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PAMPHLE

BULLET



LEICESTER MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY



CIRCUS

Linocut by John Lavrin Age 9

CHILDREN AND
CHILDRENS ART

LEICESTER UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

UNBOUND PERIODICALS
NOT TO BE BORROWED
EXCEPT OVERNIGHT

~~DISPLAY~~
~~THEN~~
SHELF

MUS. STUDS

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Shelf

Visits to most large elementary schools leave an impression of work and play. Wherever it is possible to make a lesson more interesting, and so easier for the child, it has been done. This difference of outlook should be realised similarly in a museum. For a considerable time it has been true of the U.S.A. and in certain progressive museums in England. Now it is time for further advance. English museums have learnt much from America and from each other, but they should endeavour to develop so as to give even more help to the child who has few privileges.

Some children live in homes where life is made interesting whilst others lack this advantage. Fortunately, they must spend a certain amount of time at school and some will develop hobbies of their own. Little is done to interest those children who find it difficult to amuse themselves in their spare time. Museums could remedy this by caring not only for the particularly clever children but what is more necessary, the slow ones. In out-of-school activities backwardness is not so pronounced, and museums may help to minimise its unfortunate companion, a sense of inferiority.

Leicester Museum and Art Gallery already helps children in many ways. Exhibits are sent to schools for illustration of lessons. Hundreds of these are used by city and county schools, and it is well known amongst teachers how much they are appreciated by the youngsters who take every opportunity to "stand and stare" at the cases. The demand for material continues to increase and the schools service expands day by day.

Talks are given to school parties by a guide-lecturer, and many of the listeners are so enthusiastic that they return to study exhibits at their leisure. During week-ends and holidays hundreds of children visit the Museum. Some have been introduced already during school visits but many others come of their own initiative. In the past months child evacuees from other places have been welcome visitors.

At the present time when life is apt to become disturbed at home and elsewhere, the more that can be done for these children the better for their welfare. Whilst the loan collections and the organisation of visits at Leicester have been developed primarily for the schools, now is the time to offer children something for their leisure. For this purpose it is hoped to develop children's clubs as an important part of the Museum's School Service policy in the near future. Such clubs, as developed in America, cater for immense numbers who would otherwise lead a dull existence. There is an even greater need to do something for the adolescent who presents a more difficult

problem. Local authorities have realised this and organised youth movements throughout the country. At present they are hampered by a lack of club leaders. In this movement museums could help to a far greater extent than is at present thought possible.

At school many children will not make the effort to be interested because they are forced to listen whether they like it or not. A child in a museum club adopts a totally different attitude since his participation is voluntary. There are many youngsters eager to join in museum activities if given the opportunity. Whilst most children have a love of nature it is difficult to teach this subject in the best way when schools are situated in the centre of a town. The syllabus militates against time for out-of-door work, and theory and fact are stressed rather than practical application of work in the field. A museum natural history club could remedy this weakness in large measure, providing an excellent introduction to nature study which would remain as a lifetime treasure and a constant help in dull moments.

Club activities would not be confined to the Museum building, for at weekends, during holidays and long summer evenings organised excursions would have the immense advantage of providing access to different surroundings. Instead of playing in crowded and dangerous streets, the child would be guided to do something useful, instructive and enjoyable.

There are many fields open to experiment and development. History in school may consist only of dates and facts. As a hobby in the museum with real objects to handle, dioramas to visualise the scene, and club excursions with a guide to historic sites, it becomes fascinating and alive. Most children love acting and whenever possible visit the local cinema which may be their only form of amusement. Museum theatre groups could help these children not only to be amused but to entertain themselves by producing plays, making costumes, decor and puppets.

At first each club would need to be directed by adults, and the advice and co-operation of outside helpers would be welcomed. Later the need for developing a sense of responsibility amongst the children themselves would be met by encouraging them to organise their own clubs, through the election of their leaders and the planning of programmes of events. New members would be introduced by the children, thus developing a sense of comradeship and mutual co-operation. Though at first the organisation of these clubs would present difficulties and problems, there can be no doubt that these would be more than compensated by the enthusiastic support of the young members.

AUDRIE FITZJOHN