to wear in the play.

The play follows as it was finally worked out by the children.

THE STORY OF QUEEN ESTHER

SCENE I

PLACE: The King's palace—Shushan.

CHARACTERS: King Ahasuerus (king of Media and Persia), Haman (chief counselor), Persian Princes, Servants.

[*The* KING *is seated on his throne, princes seated before the* KING, *and* HAMAN *is seated by the* KING'S *side. Servants are bringing drinks in golden vessels.*]

King: The seventh day of this feast hath come, and on this day will I bring my beautiful Queen, Vashti, before you. The princes of my land must depart, bearing a good report of my fair Queen as well as of the great riches of my court. Chamberlains, come forth! [*The servants come before the* KING *and bow.*] I command you to bring Vashti, the Queen, before my presence. [*Servants withdraw.*]

First Prince: O King, this is a great honor that thou bestowest upon us!

Second Prince: Yea, Vashti, the Queen, is already known over the land for her wondrous beauty. We are most happy that thou wilt allow thy servants to behold her.

Third Prince: What wonderful tidings we will spread over thy provinces, O King. Thy people do not know the half of thy riches and thy wonderful greatness and generosity.

[*Enter servants. They bow low.*]

King: Rise; what is thy message?

[*They do not rise.*]

First Servant: O King, be merciful unto us!

[*They bow lower.*]

King: What meaneth this? Speak! [*in astonishment*] I command thee. Where is the Queen?

Second Servant: O great King, we delivered thy message as thou didst command, but the Queen has refused to come before thy presence.

[*All the princes and the* KING *show surprise and anger.*]

King: Refused to obey me? This is impossible! Are ye certain that she understood the meaning of my command?

Servants: We are, O King.

King: She hath refused! It cannot be! [*He looks absently away.*] She must be punished.

Haman: What shall we do to Queen Vashti according to the law, because she hath not performed the commandment of King Ahasuerus?

First Prince: She hath not done wrong to the King only, but also to all the princes of the land, for this deed of the Queen shall become known unto all the women of Media and Persia and they shall despise the command of their husbands: "Because," they shall say, "King Ahasuerus commanded Vashti, the Queen, to be brought before him and she came not."

Second Prince: What shall we do? This will cause great trouble and disobedience.

King: What thinkest thou, Haman, my chief counselor?

Haman: If it please the King, let there go forth a royal commandment and let it be written among the laws of the Medes and Persians that Vashti come no more before Ahasuerus, and let the King give her royal estate to another

that is better than she. Then when this decree shall become known all wives shall give honor unto their husbands.

King: This saying pleaseth me greatly. I shall do accordingly. [*To servants*]: Send letters unto every province to every people, which shall state this decree, so that every man shall know it.

Haman: O King, I pray thee, let there be fair maidens brought before thee from which thou shalt choose another which shall be thy Queen.

King: So be it! See that fair maidens from every province be brought here to my palace; and the one that pleaseth me best, I will take her for my Queen.

[*All bow.*]

SCENE II

PLACE: At Shushan, the palace.

CHARACTERS: King Ahasuerus, Mordecai, Maidens, Haman, Servants, Courtiers.

[*Two servants are standing in the court room of the palace. Enter a messenger followed by* ESTHER *and* MORDECAI.]

Messenger [*announces to the servants in the room*]: This maiden has come to see the King.

[*He goes out.*]

First Servant: This is the place. Wait thou here. [*To* MORDECAI]: What art thou here for? Thou wilt have to depart.

Mordecai: I only brought this maiden. I beg of thee let me have a few words with her; then I will withdraw.

First Servant: Speak then quickly, before the King cometh.

[*Servants withdraw to another part of the room.*]

Mordecai [*taking* ESTHER'S *hand*]: Esther, my child, thou art like my very child, for although I am but thy

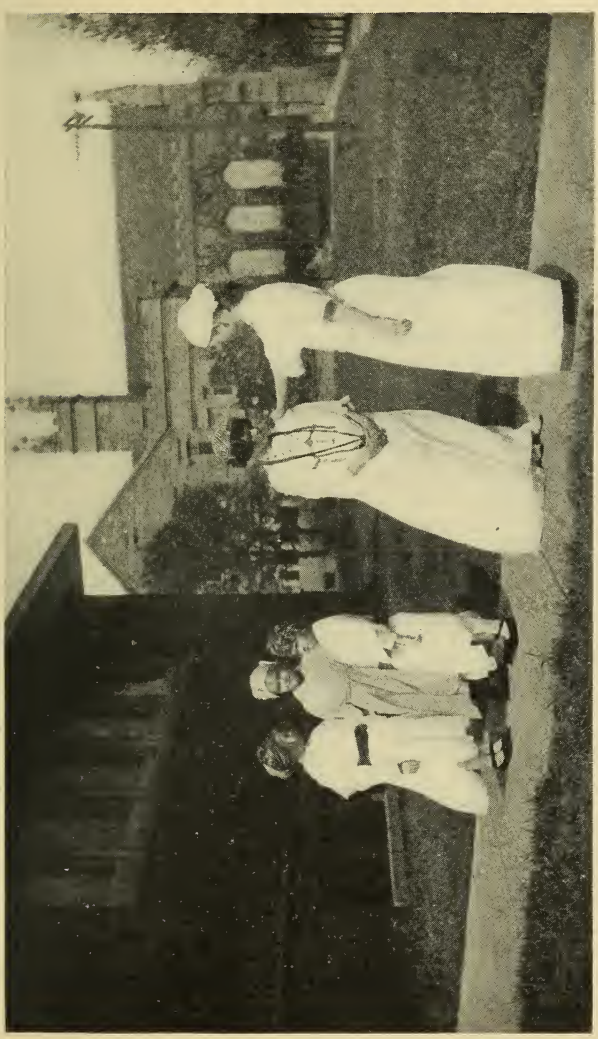


FIG. 3.—Esther and Mordecai

uncle I have been as a father to thee. I bid thee farewell now, for it seemeth to me that the King will surely choose thee to be his Queen—thou art so fair. This one thing remember, tell him not that thou art a Jewess. Fare thee well, Esther! May the Lord bless thee!

Esther: Farewell to thee, Mordecai!

[MORDECAI *goes out. Other maidens come in announced by the messenger.*]

Messenger: These maidens would see the King.

[*The servants show them where to sit. Enter second messenger.*]

Second Messenger: The King! The King!

[*Enter* KING *and* HAMAN. KING *sits on his throne.*]

Second Servant [*bowing before the* KING]: O King, the maidens from all parts of the country have arrived and await thy pleasure.

King: Let them come before my presence one at a time, and I will choose from among them the one that seemeth most fair.

[*The musicians begin playing and, one by one, the maidens come out. They bow and dance.* ESTHER *comes last of all. As* ESTHER *dances the* KING *speaks.*]

King: What marvelous beauty! Surely this maiden is fair enough to be my Queen.

Haman: Yea, O King, thou art right; she should be thy Queen.

King [*takes* ESTHER'S *hand*]: What is thy name, fair maid?

Esther: My name is Esther, O King.

King: Esther, I do here take thee to be my Queen. Bring the royal crown and the Queen's robes!

[*Servants come immediately and put them on her.*]

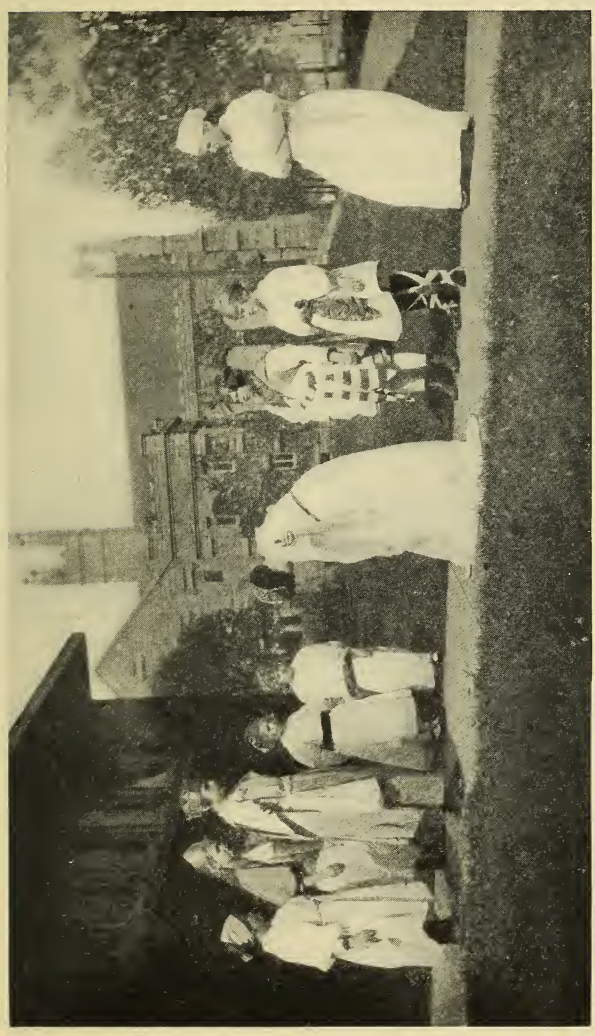


FIG. 4.—Esther dances before the king

King [*leading* ESTHER *out*]: Come unto the wedding feast which is now prepared. All are welcome!

SCENE III

PLACE: The palace gate.

CHARACTERS: Haman, Mordecai, Servants, Esther.

[*Servants are standing and walking by the gate. Women come by carrying water jars.* MORDECAI *stands apart from the crowd.* HERALD *comes in.*]

Herald: Bow the knee, bow the knee. The chief counselor, Haman, approacheth! Thus saith the King.

[HAMAN *comes in. All bow to him except* MORDECAI.]

Haman [*pointing to* MORDECAI]: Who is this man who doth not bow the knee to me?

First Servant: He is Mordecai, the Jew, my lord. [*To* MORDECAI]: Why dost thou break the King's commandment?

Haman: Thou Jew! Dost thou think that thou art mightier than I, whom the King hath set above all the princes of the land? Thou shalt suffer for this. [*Turns to servant.*] Send letters unto all the King's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day—even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and to take the spoil of them for prey.

[*Servant bows and goes away.* HAMAN *passes on, leaving* MORDECAI *with two servants.* MORDECAI, *in deep thought, walks anxiously up and down.*]

Mordecai: I must see Queen Esther. Canst thou not take me to the Queen?

Second servant [*laughing scornfully*]: Thinkest thou that the Queen will see thee?

Mordecai: Give the Queen this paper and say to her that I, Mordecai, the Jew, bid her come to me.

[*Servant withdraws.*]

Mordecai [*walking, talks to himself*]: Israel, O Israel, my people! You shall not perish. Esther, your Queen, will save you.

[*Enter* ESTHER.]

Esther: Mordecai, my uncle, why art thou here? Thou lookest unhappy. Hath aught happened to thee?

Mordecai: Yea, Esther, I am unhappy. I have sorrowful news to tell thee.

Esther: Chamberlains, withdraw! Speak, Mordecai; tell me quickly. It may be that I can help thee.

Mordecai: Esther, thou canst help me, and thou art the only one who can. Haman, the King's counselor, hateth the Jews—thy people and mine. He hath sent a decree over all the country commanding that every Jew, both old and young, little children and women, be killed on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. Esther, thou must save thy people and thyself? Thou must go before the King and beg of him that he spare thy people.

[ESTHER *shows great distress.*]

Esther: Oh, what shall I do? Dost thou not know that for one who dareth to go before the presence of the King, if the King hath not called him, there is certain death; except to whom the King shall hold out the golden scepter—he may live? I have not been called to come in unto the King these thirty days. He will surely put me to death for such boldness.

Mordecai: Thou must go unto the King even so. Think not that thou wilt escape death from Haman because thou art in the King's house. Who knoweth but that thou hast been made Queen for such a time as this!

Esther [*after thinking deeply*]: Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day; I also and my maidens will fast likewise—and so I will go in unto the King, which is not according to the law, and if I perish, I perish.

Mordecai: May the Lord go with thee!

SCENE IV

PLACE: In the court of the King's palace.

CHARACTERS: King Ahasuerus, Esther, Haman, Courtiers, Servants.

[*The King sits on his throne.* QUEEN ESTHER *enters and bows before the* KING. *The* KING *looks at her in astonishment.*]

Courtiers [*in loud whispers*]: The Queen! It is the Queen!

King: Esther, hast thou dared to come before my presence when I have not called thee? Thou surely dost not know what thou art doing! This act of boldness can mean thy death! But thou art so beautiful, Esther, I cannot be hard with thee. Rise! [*He holds out the golden scepter.*] What is the request that has brought thee here? It shall be given thee, even though it be half of my kingdom.

[ESTHER *touches the scepter and rises.*]

Esther: If it seemeth good unto the King, let the King and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for them.

[*She turns and goes out.*]

King: Hearest thou, Haman? Make haste and let us do as Esther hath said. Come, we will prepare for this banquet.

[HAMAN *bows.* *The* KING *and* HAMAN *go out.* *Others follow.*]

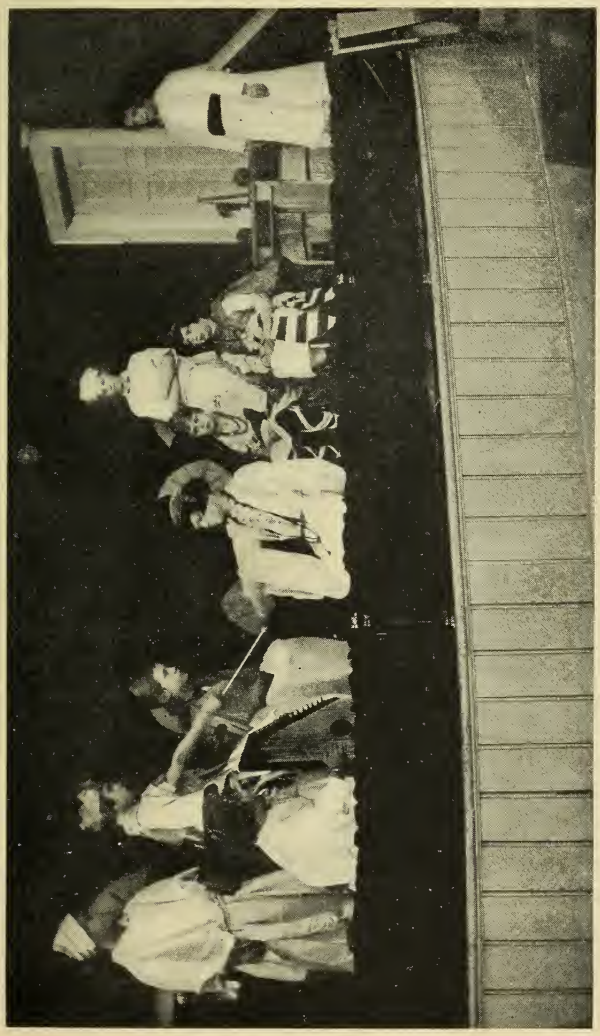


FIG. 5.—The king holds out the scepter to Esther

SCENE V

PLACE: The Queen's apartment.

CHARACTERS: Queen Esther, King Ahasuerus, Haman, Servants, Mordecai.

[*The servants are preparing the feast. Enter* ESTHER.]

Esther: See ye that the feast is in readiness, for the King will soon arrive.

[*Servants bow.*]

Servant: The King cometh!

Esther [*going to meet the* KING *as he enters*]: Welcome, my lord!

[*The* KING *sits upon a throne prepared for him.*]

King: I am happy to be with thee, my fair Queen. Thou must have a request which thou desirest to make—speak, be not afraid. I will grant it though it be half of my kingdom.

Esther: If I have found favor in thy sight, O King, and if it please the King, let my life be saved and the lives of my people—the Hebrew people. We are to be destroyed, to be slain and to perish.

King: Thy people? The Hebrew people? Who is this and where is he that dareth in his heart to do this thing to thy people?

Esther: The enemy is thy chief counselor, this wicked Haman.

King: Did Haman do this deed? How didst thou know of his plan?

Esther: O King, Mordecai, the Jew, my uncle, hath shown me the letter which Haman hath sent over the country. The Jews are to be killed on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. I am begging thee for my life and for the lives of my people!

FIG. 6.—Queen Esther pleads for her people

King: Fear not, Esther; thy people shall be saved. Mordecai, the Jew, hath once done me a great service. He hath not been rewarded for this. He shall have honor, for he deserveth it.

Servant: The great Haman hath come, O Queen.

[HAMAN *enters; they seat themselves, and the feast is served.*]

King: Haman, what shall be done unto the man whom the King delighteth to honor?

Haman [*aside*]: Whom would the King like to honor more than myself? [*To the* KING]: For the man whom the King delighteth to honor, let the royal apparel be brought which the King useth to wear, and the horse which the King rideth upon, and the royal crown which is set upon his head; and let these be given the man whom the King delighteth to honor; and let him ride on horseback through the streets of the city; and proclaim before him, "Thus it shall be done unto the man whom the King delighteth to honor!"

King: Make haste and take the royal apparel and the horse as thou hast said and do even so unto Mordecai, the Jew, that sitteth at the King's gate. Let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.

[HAMAN *bows his head low and goes out to* MORDECAI.]

Servant: O King, Haman hath built a gallows upon which to hang Mordecai, the Jew, this day.

[HAMAN *returns with* MORDECAI *and puts on the crown, etc.*]

King: Let him who hath made the gallows hang upon it!

[*Servant takes* HAMAN *out.*]

King: Come near, Mordecai. Thou hast found great favor in mine eyes. From henceforth thou shalt be my chief counselor, and thou shalt rule the land in Haman's place. Thy people shall be spared, and letters shall be

sent over all the land and into every province which shall state that the Hebrew people shall not be destroyed, but instead they shall be honored and have joy and feasting.

Mordecai: I thank thee, O King and Esther, my Queen, for the great deliverance and for this great honor to me. May the Lord give me strength to deal wisely with these peoples.

Esther: This is a great happiness which thou hast bestowed upon me, O King.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DRAMATIZATION OF *ABRAHAM AND THE THREE GUESTS*

This incident should be simplified and adapted before it is told to children. The dramatization is best worked out in the form of a short, free play which involves only one act. It is unnecessary to carry it to the point of fixed words and actions. The emphasis should be placed upon the customs of the times which are so well brought out in the story; for example, the hospitality of Abraham to the strangers represents the feeling toward strangers among the nomad peoples, and the manner in which he showed his hospitality makes children acquainted with customs peculiar to those people. There is excellent opportunity here for enriching the children's understanding of the life of a shepherd people, of which the Israelites are an example.

Descriptions and pictures of the kind of tent the people lived in are necessary. It is important that children should get the idea of the correct shape of the Arab tent and not confuse it with the Indian wigwam. No stage scenery need be used; it is best to leave that to the imagination. A curtain

may be put up to represent the front of the tent, but nothing more.

There is much of this incident that should be left out in the telling; by no means should it be read directly from the Bible to children. The story may be told so that the following points are emphasized:

Abraham is sitting at the door of his tent. Three men appear; he runs to meet them and bows to the ground. He invites them to rest under the shade of the tree and offers to get food and to have their feet washed. The strangers sit and talk together, then Abraham comes with the food. They all eat and are rested, and as they rise to depart they ask for Sarah, Abraham's wife. The strangers tell Sarah and Abraham that they are to have a son whose name shall be Isaac and whom God shall bless and who shall be the father of many people. Abraham and Sarah are greatly astonished and pleased. They fall upon their knees to thank God, and when they arise they find that the strangers have departed. The scene closes with their exclamation, "Surely these were angels from the Lord who have visited us!"

This story was dramatized by the children of the dramatic club after they had had experience with many other dramatizations. During the first hour after the story was told the children succeeded in getting the play into very nearly its final form.

Two of the older girls, undertaking to write out the scenes as they thought they should be, brought in their versions at the second meeting. Each one was read aloud, the other children being asked to remember the parts that seemed especially good. Then by combining, adding to, or taking from, a composite result was obtained. Several children wrote down the final decisions at the dictation of the group.

Below is given the version which one child worked out by herself, and following that is the final form of the play which the group as a whole decided upon. The leader purposely left this play entirely in the hands of the children; the product is wholly their own.

THE PLAY EXACTLY AS ONE CHILD WROTE IT

Abraham: The day is hot and I am weary. I will rest myself from the heat of the day. [*He seats himself in the shade of the tent.*]

Sarah: It is indeed hot, and I will bring thee food and drink that thou mayest refresh thyself. [SARAH *retires into the tent.*]

Abraham [*rises to his feet and shades his eyes with his hands*]: Sarah, come hither! Yonder are strangers who are in need of rest. [SARAH *comes out, and she and* ABRAHAM *kneel before them.*] Welcome, strangers, seat yourselves that ye may rest. My wife, Sarah, will bring you food, and water that you may wash your feet.

First Stranger: The Lord bless thee, Abraham. [SARAH *and the servants withdraw, and* ABRAHAM *and the*

three men seat themselves before the tent. SARAH *returns with water and food. The strangers wash their feet and eat.*]

Sarah [*offering them food*]: Drink thou this fresh milk, and refresh thyself with this fruit, for ye look weary. [*They finish eating and* SARAH *and the servants retire.*]

Second Stranger: We bring thee good tidings and would speak with thee and thy wife. [SARAH *comes from within the tent.*]

Third Stranger: We are messengers from the Lord to tell thee that thou wilt have a son.

First Stranger: He will be the father of many men and thousands will respect him. Ye shall name him Isaac.

Sarah: That cannot come to pass! For many years I have been childless, and the Lord will not give me a son.

Abraham [*falling on his knees*]: Thanks be to the Lord! A son at last!

Sarah: Can it be that these tidings are true? If so, it is indeed a message from the Lord! [*She too falls on her knees before them. The three men quietly leave, and when* SARAH *and* ABRAHAM *rise to their feet they are out of sight.*]

Abraham: They were angels from heaven! Our wish has been granted at last!

END

The following is the play as it was finally presented:

ABRAHAM AND THE THREE GUESTS

PLACE: In front of the tent of Abraham.

CHARACTERS: Abraham, a Shepherd; Sarah, His Wife; Three Strangers; Four Servants.

[ABRAHAM *and* SARAH *come out of the tent.*]

Abraham: The day is hot, and I am weary; I will sit down and rest in the shade of this tree.

Sarah: Yea, it is hot. I will bring thee drink and food that thou mayest refresh thyself, my good husband.

[SARAH *goes into the tent.* ABRAHAM *sees three strangers approaching. He stands up, shades his eyes with his hands, and looks out over the desert. He calls to* SARAH.]

FIG. 7.—The three guests bless Abraham and Sarah

Abraham: Sarah, my wife, come hither! Lo, I see three strangers approaching over the desert.

[SARAH *comes out of the tent and looks also.*]

Sarah: They will be weary and in need of rest. I will hasten and prepare food and drink for them also.

[SARAH *goes away.* ABRAHAM *rises to meet the strangers; he falls on the ground before them.*]

Abraham: Welcome, strangers, to the tent of Abraham! If I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee! Let now a little water be fetched and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and this will strengthen your hearts; after that ye shall pass on.

The Three Strangers: So do as thou hast said, good Abraham.

[ABRAHAM *turns to the servants who are standing near.*]

Abraham: Haste ye, bring water; fetch a calf, tender and good. [*Servants hasten away.*] [*To the strangers*]: Sarah, my wife, will make ready three measures of fine meal and knead it into cakes.

First Stranger: Our host, Abraham, is a true servant of the Lord.

Second Stranger: We are indeed weary; we have journeyed far across the desert.

[*Servants appear with water and food.* SARAH *also brings food to them.*]

Sarah: Drink thou this fresh milk, and refresh thyself with these dates, for ye look weary.

Third Stranger: This is indeed a rest.

[SARAH *goes into the tent and the strangers finish eating. The strangers rise to go.*]

Abraham: Tarry yet awhile with us.

First Stranger: We thank thee, good Abraham, but we must be on our way.

Second Stranger: We would speak with thee and thy wife, Sarah. Where is thy wife?

Abraham: Sarah, come hither.

[SARAH *appears.*]

Third Stranger: We bring you a message from the Lord. You shall have a son, and his name shall be Isaac. He shall be the father of many men, and thousands shall respect him.

Sarah: Surely, this cannot come to pass!

Abraham: Thanks be to God for this great gift!

[SARAH *and* ABRAHAM *fall down on their knees before the strangers. The strangers stretch out their hands to bless them.*]

Three Strangers: The Lord will bless you, Sarah and Abraham!

[*The strangers depart.* ABRAHAM *and* SARAH *arise.*]

Abraham and Sarah: Surely these were angels from the Lord!

END

As this play was very short, the suggestion was made that we might lengthen the program, as well as make it more interesting, by having some of the children tell the audience just how we worked up the dramatization. The two older girls undertook this and decided entirely by themselves just what they would say. One of them wrote with great care a description of the method of procedure. She read it to the club for approval, then she learned it by heart and gave it in an interesting manner to the audience on the day the play was given. The other girl wrote a poem about it, and recited it just before the play was given. The description and poem are as follows:

THE INTRODUCTION

By MARGARET MILLER

The play which the children are now going to give—*Abraham and the Three Guests*—has been worked out and practiced at the dramatic club. This club meets every Sunday afternoon from three until four o'clock, and is composed of any of the children of the Sunday school who wish to belong.

The first Sunday Miss Miller told the story to the members, and then they, knowing it, acted it out, making up the parts as they went along. This they did several times until they knew the story perfectly.

The two oldest girls did not take part in the acting of the play, but became assistants and helped Miss Miller direct it. During the next week the assistants wrote out the speeches very much as the children had made them up. These were read before the club and discussed, and after a number of suggestions had been added by all the children present the scene was finally written as it now is.

The children each took home a part to learn, and the following Sunday they all tried the different speeches. Before the final characters were chosen each child was able to represent any one of them. The final characters were decided upon by the group and were chosen according to their preferences and their ability to enact the different parts.

Unfortunately, most of the costumes which the club had on hand were much too small for the children this year. We therefore held a sewing-bee during the week, and lengthened the old ones or made new ones where we found it necessary.

We have worked on this play for five meetings, which represents altogether five hours, except for a little work that the assistants did outside.

We have had much fun with this play, and we are hoping that you will enjoy it too.

POEM

By MELBA PYLE

Before you soon you shall see
The story of *Abraham and the Strangers Three.*
The partakers, they have worked;
The assistants, they have shirked—
But not as much as you would think,
For they have helped to join each link.
As day by day passed quickly away
We read the Bible and wrote the play.
Each child helped as best he could,
And thus we worked in brotherhood.
Word with word we did neatly join,
Then home we went, our parts to learn,
Next to the box where the costumes lay,
And straight to sewing and not to play.
And 'tis our happy aim, you see,
To make you joyous as can be!

CHAPTER IX

THE DRAMATIZATION OF *DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN*

The story of *Daniel in the Lions' Den* was dramatized by the members of the club according to the same methods as those which were used in connection with the story of *Abraham and the Three Guests*.

This play is given here in order to show how a story which deals with a miraculous event may be treated. When Daniel was thrust into the den of lions, he was in reality put out of the door which opens at the side of the stage. The children readily came to the decision that it was unnecessary to show Daniel actually in the den of lions on the stage. In telling the story no explanation was made or asked for concerning the miracle which happened. The children accepted it and enjoyed it as they would any other good story.

The final play which follows represents entirely the children's interpretation; the product is their own.

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN

SCENE I

PLACE: The court room of King Darius.

CHARACTERS: King Darius, Daniel, Four Conspirators, Soldiers, Servants.

[KING DARIUS *is seated on his throne. Soldiers and attendants stand nearby. The conspirators are talking together at one side.* DANIEL, *followed by two soldiers, comes in and kneels before the* KING.]

Daniel: King Darius, live forever!

King Darius: Good Daniel, I have sent for thee that thou mayest know my will. It has pleased me to set over my kingdom one hundred and twenty princes, and over these princes have I set three rulers. Thou hast been so faithful and true that I wish to make thee the first of these three rulers. Thou shalt have great responsibility, and thou shalt report to me when thou thinkest it well to do so.

Daniel: Thou art kind and gracious unto me, O King! May the Lord, Jehovah, help me to do this.

King Darius: Come unto the feast, Daniel, and have the royal robe placed on thee.

[DANIEL *bows to the* KING *and they both go out, followed by the soldiers and servants.*]

[*The conspirators are left alone in the room. They show great anger and begin talking to each other.*]

First Conspirator: See how this Daniel has found favor in the King's sight! He is not of our country, he belongs to the Hebrew people; but the King has appointed him over us all! We must destroy this Daniel.

Second Conspirator: Yea, thou art right. What can we do?

[*They all walk back and forth in deep thought.*]

Third Conspirator: I can think of nothing against him!

Fourth Conspirator: Thou sayest the truth; he hath no fault. He is faithful and doth nothing wrong.

First Conspirator: I can think of nothing, save that we find it against him concerning his God.

Fourth Conspirator: Ah, that is true; Daniel worshipeth a different God; I have seen him praying thrice in one day.

Second Conspirator: Let us influence the King to make a firm decree that whosoever shall worship any God or man, save the King, for thirty days, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

Third Conspirator: That soundeth well! If Daniel be faithful to his God, he will surely disobey this decree; and if the King once signeth it, the law of the Medes and the Persians saith that it cannot be altered.

First Conspirator: Ah, this will surely be Daniel's ruin now!

Fourth Conspirator: Come, let us hasten to the King and have him establish and sign this decree. He will be pleased; he will not think of Daniel.

Third Conspirator: Yea, we will hasten before the setting of the sun.

SCENE II

PLACE: The same as in scene i.

CHARACTERS: The same as in scene i.

TIME: Several days after the events in scene i.

[*The* KING *is seated on his throne. The four conspirators come before the* KING *and kneel.*]

The Conspirators: Great King Darius, live forever!

King Darius: Arise, my friends!

First Conspirator: O King, hast thou not signed a decree that he who shall pray to any God or man within thirty days, save to thee, shall be cast into the den of lions?

King Darius: This thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

Second Conspirator: A man in thy kingdom regardeth not this law, and doth pray to his God three times a day—we have seen him!

King [*with anger*]: Who is this man that breaketh my laws?

First Conspirator: He is Daniel, whom thou hast favored and made ruler!

King Darius [*with surprise and sadness*]: Daniel! It cannot be! Daniel must not die, for I love him.

Third Conspirator: Thou knowest, O King, that the law of the Medes and Persians is that no decree which the King establisheth may be changed.

King [*sadly*]: Thou sayest truly; the King's word may not be broken. Bring Daniel hither.

[*Soldiers go for* DANIEL. *The* KING *walks back and forth in great distress.*]

King [*talking to himself*]: Oh, I would that this had not happened!

[DANIEL *appears and bows before the* KING.]

King: Why hast thou disobeyed my law, Daniel? Wherefore didst thou pray to thy God when thou knewest of my decree?

Daniel: Great King Darius, my God, the God to whom I pray, is the true God, and I shall worship no other. Do with me what thou wilt.

King: Daniel, I would that thou hadst not done this thing, for I love thee. Thou art a brave and bold man! Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee! [*To the soldiers*]: Take this man from me; cast him into the den of lions.

[*Soldiers take* DANIEL *and thrust him into the den. The door is closed, and the* KING *seals it with his signet. The* KING *and attendants withdraw. The conspirators are alone.*]

First Conspirator: Daniel has fallen at last! No longer will he be the King's favorite!

Fourth Conspirator: We, instead, will be the favored ones!

[*They leave the room in high spirits.*]

SCENE III

PLACE: The same as in scene i.

CHARACTERS: The same as in scene i.

TIME: The next morning after the events in scene ii.

[*The* KING *hastens to the door of the lions' den.*]

King [*calling eagerly*]: O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

Daniel [*from within*]: O King, live forever! My God hath sent his angel and hath shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me, for the Lord knoweth that I have done no wrong, either before him or thee, O King!

King [*to servants who have followed him into the room*]: Come hither, servants! Quickly bring Daniel out that I may see him!

[*The door is opened, and* DANIEL *comes out. The* KING *shows great joy in greeting him.*]

King: Thy God is truly the living God! Bring forth the men that have done Daniel this wrong. Cast them into the lions' den.

[*The conspirators are standing in the room, looking at* DANIEL *in astonishment. The soldiers seize them and push them down into the den. As they go they cry to the* KING.]

Conspirators: O King, spare us!

King: I will now sign a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men shall bow before the God of Daniel, for he is the only true God. He delivereth and rescueth and worketh great wonders; he hath saved Daniel from the power of the lions.

Daniel: The Lord God will surely bless thee for this good thing!

END

CHAPTER X

THE DRAMATIZATION OF NEW TESTAMENT PARABLES

Many of the New Testament parables present interesting problems for dramatization. The selection should be limited to those which involve dramatic situations and unity of structure. The simplicity and conciseness of words and actions in many of the parables are qualities which call forth a ready and free response from children.

Among the parables which have been worked out by the dramatic club are *The Good Samaritan*, *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*, *The Great Supper*, *The Talents*, *The Prodigal Son*.

In the case of these short parables the story was not told first, but the parable was read to the children directly from the Bible. There was no discussion as to the truths supposed to be taught, the emphasis being placed entirely upon the story element involved. The customs of the times and the division of the story into scenes were discussed as fully as was done with other stories. Usually one or two meetings were all that were necessary for working one of these parables into dramatic form. When it was completed, the result was not

a finished product, as the words and action had been interpreted with slight variations each time. The children learned the story by heart, as it is given in the Bible. This influenced their words when they were dramatizing.

Several parables were given together at the meeting when parents and friends were invited. One child recited the Bible version just before the play was given. This feature added interest and dignity to the occasion.

The parables were given in the following order:

THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

[*Ten virgins with their lamps are waiting for the bridegroom.*]

First Virgin: The bridegroom tarries; let us rest here awhile.

Other Virgins: Yea, let us rest.

[*They all sit down and go to sleep.*]

A Cry Without: Behold, the bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet him!

[*All the virgins get up hurriedly. The five wise ones, with oil in their lamps, stand in readiness. The five foolish ones are in great confusion.*]

First Foolish Virgin: We have no oil! Our lamps are gone out!

Second Foolish Virgin [*speaking to the five wise virgins*]: Give us of your oil—we have none.

First Wise Virgin: Not so, lest there be not enough for ourselves and for you. But go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

[*The foolish virgins hasten away.*]

A Cry Without: Behold, the bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet him!

[*The* BRIDEGROOM *comes in, followed by a few attendants. He walks by, and the five wise virgins follow him. They go in a door which is closed after them. The foolish virgins come hurriedly back and rush to the door. They beat on it and call out several times.*]

Foolish Virgins: Lord, Lord, open unto us!

[*The door opens and the* BRIDEGROOM *stands there.*]

Bridegroom: Depart, I know you not!

END

During the work on this play the question arose as to the kind of lamps that were used at the time of the story. The children looked up pictures and descriptions, and from these they made themselves lamps out of plasticene or clay. Fig. 8 is a photograph of one of the scenes taken out of doors. The lamps can be seen, also the simple costumes which the children worked out.

THE GREAT SUPPER

[*The* MASTER *of the feast stands in his door and speaks to his servant.*]

The Master: Go, bid my friends come to the supper, for all things are now ready!

[*The servant bows; the* MASTER *goes into the house. The servant walks down the street, and as he meets people he delivers his* MASTER'S *message.*]

Servant [*to the men as they come by*]: My Master bids thee come to his feast, for all things are now ready!

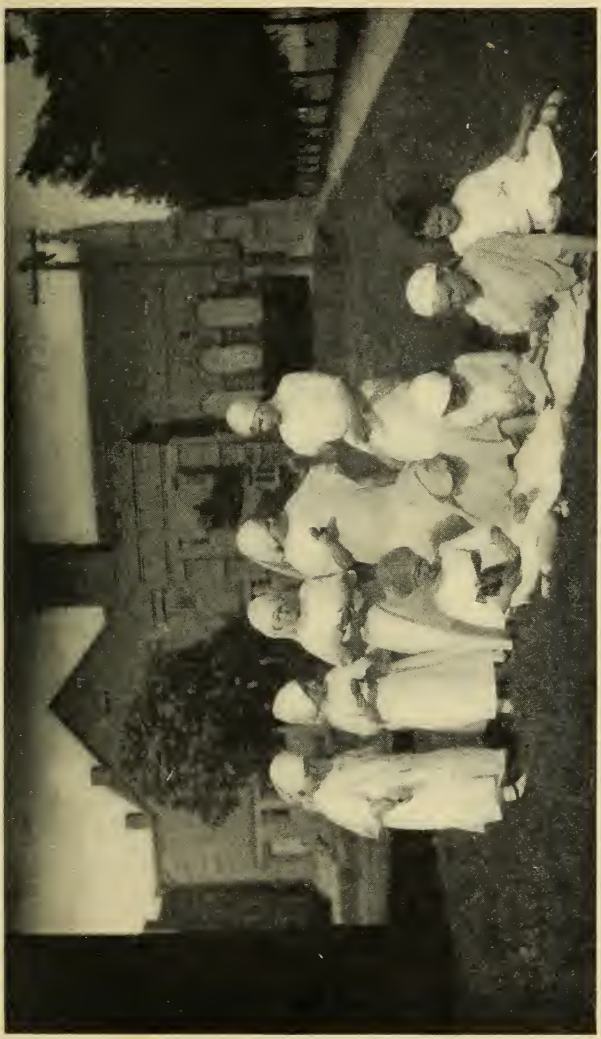


Fig. 8.—The wise and foolish virgins

First Man: Say to thy Master that I have bought a piece of land and must needs go and see it. I pray thee have me excused.

[*The servant bows and the man passes on. The servant delivers the message to the second man.*]

Second Man: I have bought five yoke of oxen; I must go to prove them. I pray thee have me excused.

Third Man: I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

[*The servant goes back to his* MASTER'S *house; the* MASTER *comes out to meet him.*]

Servant [*falls on his knees before his* MASTER]: O sir, I did as thou commandedst, but one by one they made excuse, and would not come to thy supper. One man had just bought a piece of land and must go to see it; another had bought five yoke of oxen, and was on his way to prove them; and another had just married a wife. All begged that thou excuse them.

Master [*shows great anger*]: What! They that are bidden refuse to come to my feast! Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the maimed, and the halt, and the blind!

[*The* MASTER *goes into his house, and the servant again walks down the street.*]

Servant [*as he meets the lame, the halt, and the blind*]: Come! My Master invites you to a great supper, which is now prepared at his house!

[*Each person, or group of persons, bows and thanks him with such remarks as*]—

Maimed, Halt, Blind: We thank thee; we will be there. We gladly accept this invitation.

[*The* MASTER *stands in the door to receive his guests as they come. When they are all in, the servant comes back to his* MASTER.]

Servant: Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

Master: Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you that none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper!

[*The servant bows; the* MASTER *goes in.*]

END

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

SCENE I

PLACE: The road from Jerusalem to Jericho.

CHARACTERS: A Traveler, Thieves, a Priest, a Levite, a Samaritan.

[*A man comes along the road carrying his bundle over his back. Many thieves rush out from ambush and attack him. Some knock him down and rob him, while others are looking anxiously up and down the road. After beating and cutting the man they go off, thinking that he is dead.*

As the traveler lies groaning and begging for water, a priest comes along the road, but when he sees the man he passes by on the other side of the road. Also a Levite comes along, and after looking at the man passes by on the other side of the road.

Then a Samaritan comes along, and as soon as he hears the groans he hastens over to the man. He kneels down and looks at him and speaks.]

Good Samaritan: What is this—a man! Hast thou been hurt, my friend?

Man: Oh, help me! Thieves fell upon me and took all I had, and have left me here to die.

Good Samaritan: I will help thee, my good friend; thy wounds shall be bound. Drink this wine. It may help

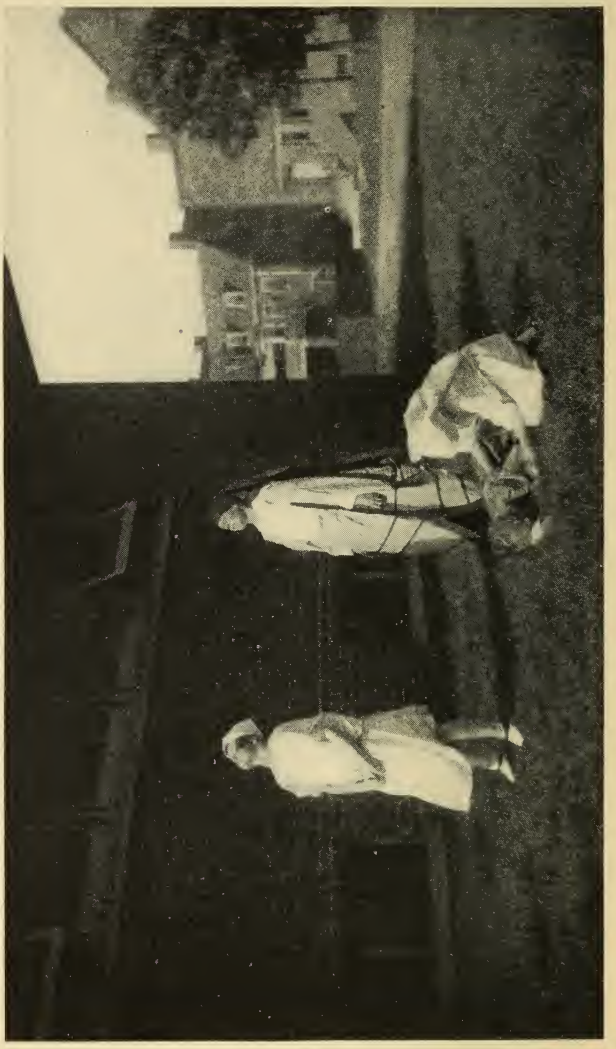


FIG. 9.—The Good Samaritan

thee. Art thou able to get on this beast of mine? I will take thee to the inn where thou wilt be cared for. [*He helps the man to rise and supports him as he hobbles off. They both go out.*]

SCENE II

PLACE: The Inn.

CHARACTERS: The Samaritan, the Traveler, the Innkeeper.

[*The* GOOD SAMARITAN *brings the man to the door of the inn and knocks. The* INNKEEPER *appears.*]

Innkeeper: Good day, sir.

Good Samaritan: Here is a wounded man. Take care of him. Here is money, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee. [*He gives the* INNKEEPER *some money. The* INNKEEPER *takes the man.*]

Traveler [*to* GOOD SAMARITAN]: God bless you, my friend!

END

THE PRODIGAL SON

ACT I

PLACE: In the father's home.

CHARACTERS: The Younger Brother, the Father, the Elder Brother, Servants.

[*The* FATHER *and* ELDER SON *come into the room together. The* YOUNGER SON *comes in from another door.*]

Younger Son: Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth unto me. I am weary of living at home. I will go into some far country and make my fortune.

Father: My son, why is it that thou desirest this? Hast thou not everything at home?

Younger Son: Yea, father, but I beg of thee to divide thy living between us. I must have my share.

Father: Thou art very foolish; nevertheless I will do as thou askest. [*To servant*]: Bring my money bags. [*To* ELDER SON]: And dost thou intend to take thy living also, and leave thy father?

Elder Son: Nay, father, I am fully content to live with thee; I do not want my portion.

[*Servant returns with money bags.* FATHER *gives money to his younger son.*]

Father: This is thy share—use it wisely.

Younger Son: I thank thee, father. I shall become a rich man with this; but now I must leave thee; I can stay here no longer.

Father: This grieves me, my son, for I know that thou art foolish—but go and learn thy lesson.

[*He stretches out his hands toward his son as if blessing him.*]

ACT II

SCENE I

PLACE: Along the roadside in a distant country.

CHARACTERS: The Prodigal Son, a Farmer.

[*The* PRODIGAL SON *comes down the road, tired and hungry. He sits on a rock and talks.*]

Prodigal Son: Would that I had something to eat! My money is all spent, and there is famine in the land. What shall I do? I am sick, and feel that I may soon die. If I could but find something to do that I might get a little food.

[*A man comes along. The* PRODIGAL SON *goes toward him and falls down before him.*]

Prodigal Son: O sir, I am starving unto death. Wilt thou give me any task to do that I may make enough to keep me alive?

Man: I have no work to be done—unless it be to take care of my swine. Thou wilt find them in yon field; they need a keeper.

Prodigal Son: I will gladly do this.

[*He goes off joyfully.*]

SCENE II

PLACE: In the field with the swine.

CHARACTER: The Prodigal Son.

[*The* PRODIGAL SON *comes in driving the pigs. He sits down.*]

Prodigal Son: How horrible is this life; I am dying of hunger. No man will give me anything—all I get to eat is the food that I give the pigs. Oh, I wish that I had never left home! How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants."

[*He rises and goes away hurriedly.*]

ACT III

SCENE I

PLACE: In front of the father's home.

CHARACTERS: The Father, the Prodigal Son, the Servants.

[*The* FATHER *stands looking for his son.*]

Father: It seemeth to me that I see my son coming home! I knew that he would come! I will go to meet him! [*He meets him.*] It is my son! [*The* FATHER *shows great joy. The* SON *falls on his knees before his father.*]

Prodigal Son: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

Father: Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!

SCENE II

PLACE: In the field, near the father's house.

CHARACTERS: Elder Son, Servant, the Father.

[*The* ELDER SON *is hoeing in the field. A servant comes out. The* ELDER SON *calls to him.*]

Elder Son: I hear music and dancing in the house; what do these things mean?

Servant: Thy brother is come; thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. Thy father sendeth for thee to come in. [*The* ELDER BROTHER *shows anger.*]

Elder Brother: I will not go in. Why should he make merry over my brother who has wasted his living?

[*The* FATHER *comes out.*]

Father: My son, wilt thou come unto the feast? Thy lost brother hath returned!

Elder Son: Lo, these many years do I serve thee; neither have I at any time disobeyed thee, yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as thy son was come, which hath wasted thy living, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

Father: Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. Come thou in to greet thy brother!

[*They both go in.*]

END

CHAPTER XI

THE DRAMATIC QUALITIES IN A GOOD STORY

The stories in the Bible, if taken just as they are given, present a body of material which is complicated by a historical background and a religious symbolism that is remote from the young child's experience. They embody the historical incidents as well as the myths and folklore of ancient Hebrew life, and for the most part they express the highest idealism of the Hebrew people. There is no reason, however, why good stories and appropriate incidents may not be given to children from this body of material through selecting from and simplifying the biblical version. A great deal of what is in the Bible should not be used, but there is much that is highly dramatic and becomes valuable for dramatization.

It is possible to adapt an incident by simplifying, and in a measure reorganizing, the parts, and yet to keep the dignity and integrity of the story as it is given in the Bible. The attitude of the children, created by contact with this type of story, should be one of reverence and dignity, coupled with a consciousness of the high ideals of the people they are impersonating.

Before any attempt is made to select parts of the Bible narrative for dramatization the leader, or director of the children, should have well in mind standards which will help in making the part that is chosen a well-organized story. When any good story is analyzed it is found to be built upon an underlying basic structure. There is always a beginning or setting; a middle part, where the incidents rise to a climax; and an end, where the events of the story are satisfactorily worked out. There should be a feeling of movement straight through the story; the incidents should develop; there should be action that leads to some end. A unity must underlie the whole story—there must be no part which is not essential to the working out of the plan. The end of the story should give a sense of completeness, of satisfaction.

It is often the case that the three essential parts of the story call for three acts when the story is dramatized. In some of our modern dramas five acts, but in many only three acts, are required in order to complete the structure. Sometimes, however, all three parts of a story may be given in a one-act dramatization. Before a story is dramatized it is very necessary that it be told so clearly that the children are conscious of these parts; otherwise the resulting drama will lack in organization. No matter how elaborate or simple the story, the children should have a feeling for the

basic structure, which should guide the form of the dramatization.

The leader in charge of a dramatic club in which Bible stories are used must take the responsibility of changing the Bible version so as to make an organic unit of the story and yet keep the spirit and big meaning. There are many parts of the Bible narrative which already embody this simple organization—or division into related elements—if all of the heavy, unnecessary incidents are omitted.[1]

Although the main purpose of these dramatizations is not that an artistic result be secured, yet that is an important factor, and should be recognized by both the leader and the children. The product many times will be necessarily crude and lacking in the aesthetic element, but nevertheless there should be an attempt, even though gradually, to train the children toward a recognition and an appreciation of the artistic qualities of the literary production they put forth, as well as of the stage groupings and effects.

[1]As a matter of fact, it is often the later editorial additions to the simple old stories that have produced the cumbrous effect. When the original story is recovered, it lends itself much better to the purpose here discussed. Such a reorganization of the stories with a preservation of the biblical language has been made in Soares' *Heroes of Israel* (The University of Chicago Press), where also there is much illustrative material interpretative of the situations.

Care must be taken that the stories chosen are ethically sound. The story of Jacob is one that may well be omitted. Jacob deceives, and yet all the good things in life come to him—he takes them away from those who rightfully have earned them. This injustice in the story always raises a question in the minds of the children, and for this reason it is not a good story. The stories of Samson, Jephthah, Jael, and others on this order should be eliminated for similar reasons. They are each based upon attitudes toward society and standards of friendship which are now outgrown. There are so many simple episodes in the Bible that can easily be readjusted into well-constructed stories, about which there can be no question of the moral value, that no time need be wasted in considering any story about which there is the least suggestion of an unethical quality when judged by our present-day standards.

CHAPTER XII

BIBLE STORIES SUITABLE FOR DRAMATIZATION

The stories which have been taken for dramatization in the previous chapters were not chosen because they are the best ones for that purpose, but because they represent different kinds of stories and illustrate the opportunity for various methods of presentation. There are many other stories and incidents in the Bible which are equal to, or better than, those described.

A list of some of these stories is given below, together with a few of the most essential points which should be considered in dramatizing each. No attempt is made to give the story in full or to elaborate the dramatization; the plan for each is merely suggestive.

I. SAMUEL

I SAMUEL, CHAPTERS 2 AND 3

The story of Samuel may be worked into a short play of one or two scenes. The most interesting and dramatic incident is the familiar one of the Voice Calling Samuel at Night. The first part of the story, however, is beautiful, and may be used along with this incident.

In scene i Hannah brings little Samuel to the temple and dedicates him to the Lord. Eli, the old priest, takes the child to live with him in the temple so that he may train him to serve the Lord.

Scene ii takes place several years later. It is night time, and the child Samuel is sleeping near the old priest, Eli. He thinks he hears a voice calling him, and he runs to Eli to ask what he wants. Eli has not called him and tells him to lie down again. Three times he runs to Eli, thinking that he hears him calling. Then the priest tells him that it must be the Lord who has spoken and tells Samuel what to say the next time he is called. Samuel hears the message from the Lord and, upon Eli's request, tells him what he has heard. Eli realizes that the Lord has spoken truly, and accepts his fate as just. He praises Samuel and tells him that he will soon leave the care of the temple and of the people of Israel to him.

Neither in this play, nor in any other play, should there be an attempt to represent the Lord's voice. The child may listen as if he were hearing someone speaking, and from what he says and does the audience will be aware of what is happening. For the sake of the result, from an artistic point of view, such parts as this should always be left to the imagination, no attempt being made to interpret them literally.

2. THE QUEEN OF SHEBA'S VISIT TO SOLOMON

I KINGS, CHAPTER 10

The visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon furnishes a unit of work for a short one-act dramatization. There is no plot or complicated situation involved and there is very little activity suggested. The attention of the children may well be directed, however, to the description of Solomon's court and of the rich gifts which were exchanged. This is an excellent opportunity to have the children do construction work. They should make many things which will help to give the impression of richness to the court. They may also make their own costumes richer by adding jewels and bright-colored sashes and headdresses.

This little dramatization will include many children. A number will be needed to come in with the Queen of Sheba, and there should be many attendants upon King Solomon. The conversation will be for the most part between Solomon and the Queen, heralds and servants making announcements.

The play opens with the Queen of Sheba's arrival at the court of Solomon. Messengers announce her to the King. Solomon talks with the Queen and she tells him that she admires his great wisdom and his wealth. Then Solomon commands that the feast be served, and while they eat

the Queen presents her gifts to Solomon. When the Queen takes her leave Solomon gives her wonderful presents. The play will end with the exit of the Queen and her attendants.

Unless the children put much thought upon the stage setting and the conversation, this incident may prove uninteresting. It has, however, great possibilities for the working out of a beautiful picture.

3. JOSHUA AND THE GIBEONITES

JOSHUA, CHAPTER 9

The story of Joshua and the Gibeonites is so simply told in the Bible that children of nine or ten years of age can read it as it is given and dramatize it directly from that version.

The dramatization of this narrative calls for many characters. The older children may take the parts of Joshua and the leaders of the Gibeonites, while the younger ones are needed for Israelite soldiers and citizens of Gibeon. All the characters in the play will need to do much acting even though they do not enter into the conversation.

Although the dramatization should be a product of the children's work, yet the leader should have well in mind the three main divisions of the story that she may guide the children by her questions. This story may be worked into one of the more

elaborate productions. The Bible language should be used and the result should be full of dignity and spirit. For detail in the method of presentation compare that employed in the story of Joseph (chapter iii).

The story may be given so that the following divisions or scenes are emphasized:

SCENE I

PLACE: At Gibeon. Street scene.

The inhabitants are discussing the victories of the Israelites. They are afraid of Joshua, the leader. Messengers report that he is advancing toward Gibeon. The Gibeonites plan to make a league with him so that he will not destroy their city. They decide to deceive Joshua by dressing as strangers from a far country, wearing old garments and taking moldy bread and wine.

SCENE II

PLACE: Joshua's tent at the camp of Gilgal.

The men from Gibeon come to Joshua and tell him that they are from a far country. They say that they have heard of his great victories and wish to make a league with him. The conversation between Joshua and these strangers is interestingly given in the Bible and may be quoted almost exactly. Joshua makes the treaty with them.

SCENE III

PLACE: At Gibeon.

The Israelite soldiers rush into Gibeon to take it, but find that the inhabitants are the same ragged strangers with whom they made the league. The Israelites reproach them, but cannot go back on their word, so spare their lives.

In order to punish the Gibeonites for their deception, Joshua makes them slaves of the Israelites.

There is much opportunity for construction work in the dramatizing of this story. Costumes, pieces of armor, and weapons may be made in a simple manner by the children.

4. ISAAC AND REBEKAH

GENESIS, CHAPTER 24

The story of Isaac and Rebekah is unusually valuable for dramatization. It involves a well-worked-out plot which is beautifully and simply told in the Bible, and which brings the children in contact with many interesting customs among the shepherd people. The story needs little changing; it may be given almost as it is written.

The following outline for the divisions of the story is merely suggestive:

ACT I

SCENE I

PLACE: Abraham's tent in Canaan.

Abraham is lying down in his tent. He is talking to Isaac, his son, about the wife he wishes him to have. He calls a servant and bids him go to Mesopotamia, his old home, and bring a wife for Isaac from his own kinsfolk. Abraham makes the servant swear that he will do as he has been told. Perhaps Abraham has his hand on Isaac while he is talking, and Isaac will take some small part in the conversation.

ACT II

SCENE I

PLACE: Mesopotamia.

The messenger, with his servants, comes to the well just outside of the city walls, where the women draw water. There should be no attempt to represent the camels. These may be indicated by the conversation and left to the imagination. The messenger, through praying to God, decides how he shall know which young woman to choose for Isaac. When Rebekah comes with her pitcher she offers to give water to him and to his camels also. The man is sure then that Rebekah is sent by God, and therefore he arranges to go to her father's house for the night.

This scene should be made very picturesque as well as interesting. The children may look up pictures of the wells of those times and then construct something that will serve the purpose. Pieces of pottery may be brought in on the shoulders of the women to represent water jugs. (Compare with the street scene described in the story of Ruth, chapter vi.)

SCENE II

PLACE: Rebekah's home.

In this scene comes the discussion of Rebekah's leaving home to become the wife of Isaac. The messenger makes known to the family that it is Abraham, their kinsman, who is sending for Rebekah. He gives Rebekah the gifts which his master has sent—earrings, bracelets, and the like. The family finally decide that Rebekah may go back to Canaan, but they ask the servant to let her stay with them for ten

days longer. He is unwilling to wait, and the question is therefore put to Rebekah. She answers that she will go with him now.

ACT III

SCENE I

PLACE: Canaan. A field near Isaac's home.

Isaac walks alone in the field at sunset. He is constantly looking into the distance, and he is wondering when the messenger will return with a wife for him. At length he sees the camels approaching and hastens to meet them. This is all indicated by his soliloquy—no camels must be shown. The servant and Rebekah have dismounted and come to meet Isaac. The servant gives Rebekah to Isaac who embraces her and shows his joy at receiving such a beautiful wife. The play should end where Isaac turns toward his father's tent with Rebekah.

While the children are playing this story there should be much detailed discussion which will give them an adequate background for understanding the customs upon which the story is based; and there should be shown many illustrations which will insure correct mental pictures.

5. ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW'S MEAL

I KINGS, CHAPTER 17

This may be used as a very simple incident of two scenes, or it may be elaborated into a longer play.

The first scene is placed by the gate of the city of Zarephath. As Elijah comes toward the gate

he asks a woman, who is gathering sticks, for a drink of water. She gives him the water and he asks for bread. The conversation between them brings out the facts that there is famine in the land, and that the widow has hardly enough meal left in the house to make bread for herself and for her son. She agrees to divide with Elijah, however, and takes him into her house. The wording for this scene may be taken almost directly as it is given in the Bible.

The second scene is placed in the house of the widow. The woman and her son are eating with Elijah. From what they say to each other it is apparent that the meal and oil have lasted for many days, and the three people have had plenty to eat during the famine. The widow is convinced that a miracle has been wrought by her guest. She begs him to tell her who he is. The stranger answers that he is Elijah, the prophet of the Lord, and that it is through the Lord's care of them that they have had food enough. The play may well end here with the final speech from the widow as it is given in the Bible: "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."

In case the part of the story which gives the raising of the widow's son is used, a third scene may be added, and the widow's speech would come at the end of that scene.

6. ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMMITE

II KINGS, CHAPTER 4

This incident is similar to the story of Elijah and the widow's meal, and may be dealt with in the same manner. It should be simplified by selecting certain parts for dramatization. The emphasis throughout falls upon the generous qualities of the two characters—Elisha, ever ready to help others, and the woman, who always kept a room for the prophet because she admired his goodness.

7. DANIEL INTERPRETS THE KING'S DREAM

DANIEL, CHAPTERS 1 AND 2

The stories about Daniel have unusually interesting possibilities for dramatization. They need very little explanation. They are so vividly and beautifully told in the Bible that the children will understand them readily and have no difficulty in interpreting them. A few historical facts may be given to make the setting clear. The following divisions are suggested for the first story:

SCENE I

King Nebuchadnezzar brings four Israelites into his court in order to have them trained as councilors. He appoints them a daily provision of the king's meat and wine.

SCENE II

The King dreams a dream and forgets it. He calls all of his wise men and demands that they tell him what his dream was and also interpret it. The wise men declare that this is an impossibility and refuse to obey. Nebuchadnezzar is furious and orders that they all be put to death.

Daniel then comes before the King and asks that the King give him time that he may interpret the dream. The King grants this.

SCENE III

Daniel appears before the King again. The King asks if he is able to tell what the dream was and to interpret it. Daniel answers that he is able to tell him, not, however, by his own power, but by the power of God in heaven who revealeth secrets. Then Daniel gives in detail the dream and tells King Nebuchadnezzar the meaning thereof. The King is so affected that he falls on his face and worships Daniel. He recognizes the God of Daniel, and commands that Daniel be made governor of Babylon. At Daniel's request he also makes the three other Israelites rulers of certain provinces.

This story may be treated in the same manner as the story of Joseph (chapter iii).

8. SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABED-NEGO IN THE BURNING FIERY FURNACE

DANIEL, CHAPTER 3

This story may be read to children directly from the Bible. After they have worked it over several

times the final product will include three scenes of the following character:

SCENE I

The heralds come through the streets crying aloud that King Nebuchadnezzar commands all people to bow down when they shall hear the musical instruments and worship the image of gold which he has set up. Those who do not obey will be put into a burning fiery furnace. The instruments of music sound and all the people fall to the ground to worship except the three Israelites, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Some of the men notice that the Jews do not obey, and go off immediately to tell the King.

SCENE II

The men come before the King and begin their story by saying, "O King, live forever!" The Bible language may be used directly here in the conversation which follows. The King is very angry at what these men tell him. He orders that the three Jews be brought before him. They are brought in and the King tells them that they will have to be put into the fiery furnace if they do not obey. The Jews are not afraid and reply that their God will take care of them. The King then orders them to be bound and to be taken out to the furnace, which has been heated seven times hotter than usual. Men come running back to the King to tell him that the servants which thrust the Jews into the furnace were burnt up by the heat, but that the Jews were not harmed. Another man runs in and tells the King that a fourth person is in the furnace, and that he resembles the Son of God. Nebuchadnezzar commands that the three men be brought out from the furnace. They come before him, with no mark of the fire on them. The King is so greatly impressed that he makes a decree that

no one shall speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. He then appoints these three men to positions of greater trust than ever before.

9. BELSHAZZAR AND THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

DANIEL, CHAPTER 5

This story, like the others from Daniel, is so dramatically told in the Bible that it may be taken almost exactly as it is given. It should be worked into a one-act play. Much attention should be given to the setting, and the children may make many things which will give some idea of the richness of the banquet hall.

The play opens with the feast of Belshazzar. The people are making merry in the midst of all the pomp and luxury of the court. Suddenly the handwriting appears on the wall. The King and the people see it and are terrified. The children should not attempt to show the handwriting, but from the words and actions of the King and the people the audience must be made aware of what is happening. None of the wise men present is able to interpret the handwriting. The Queen comes before the King and begs that he send for Daniel, the Jew. Daniel is brought in, and after a little thought gives the interpretation. The scene should end with the recognition of Daniel's power. The scarlet robe is placed on him and the

golden chain is put around his neck, and the King proclaims that Daniel shall be the third ruler in the land.

10. THE STORY OF JOB

THE BOOK OF JOB

The most majestic piece of literature in the Bible, and one of the world's masterpieces, is the Book of Job. The Prologue and Epilogue are in the prose epic style, which characterizes the best narrative portions of the Bible. The main part of the book is actually dramatic in form, and the deep problem of human suffering is discussed in the loftiest poetic language. The theme is so profound and the imagery so elevated that it is quite beyond the ability of small children. High-school students might well present the drama. Many of the speeches may be abbreviated, while the Prologue can easily be dramatized. Job has been so presented with great success by children of high-school age at All Souls' Church, Chicago. It may be noted that the voice of the Lord was given in an elevated monotone by a person unseen.

11. THE PROPHETS

For the older children many of the Prophets make interesting characters for dramatization. The great value of a study of the Prophets lies in their appeal as beautiful pieces of literature and

expressions of the deepest spiritual feeling, rather than in the dramatic situations presented. If a study is made of the life of the Prophets, and of the times in which they lived, ample material will be discovered which may serve as a background for the dramatization of these characters. This material is not entirely available from the Bible, but should be reinforced by outside references, such as *The Prophets of Israel* by C. H. Cornill, *The Modern Reader's Bible* by R. G. Moulton, *The Hebrew Prophets* by Chamberlin.

The prophet Amos may be taken as an example of what can be done with this material. The Children of Israel are celebrating their autumn festival with great joy and abandon. As the mirth is at its highest an unknown man makes his way through the crowd. He silences the festivity by chanting his dirgelike reproof to the merrymakers. The astonishment of the people at this sensational interruption is great. The high priest hurries toward him and demands an explanation for this unusual disturbance. He orders Amos to cease speaking and to go back to the hills and mind his sheep. Amos answers that he is sent by the Lord to reprove the people of Israel, and he continues to intone his lamentations. The most beautiful and vivid selections for use in dramatization are found in chapters 8 and 9. While the final beautiful words of the prophecy are regarded as an

editorial appendix, there can be no impropriety in using them as a dramatic climax. The people may then be represented as subdued in spirit, accepting the upbraiding as being the word of God.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other Prophets may be worked out in like manner. The result in each case, however, should insure the utmost dignity and beauty; otherwise the dramatization should never be attempted.

The many Prophets with their various messages suggest the possibility of their use in a pageant. This form of dramatization may be given to advantage by a group of children as a climax to their detailed study of the Prophets.

From each of the following subjects several dramatizations may be taken. They suggest many short one-act plays, and also some excellent long ones.

Saul Chosen and Anointed King of Israel. I Sam., chaps. 9 and 10.
Samuel Anoints David. I Sam., chap. 16.
David and Jonathan. I Sam., chaps. 18–20.
David Spares Saul's Life. I Sam., chap. 24.
Moses Begs Pharaoh to Allow the Children of Israel to Leave Egypt. Exod., chaps. 5–13.

It may be well to state, in connection with the selection of stories from the Bible for dramatization, that other stories outside of the Bible may

be dramatized by these same methods and will accomplish the same results. It is not best to allow children to dramatize in succession too many of the heavier type of stories, such as the Bible stories represent. They may become tired if they work too long at the same kind of dramatization. Children need stories which will lighten and relieve the extreme seriousness and dignity which they necessarily have to express in playing the Bible stories. There is a host of fairy tales, folk-tales, and historical incidents that may well be adapted for this purpose.

The Children's Educational Theatre, by Alice Minnie Herts, describes dramatic work with children older than those who made the plays in this book. It is an interesting experiment in education which uses dramatization as a means for accomplishing certain aims.

CHAPTER XIII

STAGE SETTING AND PROPERTIES

The point has been emphasized in the preceding chapters that very little stage setting and only a few properties are used in connection with these dramatizations. It is always best that as much as possible should be left to the imagination, and that only such setting and properties be used as the children themselves can construct and as are needed to produce the atmosphere of the play. This point of view influences any consideration of these matters.

It is frequently true that, after the children have made the articles they find a need for, the results are very crude, and there is yet much opportunity for free play of the imagination. Great benefit is derived, however, through the construction of these objects. The children gain a clearer understanding and a keener appreciation of them after they have had the experience of trying to express the shape or form through some medium, such as clay-modeling, paper-cutting, drawing.

Care should be taken that children make nothing in the nature of stage scenery, such as trees, grass, bulrushes, and other bits of landscape. The only

stage setting which seems at all necessary for them to make involves very simple designs which show the characteristic ornamentation of the times, for example, the lotus and papyrus designs in Pharaoh's court.

Drawings and descriptions of a few of the most essential stage properties and settings are given below, with suggestions as to where and how each may be used.

Water jugs and dishes.—In the earlier stages of Hebrew history—as is found to be the case with all primitive shepherd people—skins and wooden bowls were used for holding water, milk, and food. Clay vessels were probably not in general use during the nomadic period. When dramatizing the stories of Abraham and Isaac, and others of that period, this fact should be taken into account, and only vessels of wood and skin should be used.

Most of the clay utensils, which are mentioned in the stories of a later time, were shaped like those shown in Fig. 10. Many of the water jugs had small handles, though some were without handles. Fig. 11 shows the position in which a Hebrew woman usually carried her water jug.

The Hebrews had little interest in the aesthetic except in the realm of literature, and the lack is very evident in their pottery. The water jugs are far from having the beauty of line and proportion

which is found in Greek pottery. Whenever any of these vessels are needed for use in a dramatization, it is well to have the children bring jars and

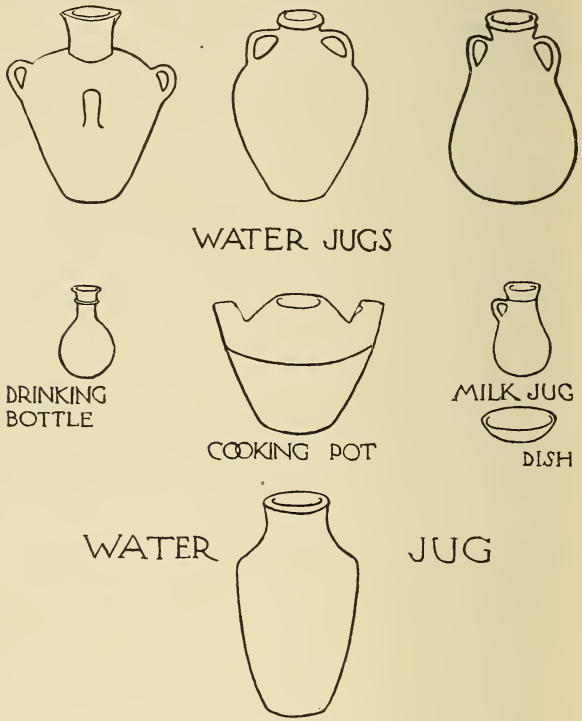


FIG. 10

bowls from home which conform as nearly as possible to the shapes here given. Earthenware bowls and jars may be used effectively.

Wells.—The importance of wells in the life of the early Hebrews cannot be overemphasized. The scarcity of water in the desert made the digging of wells a necessity for the survival of people and of flocks. As much of the land was rocky, wells could be dug only at certain places. These favorable places were the means of determining where the tents were to be pitched. In most of the stories of the nomadic life wells play a conspicuous part.

WOMAN CARRYING WATER JUG

FIG. 11

Children should have correct mental pictures of those ancient wells, so that they do not confuse them with the modern wells. The wells of Palestine usually had low stone walls around them, and often big flat stones for covers. The rocks were piled high enough to keep animals from falling in. In some of the wells the water was so low in the ground that people had to go down steps on the inside in order to get it. In other wells the vessels were let down by means of ropes. The women of the land were always required to draw and carry the water.

The simplest way for children to represent a well on the stage is by piling up rocks to resemble the outside or by using something that will look like a great stone. Fig. 12 shows two kinds of wells in Palestine.

FIG. 12

Staff and rod.— The shepherd boy always had with him a rod and a staff (Fig. 13). The rod was about two and a half feet long and was used for protection. The thick knob at the end was cut out of the tree from which the limb came, and was frequently covered with knots or nails to make it more terrible as a weapon. The children may find pieces of wood which will serve the purpose, or if they live near a forest they may make their own rods.

The staff was usually about five feet long. The shepherd used it to help him climb hills and mountains and also to keep the sheep from straying. Some staffs were nothing more than the straight limbs of trees; others had a fork or crook at the end so that they could more easily catch into the

wool of the sheep when they needed guiding. Children may use long sticks or branches from trees when they represent staffs.

Sling.—The sling which was used in David's time was frequently woven of rushes, hair, or

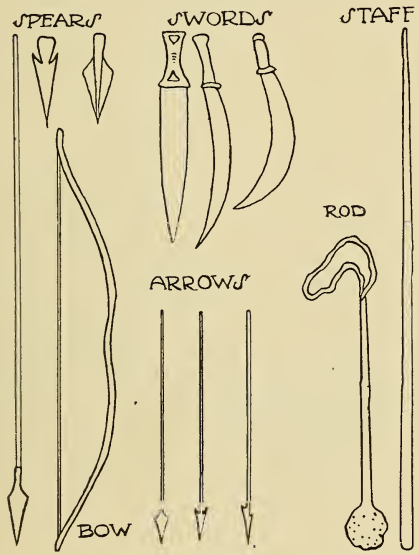


FIG. 13

sinews; sometimes it was made from soft leather. From Fig. 14 it will be seen that the shape of the woven part is wider in the middle and comes to a point at the end. A string was tied to each end and the stone was placed in the wide part. The

sling was whirled around over the head, and as one string was let loose the stone flew out. When the sling is used in a dramatization, the stone may be left to the imagination.

Children take great pleasure in trying to weave this sling. A diagram of a simple cardboard loom

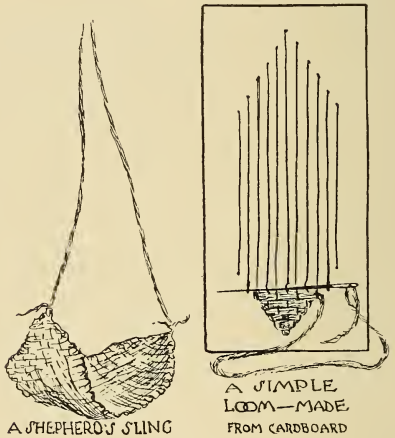


FIG. 14

is given in Fig. 14. The shape should be drawn on the cardboard, then holes made for the thread which strings up the loom. Coarse woolen yarn may be used for the weaving.

Shepherd bag.—The shepherd bag which was used by David was carried by every shepherd boy along with the staff, rod, and sling. It was made

from a piece of skin with a cord at each end. The cords were fastened to the girdle so that the skin formed a kind of bag. Pebbles for the sling were carried in it, and often supplies of food. A piece of leather or of brown cloth may be easily made into one of these bags for the children to use.

Sickles.—Sickles were of two kinds—those made of metal and those made of wood. The wooden ones were toothed with sharp pieces of flint. Fig. 15 gives the characteristic shapes.

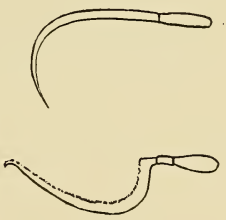


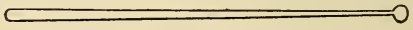
Fig. 15

Children may represent these sickles by cutting the shapes from stiff cardboard and coloring them some dark color to make them look as if they were wood or metal. Some of the boys may be interested in cutting sickles directly out of wood.

Scepter.—The scepter was used by kings in the later history of the Hebrews. It was nothing more than a development of the rod used in the shepherd period. As a rod it was a means of protection and power over enemies, and as a scepter it was a symbol of the same power. Scepters were sometimes short, with much ornamentation; others were long, probably five feet in length. They were all characterized by a ball at the end, and in

many cases the kings had them made from gold, or richly ornamented with gold. The Persian kings used the long scepter, which therefore is the kind most appropriate for the play of Esther (see Fig. 16).

Tents.—The ancient Hebrew tent was much like the modern Bedouin tent. It was low and spread out over the ground, and was made of black goat's hair cloth. This cloth was usually stretched over



SCEPTER

FIG. 16

nine poles, arranged in rows of three and from six to seven feet in height. The inside of the tent was divided into two parts by a long curtain which hung across the middle.

A tent may be represented on the stage by placing a big thick cloth (a blanket or canvas or dark curtain) over poles or screens.

Shields.—There were two kinds of shields found among the Hebrews. One was very large and covered a man from head to foot; it was usually carried by a shield-bearer. The other was small and was sometimes called a buckler. Many different shapes were found in both kinds of shields; some were like the Egyptian—long, broad, and straight at the bottom; others were round and

oblong. All shields were convex with handles on the inside to hold them by. The kings had shields covered with gold, or decorated with gold and precious stones; but the common soldier had a shield of wood or stiff leather. Leather formed the basis of the shields that were decorated. Fig. 17 will show drawings of some of the typical shapes. Children can easily make shields out of cardboard; some may be covered with gold paper or with dark-brown paper. A handle may be glued or sewed in the inside so that the shield may be held without trouble.

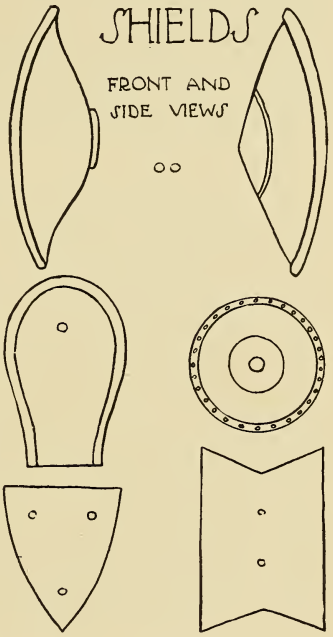


FIG. 17

Swords.—The sword was always hung from the left side of the sword-belt. It was made from bronze or iron, and was about seventeen inches long. Fig. 13 shows some of the usual shapes. Many swords were two-edged and had leather

sheaths in which they were carried. Children may make these out of stiff cardboard, or out of thin wood. They should be colored a dark color, and the hilts may be decorated with bright colors to represent jewels.

Spears.—Spears averaged about five feet in length. The javelin was a long, heavy spear used for casting; the lance was a lighter spear used for

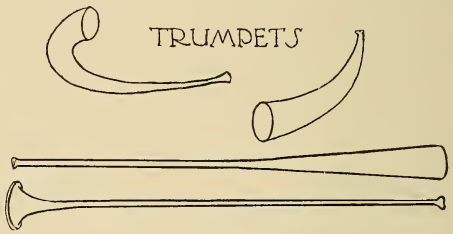


FIG. 18

defense. All spears had a shaft of wood and a metal or stone point. Fig. 13 gives several of the characteristic shapes of spear-points. Spears may be made by fastening cardboard points to long sticks, or by cutting the point directly out of the wood.

Bows and arrows.—The bows and arrows of the Hebrews were very much like those of all other primitive peoples. The bows were often four or five feet long and the arrows were pointed with sharp flint or metal. Illustrations of the shapes are found in Fig. 13. Children need little direction

in the making of these weapons, a string and some pliable wood being all that is necessary.

Trumpets.—Fig. 18 illustrates the kinds of trumpets used. The small ram's-horn trumpet was associated with the feasts and other public celebrations, while the long metal horn was used for the most part by the priests. These metal trumpets were frequently made from hammered

FIG. 19

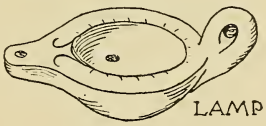


FIG. 20

silver. Children can make them out of stiff paper or thin cardboard and cover them with silver paper.

Signet ring.—A signet ring is something that the kings were never without. In the earlier times it was worn on a chain which hung from the neck; later it was worn on the finger. Fig. 19 gives a drawing of a signet ring. The design was raised so that it left an imprint. The king used this imprint as his royal signature instead of signing his name. When a signet ring is needed in a dramatization, as is the case in *Daniel in the Lions' Den*, any large ring may be used, or the children

may be interested in making a ring from paper or cardboard.

Lamps.—Fig. 20 shows one of the simpler types of lamps used at the time of Christ. This was probably the kind referred to in the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. The lamps were terra cotta and held a very little oil. Children will be interested in making these lamps out of clay or plasticene. They are almost in the shape of a shallow bowl with a handle.

FIG. 21

Egyptian design.—In the scenes placed in Pharaoh's court a few decorations suggestive of the Egyptian will add interest. Fig. 21 gives some of the simpler designs which the children may use for ornamentation. The servants may carry the large fan-shaped designs, which they make on stiff paper. These designs were made from the lotus and the papyrus plants; the leaves were usually a blue-green, and red, blue, yellow, white, and black were used in many designs. Fig. 21 shows some of these designs that were made by the children and used in representing Pharaoh's court.

As it may be of interest to those who have access to a library to know where more definite and detailed information may be secured concerning the articles that are but briefly described here, the following works are recommended: The *New*

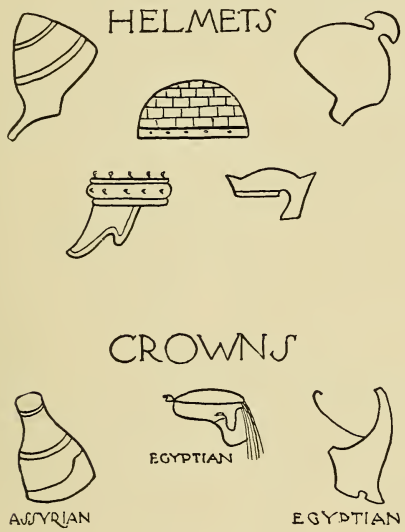


FIG. 22

Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge; Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible;* the *Jewish Encyclopedia;* Kitto, *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature;* three books by W. M. Thomson—*Central Palestine and Phoenicia, Southern Palestine and Jerusalem, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan;* Elmendorf, *A Camera Crusade through the Holy Land.*

CHAPTER XIV

COSTUMING

The question of costuming may be dealt with in much the same manner as that of stage setting and properties. Costumes are unnecessary in many of the simpler plays, and even where they are used they should be so treated that they are of minor importance in the minds of the children. It is nearly always the case that the very smallest suggestion of a costume—a sash or a cloth around the head—is satisfying and sufficient to produce the proper atmosphere of the play. There is danger of placing so much emphasis upon this phase of the work that the children attach undue importance to it and thus lose the real spirit of the dramatization.

If costumes are used they should not be saved for the final performance, but the children should have the pleasure of wearing them at each practice where they are actually living over and over the lives of other people. Children should get their ideas of the dress of the times from pictures and descriptions and then in very simple ways try to represent what they have observed. The simplicity of the costumes among the Hebrew people makes the problem comparatively simple.

FIG. 23.—A group of children, showing costumes and a trumpet

There is very little definite knowledge about the exact costume of the ancient Israelites, for they have left no records. The only sources of information on the subject are the few references to dress in the Old Testament and the few Jewish figures found among the Egyptian, Assyro-Babylonian, and Persian carvings. The conclusion has been reached, however, that the ancient Hebrew costume was in general similar to that of the modern Arab.

It is fairly certain that among the earliest tribes a simple slip or short tunic, with close-fitting sleeves, was worn. Later a big loose mantle was usually thrown over this slip. The little undergarment was white, woven from wool, or sometimes made out of skins; the outer garment was frequently striped, a bright color with white. Among the old patriarchs the outside cloak reached to the ground. It was often in the shape of a blanket, and was draped by throwing one end over the left shoulder, then passing it across the front of the body and under the right arm, then across the back, and to the left shoulder again.

At a still later period there was the long gown, which reached to the ankles and was belted in at the waist by a girdle. This was sometimes covered by an outside robe which was like a cape. Frequently these garments were brought over the heads in order to protect their wearers from the sun.

As a rule the servants and lower class of people wore only the one garment—a short tunic, with or without a girdle. The richer men wore the outside cloaks. Kings and nobles had many kinds of

FIG. 24.—The costume of Abraham

cloaks which were very elaborately decorated. They had silk girdles, while the poorer men wore leather girdles. See Figs. 23–27 for costumes made by the children.

The women's dress was very much the same as that worn by the men. All garments may have

been a little longer, but the draping and the kinds of garments were the same. Great ladies had beautiful veils and shawls.

FIG. 25.—Two kinds of costumes—the Rich Shepherd and the Servant.

Both men and women wore sandals. The soles were made of leather or thick woven cords. They were fastened to the feet by means of strings

of leather, linen, or of papyrus. Two straps were usually attached to the back of the sandal, then crossing from the back over the instep they were tied to a third strap which was fastened at the front and came between the great and second toe.

FIG. 26.—Costumes, showing sandals made by the children

Fig. 26 shows sandals which were made by the children.

The headdress in the earlier days was nothing more than a piece of square cloth, folded diagonally and placed over the head with the long point at the back; the two ends were then crossed under the

chin and thrown back over the shoulders. A cord was tied around the head to keep the cloth on. Later a kind of turban was worn which had no loose ends, but which projected over the face enough to protect one from the sun. Figs. 23–25

FIG. 27.—Costumes

give examples of different kinds of headdress made by the children.

The crowns which the kings wore were frequently of gold, studded with jewels, although the Persian king had a stiff cap of felt or cloth, encircled by a blue and white band. Fig. 22 gives a few of the typical shapes for crowns.

The helmets which were worn by the soldiers were varied. The shapes employed by the Assyrians and the Egyptians were probably used among the Hebrews. See Fig. 22 for drawings of some of the best-known helmets. Children may make these easily by using cardboard and gilt paper.

The Hebrew men and women had many personal ornaments, such as necklaces, armlets, bracelets, rings. Children delight in making all kinds of bracelets and chains from gold and silver paper. They may bring all the bright-colored beads that they can get for the enrichment of the costume.

CHAPTER XV

THE ORGANIZATION OF A CHURCH DRAMATIC CLUB

The kind of dramatics described in this book may be undertaken with success in connection with any Sunday school. The most necessary element is a leader in charge who is wide awake to the aims and purposes of such work and who has the ability to deal with little children. A trained teacher is preferable.

This dramatization can be most effectively presented to children between the ages of six and thirteen. In case the Sunday school is very large and more children join than can be easily managed by one leader, it would be best to divide the members into two or three smaller groups, each with a competent leader in charge. One person should be able to handle well from twenty to twenty-five children.[1]

This training ought not to stop with younger children, but may well be carried on with pupils of high-school age. This would involve problems

[1] In church schools which are organizing on the most approved methods of the correlation of all educational activities the dramatic club may be a regular part of the junior department, similar clubs being integral parts of the other departments.

slightly different from those here presented, but on the whole the same aims may be achieved.

It is sometimes the case that a few of the children outgrow the club. They begin to realize that they are much larger than the others, and they decide that they do not care to take part in the acting, yet they are still interested enough to come to the meetings. If there is no other dramatic club into which they may go, then they may be used as assistants in the younger club and made to feel that they are a necessary part of it. There are many ways in which they can be of valuable help to the leader, at the same time experiencing a development through the training.

During one year in the history of the dramatic club here described three girls of fourteen came regularly to the meetings. They could not be persuaded to take part in the dramatizations, but they expressed an eagerness to help in the direction. They entered into the discussion and criticism of the plays that were being acted each Sunday, and their suggestions were always very much to the point. They had the ability of explaining what they meant to the children so that it was easily understood. These girls would write out the scenes, sometimes while the children were actually giving them; or, again, they would write them at home and bring them for discussion at the next meeting. They took entire charge of the costuming,

and would meet outside at sewing-bees, where they mended, pieced, or made over the costumes on hand. Then at the plays they always took the responsibility of dressing the little children, putting on their headdresses, tying their sashes, and seeing that their costumes were draped in the right way.

When a dramatic club is first started, it is advisable to dignify the organization by electing a president and secretary from among the children. The president may take charge of the meetings and then turn them over to the director, and may help in many ways to keep the club together. The secretary may call the roll and be responsible for sending notices to the members. Children always delight in this amount of formality, and through it each one becomes a much more vital part of the group; the responsibility as far as possible is placed upon the children, and they usually rise to meet it.

It is hardly practical in most cases to attempt to hold more than one meeting a week. The time should be set according to the convenience of the majority of the members. Sunday afternoon was found to be the best time for this little club to meet, but any week day will do as well. Occasionally, just before a play is to be given, a few call meetings may be necessary.

It is desirable that the club own the simple costumes which the members wear. A costume

box is a convenient place for keeping them. The same garments may be used over and over again, and should be kept where they may be easily obtained at each meeting. The older girls in the group will be glad to take charge of the costume box, and they should see that all of the garments are kept in order. The supply of costumes will grow, for children will be constantly bringing new things to add to it.

There are various methods of getting a number of costumes on hand. The children may bring from home old sheets and bright-colored shawls and ribbons, which may be used to advantage. Often the Sunday school will appropriate a small sum in order to help buy materials. A very small amount of money need be spent, for the costumes must be extremely simple and they should be planned and made by the children.

The construction work which the children do in connection with the dramatization is an important part in the working out of a play. As already noted, the greatest value of it lies in the fact that it represents the efforts of the children. There is hardly time at one of the regular meetings to have the construction work done. A discussion of the articles needed may be necessary, after which the children should be encouraged to make them at home. The older ones are able to look up pictures and descriptions which will help, while the younger

ones need to have the matter frequently talked over in order to give them the correct mental pictures of what they are to make. It is always surprising to see how readily children take hold of this kind of work. They bring in very many interesting things which they have made—often things which they have thought out for themselves and which they had not been asked to make. There are times when all the members are working on the same problem, such as lamps for the Wise and Foolish Virgins. It may be best under these circumstances to have a meeting outside where they all work together. (Descriptions of these constructed articles may be found in a previous chapter.)

A word of warning may be in place at this point. Parents of the children are usually anxious and eager to help in making costumes and the constructed objects. The very best aid that they can give is to see that the children have the opportunity for making these things themselves; they may encourage and guide wisely, but the finished product must be the child's, not the mother's. Some mothers have thought that they were doing the right thing to have a carpenter make the spears and other weapons for the soldier. The boy derives more benefit if he looks around for some sticks which will serve his purpose, no matter how crude they may be.

The order in which plays are given in this book should not be taken as the proper sequence for a dramatic club. The story of *Joseph* is described in detail first because the method used there may be followed with any of the shorter or longer stories. This particular story, however, should not be the first one presented to children who have never had such work before. Such stories as *David and Goliath, Abraham and the Three Guests*, or any of the parables should come first. *Joseph, Ruth*, and *Esther* are well worked out by children after they have had a little experience with dramatization.

As a final summary, let it be ever kept in mind that this dramatization functions as a factor in religious education only when the highest development of the children is the aim. It should be so conducted that it forms an essential part of the religious training of the Sunday school, and also one of the valuable activities of the church.

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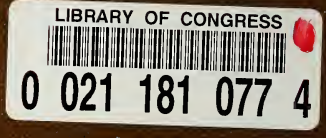
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