

AMERICA'S GIFTS TO THE OLD WORLD

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649225545

America's Gifts to the Old World by Helen W. Atwater

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HELEN W. ATWATER

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AMERICA'S GIFTS
TO THE OLD WORLD

A PAGEANT OR
MASQUE FOR

HOME ECONOMICS STUDENTS

BY
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AND
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A PUBLICATION FOR THE RICHARDS MEMORIAL FUND
AMERICAN HOME ECONOMICS ASSOCIATION
BALTIMORE
1915

Thru 12.11.65
~~Thru 12.11.2-10~~

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COMPOSED AND PRINTED AT THE
WAVERLY PRESS
By THE WILLIAMS & WILKINS COMPANY
BALTIMORE, MD., U. S. A.

INTRODUCTION

THE REASON FOR THE PAGEANT

The Pageant or Masque is designed to emphasize the fact that the New World gave to the Old many new fruits, vegetables, grains, ornamental plants, dyestuffs, and other things valuable for daily use, as well as some new useful arts and new sports which were learned from the Indians. It is not too much to say that all of these taken together far outweigh in value the gold and silver which the New World also gave. It, therefore, seems especially appropriate that home economics students should commemorate this truth and in a way which will help others to remember that the New World gave much in exchange for what it obtained from the Old World.

OUTLINE OF THE PAGEANT

While the Islands of the Eastern Seas dance and play about them, the Old World Continents—Asia, Africa, and Europe—talk together of their desire for new things and wonder when the Spirit of Discovery whom they have sent forth will return and what he will bring for their use and their pleasure.

As they speak together the Spirit of Discovery is seen approaching and with him North America, Central America, South America, and attendant Islands. He presents them to their sisters of the Old World who greet them with great pleasure, and ask if they bring things which can be given in exchange for the wisdom of the older civilizations. North America, South America, and Central America reply that they bring many Gifts, that their gold and silver and useful metals will add greatly to the wealth of the world, but that, better still, are the fruits of the earth which they bring, to serve man for food, for clothing, and for other purposes. They call the Gifts by name and lead them one by one to the Spirit of Discovery, who presents them in turn to the Old World. Each Gift explains the nature of that which he or she represents and is received and welcomed.

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Europe, Asia, and Africa, with the Islands of the Eastern Seas, unite in giving thanks to North and South America. They promise the Gifts that they will be used wisely for the good of man. Then all unite in praise of Discovery and send him forth again to search old lands and new for other Gifts to benefit mankind.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRESENTING THE PAGEANT

In the pages which follow, the outline has been filled in fairly completely and as so developed is perhaps rather a masque than a pageant. The list of characters called for is quite a long one and the performance is rather elaborate if all which is suggested is included, yet where circumstances permit the whole may be used with good effect. However, it is the outline rather than the details which constitute the essential part, and it is believed that by varying the details the performance may be easily adapted to all sorts and conditions of presentation. It may be presented indoors or out-of-doors, but lends itself particularly to open-air presentation. There are various ways in which it may be made more elaborate or more simple, as occasion requires. For example, dyestuffs (cochineal and logwood) and Indian pottery may be added to the list of Gifts if more detail is required. On the other hand, where it is desired to simplify the performance some of the suggested dances and pantomimes may be omitted and the list of characters may be shortened by leaving out some of the Gifts. Then too, one personage representing the Spirit of the Old World may be substituted for those personifying the various countries of the Eastern Hemisphere, and one representing the Spirit of the New World for those of the Western Hemisphere, and the dialogue adapted accordingly. Further, instead of one actor or a group representing each individual Gift, there might be one for each group of Gifts; for instance, one for the Grains and Vegetables, one for the Fruits, one for Cotton, Wool, Furs, Garments and Ornaments, and so on. If still further reduction were necessary, the characters personifying the countries of the New World, or Discovery himself, might present the Gifts with the explanatory speeches, etc.

It is easy to imagine circumstances in which the dialogue as here given might be unsuitable. In open-air performances on a large scale, it would probably be better to elaborate tableaux and pantomimes

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as a means of conveying the ideas of the Pageant to the spectators rather than to rely on speeches. If it were presented under conditions which make it difficult for the hearers to understand the spoken parts, it could be given entirely in pantomime, and the action could be easily followed provided the program contained some explanations. In cases where a simple, easy performance is necessary, it is, of course, possible to lessen the work of the actors by cutting the lines somewhat, especially perhaps in the dialogue which precedes the entry of Discovery and the lines in which the Americas describe their general characteristics.

Where possible incidental music should be used, not only for the dances, marches, etc., but also to accompany the presentation of the Gifts and so on. For the songs any well-known and suitable tunes may be used. Indian music, such as has been collected by the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., or can be found in Miss Alice Fletcher's "Indian Story and Song" and Miss Natalie Curtis's "Indian Book" would be appropriate. Other appropriate music might be found in compositions based on Indian motifs by McDowell, Cadman, Farwell, Troyer, Burton and others.

The Old World Continents and Islands should wear costumes suggesting the lands personified. The Islands should all be impersonated by children and their costumes should suggest the tropic, arctic, and temperate zones. Costumes of North America, Central America, South America, and the Western Islands should represent their respective types of Indian civilization. Discovery should wear a herald's costume. The Singer should wear fifteenth century Spanish costume. The Gifts may wear North, Central, and South American Indian costumes, as the case may be, or, if preferred, may wear costumes which symbolize their character or uses. If the latter are chosen, the Indian note should still be emphasized. Standard books on Indians and Indian life will furnish suggestions for such costumes.

