

Value of People's Pageants

Throughout the United States the tercentenary of Shakespeare is to be celebrated during the week of June 4th in the production of masques, pageants, dramas, etc. Whatever form the celebration takes, the fact that the citizens of the great Republic are showing such an appreciation of the Bard is an indication that a love for the beautiful and best in our language, in spite of the growth of materialism on the one hand and spuriousness on the other, is ever uppermost in the minds of the common people. What is especially encouraging to those who love Shakespeare is the spontaneity of the masses who have come forward to help in securing the success of the great celebrations. Cities and communities will vie with each other in the richness and gorgeousness of the pageants and masques, and the elaborate productions of the plays.

As an example we have before us a programme of the St. Louis celebration, and the reading alone makes us wish we were fortunate enough to be present. The production, Shakespeare's beautiful "As You Like It," will take place in a natural amphitheatre in the centre of the city's Forest Park. Our Margaret Anglin is to take the part of Rosalind, and she will manage the production with

the aid of seventeen professional and two hundred local artists. What a treat is in store for the people of St. Louis. They will listen to Shakespeare, through the magnificent voice of Miss Anglin, speaking to them in praise of their own sylvan surroundings. They will see old English folk dances, and listen to beautiful choruses. Was anything more conducive to create a love of the beautiful and a pride in city achievement?

We often wish that some such production would be given in Canada; not necessarily Shakespearean, though even the great bard should not be impossible. Pageants, masques and dramas, depicting the history of Canada, the growth of the local community, are all possible in the open air of Canada, with its thousands of beauty spots, and the many dramatic societies scattered throughout the country. As well as taking the minds of the people from the cheap and trashy productions that are continually being given in badly ventilated places, miscalled theatres, the preparation and production of national or local pageants are invaluable as educational mediums. We throw out the suggestion that the newly formed Civic Improvement League, or some other national organization, should take up the matter.

The Civic Improvement League

The Civic Improvement League is now well launched on its voyage of civic activity. How the voyage will end depends not only on the steersmen, but equally so on every member of the league. The object has already been advocated in these columns—a higher standard of civic life, both official and unofficial—and there is no reason why the voyage should even be long. Public opinion, for the last fifteen years, has slowly but surely been trained to see in a clearer light the essentials of Canadian citizenship—its privileges and responsibility in the local area. But though better taught in civic knowledge, we citizens of Canada have acted very badly, in fact not acted at all, with the only possible result, that the control of the community has necessarily been left in the hands of the few men and women who are sufficiently public-spirited to take up the burden.

Now we take it that one of the objects of the League is to fire public opinion to a sense of individual responsibility. That surely will be good for the community. There is no doubt but that there is a growing interest in the municipal affairs of the country, brought about largely by the many voluntary societies scattered throughout Canada, but up to now there has been no cohesion. This will now have been remedied by the Commission of Conservation taking upon itself the formation of this league, and the conservation of human life should be a most important part of the Commission's work. To our mind the strength of the recent meeting lay in the realization by all present, who were representative of every kind of civic activity,

that the future of Canada rests on the conditions and environments of the people, and which can be bettered only through local effort and municipal administration. In other words, that the basic welfare (hygiene and pleasant surroundings) of the people is essentially local. This truth has been preached so often and so long as to be almost commonplace, but the preachers have had little encouragement in the past, but now that the Commission has moved in the matter, in gathering together all the phases of civic life and nationalizing them into one great movement there is every reason to hope that in the near future Canada will see a vast improvement in her cities and towns and villages; in fact, anywhere where two or three people are gathered together.

The central plank in the League's programme is City Planning. The title is a misnomer, for it conveys the idea that it means the laying down of streets only. It means that, but it means much more than survey work. As Thomas Adams lays it down, City Planning means everything appertaining to the urban life of the community. It means common sense municipal engineering, plus the taking advantage of nature where she has been bountiful with her trees; and where she has been a little weak in that respect, to aid her by the planting of trees and flowers. It means the improvement of public health by the stamping out of everything that will impair it. It means an intelligent conception of municipal finance. And it means many more things which could be well illustrated by fifty people, each with a separate solution of the evils of the civic politic.