

PAGEANTS AND PAGEANTRY

BATES AND ORR

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BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION FOR MASSACHUSETTS

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PREFACE

The following chapters summarize briefly the experience of some years in producing and writing amateur plays and pageants. The teaching experience of the author has shown her that as a means of instruction, of inculcating literary appreciation, and of producing the historic sense, dramatic work has no equal. Far-away incidents become vital experiences, names and facts take on actuality, and that imaginative power that is ever keenest in children needs no urging when "the play's the thing." Nothing sends children so willingly to the library shelves as the desire to know something of the times they are going to portray, of the costumes they are going to wear, and of the manners they shall depict. Nothing will put them into the mediæval spirit like acting out *The Children's Crusade*; nothing will make them feel the colonial temper like a play of Puritan times; nor will they forget *Regulus* or *Vespasian*, *Charlemagne* or *Caxton*, after they have seen them walk the boards of their school hall.

Acting teaches more than the fact, trains more than the voice or the bearing, and besides all its intrinsic values, such work brings esprit de corps into the school where it flourishes, furnishes incentives to good work, and keeps many an idle and unambitious child in school when otherwise he would have wandered his discontented way into truancy or the factory. It satisfies the powerful social instincts, it creates harmony and friendship between pupil and teacher, it advertises

PAGEANTS AND PAGEANTRY

the school, and it need take no undue proportion of time from the actual business of lessons.

Five complete pageants are contained herein, and any one of these may be given as a whole or by single episodes. Each may be given as elaborately as resources permit, or as simply as an Elizabethan play. Experience has taught the author to spend the minimum time rehearsing and to throw the maximum of responsibility on the actors. In this way the art keeps its charm and spontaneity, and the burden lies far less heavily on the teacher. When the Colonial Pageant was given in Springfield, parts were assigned and actual work begun only two weeks before the final production. Many schools devote a half hour every Friday morning throughout the school year to dramatic work in the assembly hall in the presence of the entire school. For such occasions separate episodes in the following pageants will be found admirably suited, and will necessitate but two or three rehearsals. The entire pageants will furnish material for graduation exercises, school exhibitions, or anniversaries.

Care has been taken wherever possible to make the episodes true to the letter of the times. Actual words spoken by historic characters have been freely incorporated, and histories and biographies heavily drawn upon. Much indebtedness is owed to "Wadsworth or The Charter Oak," by W. H. Gocher, and much of the atmosphere in *The Children's Crusade* is drawn from Marcel Schwob's exquisite book. The form of the first three pageants is copied from the text of the inventor and founder of modern pageantry, Mr. Louis N. Parker, whose York, Warwick, Bury St. Edmunds, and Bath pageants have exceeded all others in beauty and literary quality.

E. W. B.

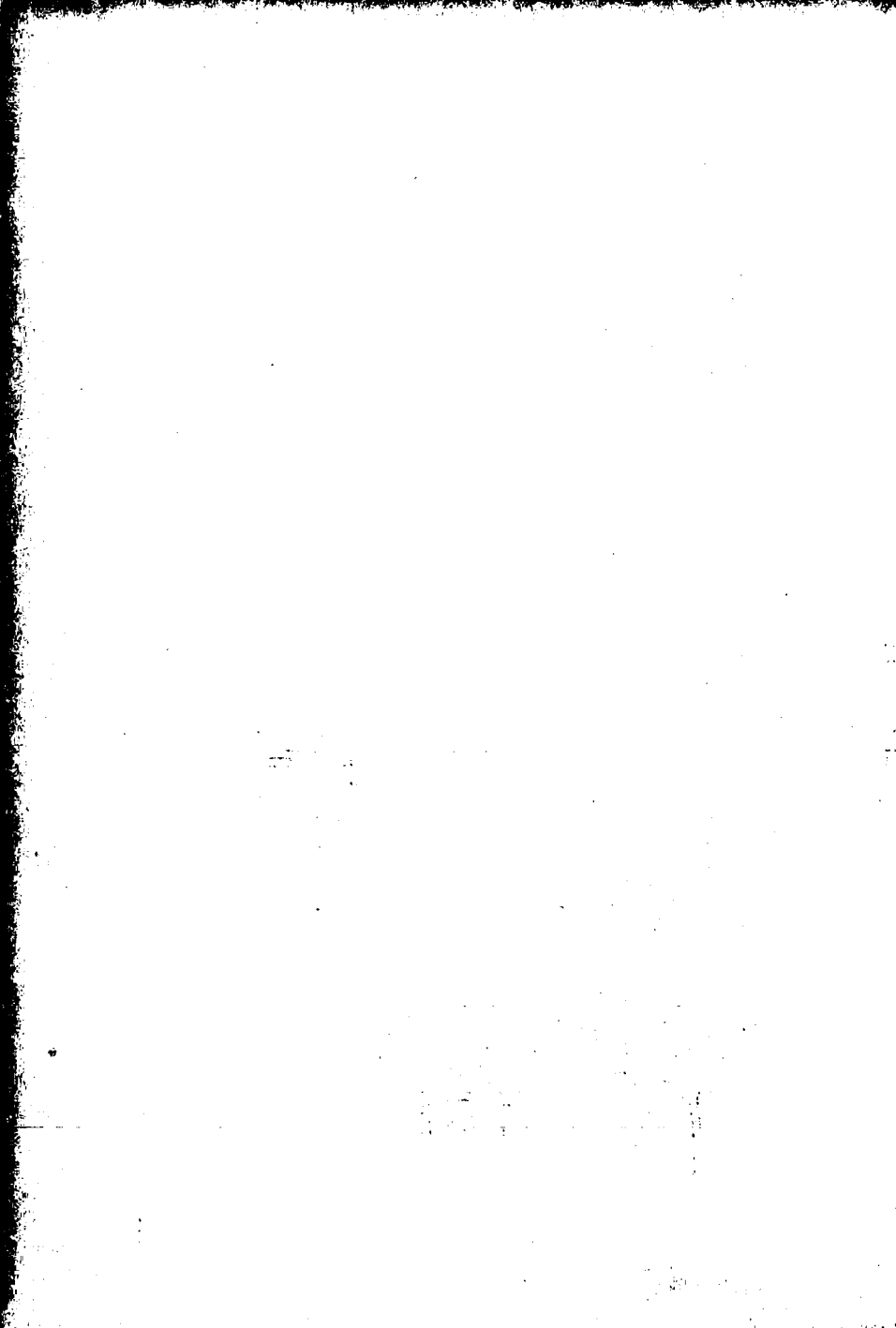
CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	3
THE MAKING OF A PAGEANT	38
A ROMAN PAGEANT	69
A MEDIÆVAL PAGEANT	95
A COLONIAL PAGEANT	149
THE HEART OF THE WORLD	183
A PAGEANT OF LETTERS	227
APPENDIX	277
BIBLIOGRAPHY	281
INDEX	289

LIST OF FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
STAGE SETTING FOR THE PETERBOROUGH PAGEANT . . .	Frontispiece
ALMA MATER, A SYMBOLIC FIGURE FROM THE BOSTON NORMAL SCHOOL PAGEANT	16
THE MUSES INVOKING THE SPIRIT OF DREAMS, IN THE PETER- BOROUGH PAGEANT	42
GREEK DANCERS IN THE BOSTON NORMAL SCHOOL PAGEANT . .	72
DANCERS IN THE BOSTON NORMAL SCHOOL PAGEANT	98
THE CAVEMAN'S DWELLING, IN FROM CAVE LIFE TO CITY LIFE, A PAGEANT GIVEN AT THE BOSTON ARENA	128
THE DAME SCHOOL, FROM THE DEERFIELD PAGEANT	152
FLOAT REPRESENTING THE LOG CABIN OF COLONIAL DAYS, FROM THE HADLEY PAGEANT	172
GROUP OF DANCERS, FROM THE PAGEANT OF THE TREE, GIVEN AT THE BOSTON OPERA HOUSE	194
DANCERS IN THE PAGEANT OF THE TREE	222
THE DAWN OF BRITISH HISTORY, FROM THE PAGEANT OF LONDON AT THE FESTIVAL OF THE EMPIRE	252
FLOAT WITH A MODEL OF THE PASADENA HIGH SCHOOL, FROM THE PASADENA PAGEANT OF FLOWERS	272

PAGEANTS AND PAGEANTRY





INTRODUCTION

DEFINITION

Pageantry as a means of popular entertainment and instruction may be said to be a recent discovery, as far as America is concerned. In England the value and possibilities of the presentation in realistic form of great historical events have for many years been well understood, and the pageant parade has become a common feature at anniversary celebrations. A new calling — that of planning and organizing of such processions — is now attracting artists, musicians, and dramatists. On the continent of Europe, civic festivals, for many generations, have been enriched and dignified by floats, tableaux, and cavalcades, ordered and fashioned to depict scenes in the past history of town or nation. Even crude and savage peoples, in religious ceremonials, in their rituals of nature worship, or in the triumphal honors paid to rulers and warriors, delight to recall in vivid action, in color, form, and sound, the charm, grandeur, and quaintness of "the days of old."

Now that the practice of pageantry has become established on this side of the Atlantic, it is rapidly developing under the influence of American ingenuity and energy. The history of this continent is found to be replete with

material full of dramatic possibilities and rich in human interest. Immigration is bringing to these shores races whose traditions, legends, and annals furnish an inexhaustible source of poetry, art, music, and incident. The popular taste, delighting in action, responds quickly to the appeal which the past makes to the imagination. Anniversaries of pioneer discovery, of colonial settlement and struggle against French and Indian, of the stirring days of the Revolution and the stages in the marvelous progress of science and invention, furnish both occasion and suggestion for historical parades, tableaux, and symbolic grouping.

With characteristic initiative, our academic and professional managers of festivals are discovering new phases and uses of pageantry. The early form was that of floats in procession, each representing some scene, historic, symbolic, or allegorical. These presentations were often closely associated in performance with the localities where the original incident occurred, as Lady Godiva's ride at Coventry, or the episode of the killing of William Rufus in the New Forest, and the carriage of his body in the charcoal burner's cart. Such realism, while impressive, has practical limitations, and when pushed too far, actually detracts from the effect, because no room is given for the play of fancy and imagination.

American pageantry has now evolved three species of presentation. First, the parade composed of floats and marching companies and troops of horsemen. An excellent example was that furnished by Springfield, Massachusetts, in her Fourth of July celebration, in 1908, when thirteen different nationalities were presented, and floats from the grammar schools, in coöperation. Hadley, Massachusetts, at her two hundred and fiftieth anniversary in August, 1909, made a notable success of an historical pageant which,

with its six divisions, in a mile-long column, abounded in graphic pictures of the exploits of the pioneer settlers and of the militias of the town and nation.

Second are out-of-door performances at selected sites of historical events, or in a natural or artificial amphitheater. In this case there is larger opportunity for action, music, and speaking. A procession of all the participants gives something of the impressiveness of the street parade. The subjects may be local, as at the celebration of the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of Quebec, or there may be rendered a play or masque with pageant effects. A most ambitious undertaking was the presentation of the Canterbury Pilgrims at Gloucester, Massachusetts, in August, 1909, in which two thousand actors and choral singers virtually brought back again the England of Chaucer, before a gathering of twenty-five thousand spectators.

Third, indoor entertainments made up of scenes so related as to possess unity. Some theme, such as the growth of national spirit, the struggle of a people for liberty, the progress of science or education, may be used as the keynote. A rich variety of effects may be produced where a decorated and well-lighted hall, adapted to processions, and with a stage of adequate size, may be obtained. While the grandeur of the outdoor performance is not possible, the limited audience adds to the intensity and favors artistic quality. For schools and colleges this latter form of pageant is most practical and possesses large elements of educational value. In February, 1909, the Central High School of Springfield, Massachusetts, made a distinct success of a Colonial Pageant given in its assembly hall.

It is entirely safe to prophesy that pageantry is to win an increasing recognition as a means of popular education

and entertainment. The instincts to which it appeals are elemental and universal in humanity. Children, youth, and manhood delight in the sensuous symbolism in which such representations abound. Popular festivals, city and national anniversaries, thus find a fitting method of celebrating and recalling the deeds of the fathers. Local pride and patriotism are quickened by contemplation of the great past out of which the present has come. Such productions as the Champlain celebration at Quebec in 1908, and the Hudson-Fulton pageant at New York, in October, 1909, give communities a wide advertisement and also teach valuable lessons of coöperation and common endeavor. There is no better way to induct immigrants and their children into a knowledge of American history and institutions than through the medium of historical tableaux given in a setting both dramatic and artistic. And an abiding sense of the stability of society is gained as one enters into the very head of the human experience out of which it has grown.

All these values of pageantry and many others are to be obtained by using it as a form of high school or college entertainment. In its nature, methods, and aim, it is much to be preferred to the plays, fairs, and exhibitions often given, and in which it is not unusual to find a certain meretricious quality. The instruction in history, science, language, art, and literature is direct and vital. Pupils live in the scenes they are rendering or witnessing. Imagination is quickened. The process is constructive, not analytical, because the appeal is to all the faculties. Such a strong interest is certain to have a profound influence on the reading of the pupil, and often dramatic, literary, or artistic ability is discovered.

The effect of the production of a pageant on the school organism is somewhat akin to the results seen in the larger community of the town or city, in that a fine spirit of helpfulness is engendered and each member learns to take his part or place, even though in so doing he must yield the greater apparent honor to his fellow. Both teacher and pupil, and all departments — art, science, physical training, music, literature, history, language, and mathematics — work together for a common aim.

The pageant may be regarded as one more instance of the way in which the new education is using the play instinct. By reason of the constructive quality of such entertainments, their appeal to the hero worship and the historic sense so strong during adolescence, and their genuine artistic quality, they must be regarded as most important among the devices put in the hands of the teacher to-day.

As the term "pageant" is used now, it means a dramatic representation of several scenes, either tableaux or miniature integral dramas which are unified by prologues. The real pageant is given out of doors, its spectators number thousands, genuine distance gives its beauty to the production, the stage is as vast as the eye can reach, and the production aims to reproduce actuality rather than illusion. The giving of a pageant is an act of veneration or of patriotism. At present it is done to honor town or hero, and becomes a great civic rite. This function of the modern pageant one would never wish to change. A play is continuous action on one theme, a pageant is interrupted action on related themes. A play has unities of time, place, or action, while the pageant dispenses with all of these. A play must be given on an indoor or outdoor stage, while

the pageant aims to employ the entire landscape, or at least in its approaches and backgrounds. On the whole, we may say that a pageant is a hybrid, bred between the procession and the play.

This manual is intended to give some account of the historical development of pageantry and the methods of organizing and presenting it with reference to schools. The specimen pageants are designed for indoor or outdoor production. It is hoped that they will serve more as suggestions than as actual representations, for the pageant should be conceived for the occasion, produced by the participants, and representative of the actors.

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF PAGEANTRY

Any review of the uses of pageantry in past ages and of its development in recent time must recognize that, while certain elements are constant, the form of presentation and the manner of acting the scenes have varied greatly. The factors essential to true pageantry are the use of the costumes and practices of older days and the representation of important events in history as expressions of the manifold activities and aspirations of the human soul. In other words, the reason of such displays is found in the innate desire for an expression of the facts of life in the guise of poetry, art, and romance. As men are wont to idealize the characters and conditions of former times, the material for pageants is naturally taken from older days on which a glamour and halo rests. Such an appeal to the imagination has always found favor with those who have sought to entertain or impress the populace. Much of ritual worship is of this nature, and one notes an instinctive tend-

ency to the use of the archaic in forms, dress, and language in ecclesiastical functions. Among Indian tribes, for example, a stone knife is often used in sacrificing, while in actual work the steel blade is employed. As a rehearsal of the past experiences of a people the pageant in its influence is akin to children's imitation of the practices of savages, such as hunting and camping in the woods.

On this elemental basis of interest, then, the pageant depends, and hence it has found favor in all times and among all peoples. The description of the great festivals of the ancients as contained in their annals and sculptured figures on tombs, temples, pyramids, and monuments show that Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans were adept at introducing into their celebrations many features of pageantry. One of the best illustrations is the Panathenaic procession, as presented on the frieze of the Parthenon, reproductions of which are so often used as decorations. When a Roman consul was tendered a triumph, the long column, as it made its way to the Capitoline Hill, contained, in the serried legions, the groups of captives and spoils of war, symbols of the might of the city and of her dominion over strange and distant peoples, while memorials in emblems, insignia, lictors, vestals, and ædiles in robes of office stirred the pride of the citizens in the mighty past. So, too, under the empire, the great exhibitions in the amphitheater impressed the imagination of a fickle populace with the supreme majesty of their rulers and with the grandeur of the Roman state. There was, in the contests of gladiators and the struggles of helpless victims in the claws of wild beasts, a pandering to lust for blood, but the real aim of the spectacles was dictated by a shrewd policy that the foundation of the

despotic power of the Cæsars might be made secure in the reverence of the people.

Regard for the past is essentially a conservative factor in society and government, and Roman stagecraft was wise in cherishing this safeguard against revolution. Augustus, whose chief aim was to restore the ideals of the simple and severe life of the Roman republic, in family circle and in public affairs, and to reinvigorate religious faith and fortify it against the assaults of rationalism, in 17 B.C. celebrated with great solemnity the *Ludi Sæculares*, an institution associated with the most cherished traditions of the Roman peoples. The festival and religious rites continued for three days, from May thirtieth to June first and second. For three days before an elaborate ritual of purification was performed and, with great ceremony, offerings were made of figs, wheat, and beans. Then, by night, near the Tiber, Augustus, Agrippa, and the consuls made sacrifices after ancient customs, while the assembled people stood before their altars. An ancient invocation was used at each ceremonial in the darkness of night and repeated at daylight. Games and sports were held after the fashion of early days. On the third of June came the final and most inspiring ceremony when twenty-seven cakes were offered to Apollo at his temple on the Palatine. The same prayer was recited, and an ode, written by Horace, was sung by a chorus of twenty-seven boys and twenty-seven girls. Then followed, by special permission of the *quindecimvirs*, some days of rejoicing in contrast with the solemn rites of the three nights and days. Not only the emperor, but also ambitious proconsuls in various provinces, instituted games and stately functions in which were found many of the elements of pageantry. Their use continued until the break-up of the