

May I say that the class manners are as easy and unforced as possible. I encourage a full play of imagination and fancy. There are humorous incidents, as when the realistically minded runs for the bright colors of the rainbow. *Ihm krabbeln Käfer in der Hand*. This shock between realism and the "shaping power of the imagination" is the greatest experience for him. I am always willing to entertain the simplest, naivest questions. These have taught me, in turn, valuable lessons. All matters relating to technique are eagerly caught up, especially by the type of student that comes from the Engineering School. In technique we have that body of demonstrable fact, beyond which only the inspired teacher will lead his students. It is well, however, to remember that a thorough knowledge of technique becomes an invaluable help to even the inspired teacher. A lot of rubbish, half truth and superstition, about matter artistic would vanish if such books as Müller-Freienfels, *Psychologie der Kunst*, were more read and better known. Only one warning: the teacher must beware of becoming entangled in the meshes of the net of technique.

In conclusion: May I hope that my rather inadequate presentation of a large and difficult problem will nevertheless have touched upon points that will hearten the fellow-worker and make him joyous in the interpretation of masterpieces? Goethe has a line that runs so:

"Denn edlen Seelen vorzufühlen
Ist wünschenswertester Beruf"

I should like to say to the teacher of Literature:

"Denn edlen Seelen nachzufühlen
Ist wünschenswertester Beruf."

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE CLUB¹

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THE purpose of a Modern Language Club, as I conceive it, is to combine the knowledge gained in the class-room with a spirit of camaraderie and informality, thus making the language

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studied, more concrete, more palpable, and more living. Through the club, the student will gain information relative to the life and literature of the foreign people in a less formal manner than it would be possible to do in the class-room.

The following is an attempt to describe the activities of "Le Cercle Français" at the Milwaukee State Normal School. For the past two years, this club has been devoting its efforts to the study of special periods from the history of the French drama. The general plan as carried out, was to have a brief "causerie" on the drama of a certain period and then have scenes from characteristic plays of that period read with parts assigned. The first meeting of this kind was devoted to the drama of the 11th-13th centuries, and included the reading with assigned parts, of the mediaeval plays *Le Jeu des Vierges Sages et des Vierges Folles*, and *Le Jeu de Robin et de Marion*, in order to give the student a conception of the religious and the pastoral characteristics of mediaeval drama. In the program treating the 15th and 16th centuries we had two short talks on the mystery plays and *sotties*, combined with the reading of most of the third act of *La Farce de Maître Pathelin*. Wherever it was feasible, scenes were acted out with some suggestion of costume. The 17th century drama occupied several meetings. All through the first semester of the school-year 1920-21, our general topic of study was Molière (both in and outside of class), as we were preparing a public presentation of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. We all felt at that time, "The Play's the thing,"—not in this case, "to catch the conscience of the king," but to bring the court of "Le Roi Soleil" and the brilliance, wit, and joy of 17th century comedy nearer to the 20th century student, too often far too much absorbed in things of a purely utilitarian nature. The benefits gained by students taking part in such plays, can readily be noticed in the increased facility of expression. Idioms used in the comedy really become part of the students' active vocabulary. Aside from acquiring fluency of expression, students derive much pleasure from rehearsals and presentation of the plays. In preparation for *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, we had a "causerie" on Molière by a faculty member, and at a subsequent meeting, the reading with assigned parts of various scenes from Molière's comedies.² In the meeting devoted

² Suggestions for this may be found in Chapuzet and Daniels: *Molière en Récits*, D. C. Heath & Co., Chicago.

to the tragedy of the 17th century, the first number of the programme was a "causerie" by one of the faculty members on "La Signification du 17ième Siècle dans la Littérature Française"; then, the most advanced class read a scene from the play they studied, *Le Cid*, which was preceded by a short discourse on the significance of Corneille. Racine was represented by a scene from *Iphigénie en Aulide*, preceded by an essay on the treatment of the Iphigenia legend by ancient and modern authors, in this case, Euripides and Racine. The other scene from a tragedy by Racine was the appeal of Andromaque to Hermione and Pyrrhus. The scenes from *Athalie* were given in connection with a musical programme to follow Mendelssohn's "Priest's March" from *Athalie*. Most of the résumés of tragedies were given in English, because of the difficulty of the subject, and I think there is a justification for this, since it is a matter of general culture.

As the meetings devoted to the history of the drama always demanded rehearsals, and "Le Cercle Français" meets every two weeks, a meeting of this kind would alternate with a "réunion" of another kind, which will now be mentioned briefly. We have always had a musical programme, in which the selections rendered were preceded by a short talk on the composer; two longer "cause-ries," one on "Les Écoles de France," another one, illustrated, on "Paris." The two holidays which "Le Cercle Français" always observes, are Christmas and Mardi-Gras. Owing to the fact that it is well-nigh impossible to find French Christmas plays, the ingenuity of the advanced students is always taxed. One year they dramatized *Un Conte de Noël* by Mme. Renard,³ while the next year, the English verse translation of Bouchor's *Un Conte de Noël*⁴ (the only form at the time available to me) was translated and abridged as a French prose play. Besides this, various Christmas customs of Provence⁵ were discussed, a poem read, and a chorus sang, "Le Cantique de Noël." The Mardi-Gras programme usually consists of dramatizations of La Fontaine's "Fables," a debate on a subject of a more or less humorous nature, songs of a lighter vein, short scenes from something like *Le Voyage*

³ See Renard: *Trois Contes de Noël*, Ginn & Co., Chicago.

⁴ Translated by Barrett Clarke. Samuel French & Co., N. Y., 1915.

⁵ Janvier, T. Allibone: *Christmas Kalends of Provence*, Harper & Bros., N. Y., 1902.

de *M. Perrichon* or *L'Avare*. What always adds to the fun on this occasion, is that those participating always are disguised in name (as their own is either translated or adapted in some way to a French name), so that there is always a great deal of guessing beforehand as to who is who. This year the programme was followed by a costume party.

The other meetings to carry out the "play idea" are represented by those devoted to the playing of games, of which several interesting ones are on the market.⁶

To give an idea of how our meetings alternated, I shall mention the order of the programmes of the year 1919-20:

Causerie; "Les Écoles de France"; Labiche Programme; Musical Programme; Drama of the 11th-13th Centuries; Christmas Programme; Causerie Illustrée: "Paris"; Mardi-Gras Programme; Games; Drama of the 15th & 16th Centuries; Games; Discussion of Articles from French Newspapers and of Brieux's *Les Américains chez Nous*. (Some scenes were read.)

The connection of the work of "Le Cercle Français" with that of the class-room has been referred to in the case of the Molière Programme. Another in which the two may be combined is the Victor Hugo Programme. Both last year and this, the students, as part of a test, were asked to write about some scene in *Les Misérables* in dialogue form. These dialogues were partly written from memory, as many parts of the conversation of the novel were remembered, and partly improvised. Other numbers of the programme may include: a French essay on the life and works of Victor Hugo, scenes from *Hernani*, or some other play which a class may be studying, poems, and résumés of some of the novels of Victor Hugo (which may be given in French or in English, according to the stage of advancement of the students).

Another feature of "Le Cercle Français" is the singing of French songs⁷ and the occasional public presentation of a play. Thus far, besides *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *La Poudre aux Yeux*, *L'Anglais tel qu'on le parle*, and *Les Deux Sourds* have been presented.

⁶ *Le Jeu de Vocabulaire*, *Le Jeu des Verbes*, *Le Jeu des Pronoms*, *Le Jeu Illustré*; Modern Language Press, 64 Mack Block, Milwaukee, Wis.; *Le Jeu des Nombres*, *Le Jeu des Heures*; Miss R. Kurlanzik, San Francisco, California.

⁷ See Walter-Ballard: *French Songs*, Chas. Scribner's Sons, N. Y.

The programmes executed by the German Club were of a similar kind. The reading of a simple one-act comedy with assigned parts always proves to be of much entertainment to the Club, and as a rule, the first meeting of the year is devoted to this sort of work. Plays like *Einer muss heiraten*,⁸ *Unter vier Augen*,⁹ *Als Verlobte empfehlen sich*,⁸ or others of a simpler nature¹⁰ will be found suitable for the beginning. Schiller's birthday can be commemorated by a programme planned in various ways. In our "Verein" usually one of the students read an essay on Schiller's life, and during the reading, scenes from plays and poems were rendered. The ones especially enjoyed by the students were the "Apfel-Schuss Szene" from *Wilhelm Tell*, the one between Queen Elizabeth and Maria Stuart, and monologues from *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*. In connection with the Schiller programme, a duet from Rossini's opera *Guillaume Tell* was rendered.

In regard to Christmas plays, there is a great deal to choose from. The fairy element of dwarfs and angels always enhances the beauty and charm of the presentation. A play of this nature and yet quite simple is *Weihnachtsboten*,¹¹ *Wie Klein Else das Christkind suchen ging*,¹² and *Was die Tannengeister flüstern*.¹³ (The last two were somewhat abridged.) Then there is the wonderfully impressive *Deutsches Weihnachtsspiel* by Otto Falckenberg.¹³ Other plays suitable for presentation are some of Hans Sachs' plays,¹² and *Im deutschen Walde*,¹¹ which is especially effective when presented out-of-doors. Then a few meetings each year may be devoted to the reading of a longer play, such as *Königskinder*, or *Der Bibliothekar*. Most valuable and delightful suggestions for games are found in Miss Caroline Young's article, entitled "The German Club" in the MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL.¹⁴

There is comparatively little material on Modern Language Clubs in educational magazines. Suggestions for this type of work

⁸ D. C. Heath & Co., Chicago.

⁹ Henry Holt & Co., Chicago.

¹⁰ Short Plays published in the collection *Die Vereins Bühne*, Verlag C. Ludwig Ungelenk. (Dresden-A).

¹¹ In *Die Vereins Bühne*, Verlag C. Ludwig Ungelenk. (Dresden-A).

¹² Druck und Verlag Philipp Reclam, Leipzig.

¹³ (Munich and Leipzig) Verlag Georg Müller.

¹⁴ March, 1917.

may be found in Prof. Oliver's Bulletin, entitled, "Suggestions and References for Modern Language Teachers,"¹⁵ the bulletins of the University of Wisconsin: "A Four Years' High School Course in French" and the same in German; a few articles in the MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL, as the one by Miss Young, referred to above, two by Prof. Jameson of Oberlin on "Le Cercle Français,"¹⁶ and part of Prof. Arnold's article, entitled "Ambassadors of France,"¹⁷ and in the Bulletins of the Wisconsin Association of Modern Foreign Language Teachers.¹⁸ The list of plays presented by Harvard University, which appeared in the MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL for May, 1919, the one of French plays published by D. C. Heath & Co., and also the more exhaustive one in Barrett Clark's book, "How to produce Amateur Plays,"¹⁹ will prove valuable. The last mentioned book also contains suggestions on stage decoration and lighting.

By way of a summary, I should like to re-state the aims which we have tried to work for and attain by means of the above-mentioned programmes:

First, to give the student a more detailed idea of foreign life and literature by means of lectures and readings from dramas characteristic of the age studied; secondly, to give them an opportunity to hear the spoken language, which is so greatly emphasized in the Reform method of Modern Language teaching; and lastly, to increase their ability to speak the language by taking part in programmes, either by memorizing parts in plays, or by improvising and writing dialogues.

The above is merely a résumé of programmes that have been rendered in our French and German Clubs. Programmes of a similar nature could also be arranged in connection with the work of a Spanish Club.

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¹⁵ *University of Illinois, School of Education, Bulletin No. 18*, published by the University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill.

¹⁶ MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL, April, 1918, and March 1920.

¹⁷ MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL, March 1921.

¹⁸ For copies of this Bulletin, address Miss Laura Johnson, Wisconsin High School, Madison, Wis.

¹⁹ Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1917.