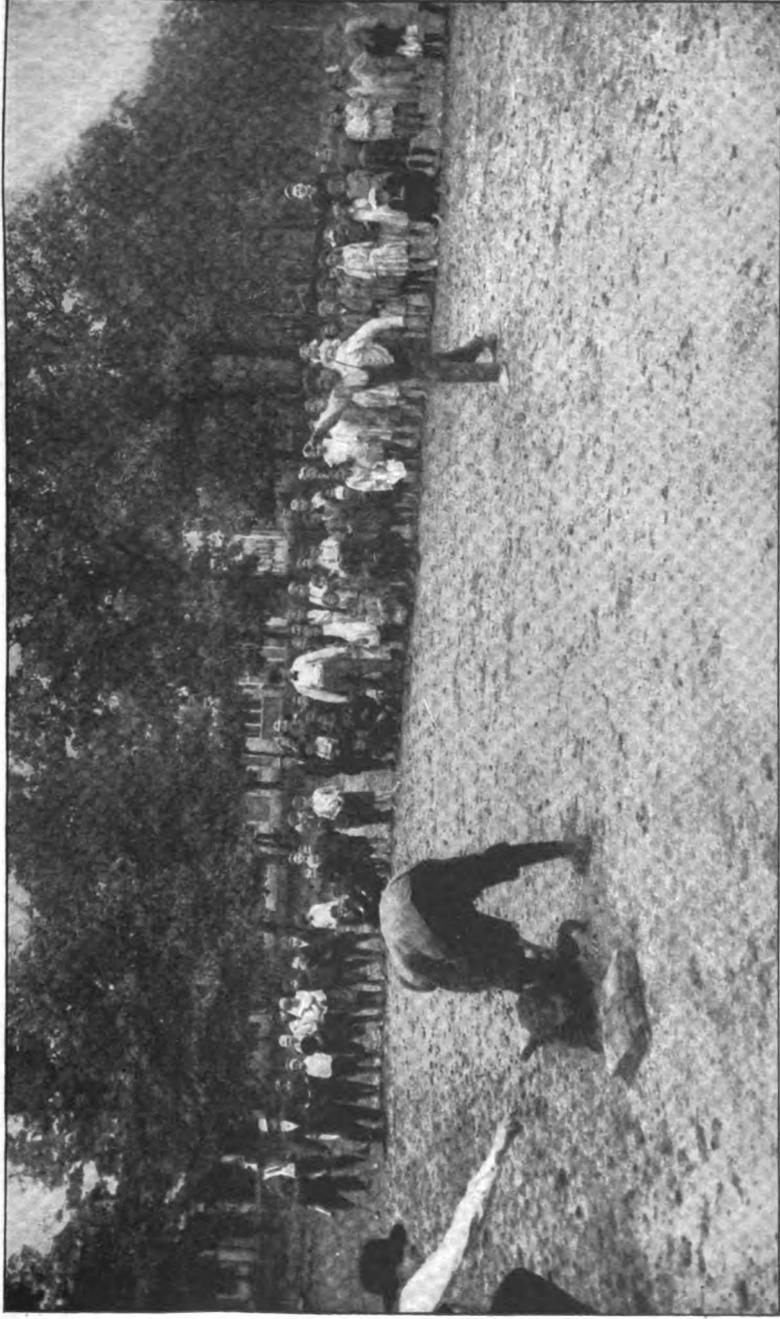




## WHY TEACH A CHILD TO PLAY?

BY G. E. JOHNSON, SUPERINTENDENT OF PLAYGROUND ASSOCIATION, PITTSBURG, PA.

**T**H**ERE** are two somewhat paradoxical expressions often used by playground people. One is "vacation school," the other "supervised play." The paradox disappears, however, when we come to think of it. Both expressions are quite natural and logical. Vacation suggests leisure and the original meaning of the word school was leisure. Leisure has always been an essential in education and in human progress. The very nature of childhood and the gradual prolongation of human infancy illustrate this. Leisure is Time's most precious gift to man. The expression "vacation school," one might say, means very leisurely leisure, or very educational education. This is, perhaps, what Mark Twain meant when he said, "Don't let your son's schooling interfere too much with his education."



**SUPERVISED BASEBALL GAME**

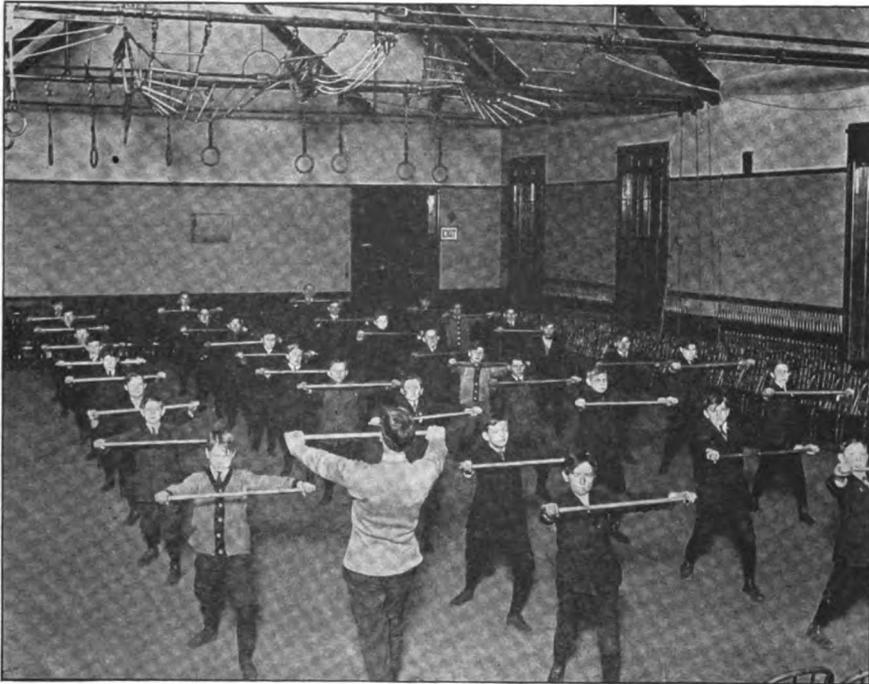
**Betting, Blasphemy, and Unfair Play are Eliminated by Proper Regulation in a Public Playground**

instinct for throwing, just as a bird inherits the instinct for singing, but not the song. When this instinct is not supervised, what happens?

Some Pittsburg boys were arrested and brought to the juvenile court. They had thrown stones at moving passenger cars in the ravine below them. In common with other boys they had the instinct for throwing, but it wasn't supervised. If it had been, these boys would have been given a ball field, and ball throwing would have taken the place of car stoning. Not long since I walked behind a group of schoolboys going home from school. A stray hen crossed the street and entered a vacant lot beyond. The boys saw her. Immediately a fusillade of stones flew about her until she had narrowly escaped up the bank beyond with a whole head upon her. If these boys had been carrying ball bats and mitts, I doubt that the hen would have been noticed. Boys have been taken to court for less serious offenses. Back in the dim ages before Adam, boys (or their prototypes) shied stones at birds in earnest. Ever since then, stones or other missiles have been thrown by each succeeding generation of boys. Throwing is a noble art and to-day is best exemplified in the baseball pitcher, whom above all men an American boy delights to honor. Baseball is a legitimate expression of the throwing instinct of which car stoning and hen baiting are the unsupervised form, and baseball the supervised.

Little Tim appeared in our juvenile court for stealing apples. He was warned and let go. Again he was tempted and fell, and again brought to court, placed under a probation officer and sent home. Once more complaint was made and Tim was again in court. In despair the probation officer took the boy aside and said: "Now, Tim, tell me honest, why do you steal these apples? Do you get so hungry for them you just can't help it?" The boy looked a little surprised, hung his head a moment and then said, "Why, I don't care much

knifing each other are unsupervised rivalry play, organized games the supervised. There is hardly anything finer in the social relations of men than the spirit of true sportsmanship that despises an unmerited advantage and that is master of victory and of defeat. Chivalry developed contemporane-

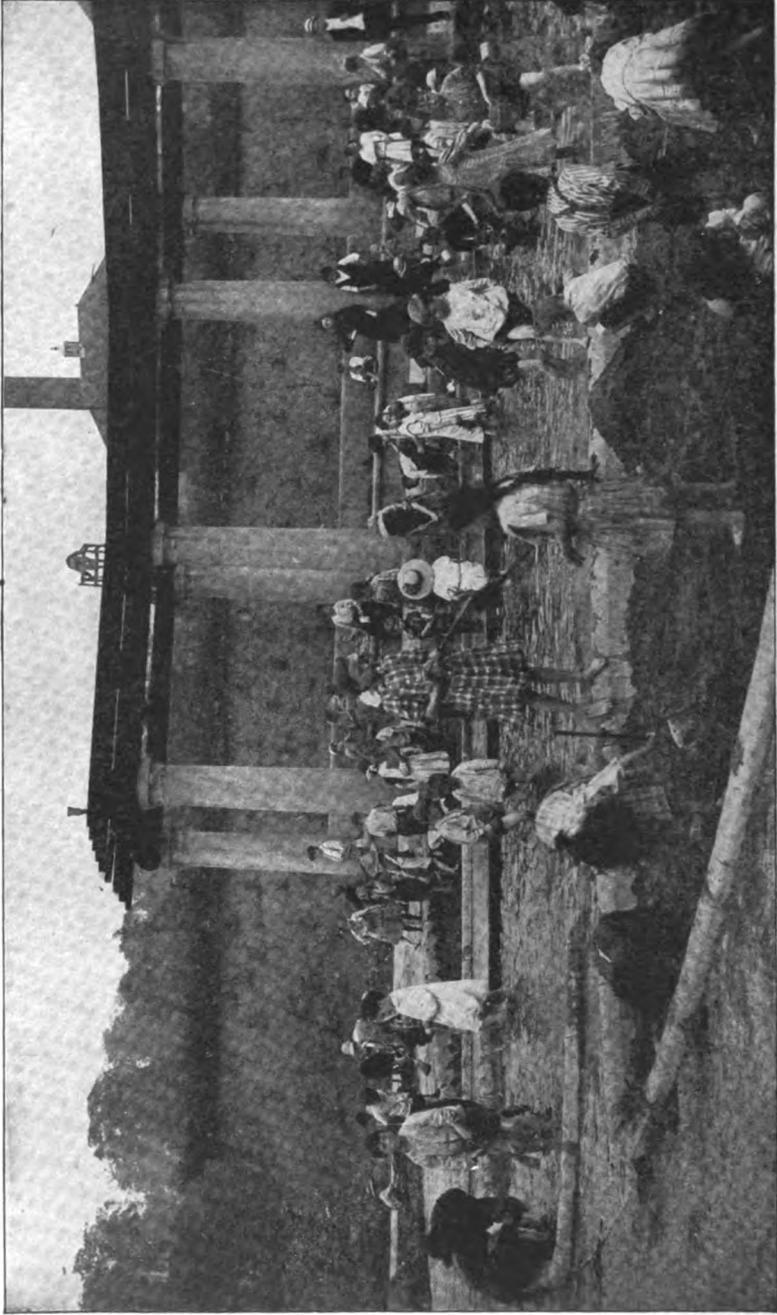


THE BOYS' WAND DRILL

A Valuable Form of Exercise Common in the Modern School Gymnasium

ously with the tournament and the joust. The evils of school and college sports are plainly due to lack of right supervision. In supervised play only do boys learn best the double lesson of how to bear defeat and how to temper victory.

Not long since, a gang of boys, fourteen in number, were arrested in Pittsburg and taken to the police station in a patrol wagon, because they had gathered together and were



**IN THE WADING POOL**  
Where the Small Children of a City Find Their Greatest Delight on a Sweltering Day in Summer

ever rode in the patrol wagon? My father has three times and mother once and when I get big I'm going to." A mission worker told her Sunday school class the story of Adam and Eve. Later she asked the children, "Where did Adam and Eve hide?" There was a pause, then came the answer, "Up an alley." It is a far cry from a city alley to the Garden of Eden. Perhaps if these children had attended a play festival they might have answered "Schenley Park." Last year at the Festival some children asked their teacher, "Do they really have grass and trees out here all the time?"

Every year our great rivers overflow their banks, endanger life and damage property. No one ever wishes that the rivers could be removed, for if they were, Pittsburg would be dead. One only wishes that proper channels could be provided. The immemorial streams of heredity in our boys and girls often break over the barriers of law and convention. We do not wish these streams could be removed, for if they were, the boys and girls would be dead. We can only wish that proper channels be provided. It is a hard lesson for us to learn that man's laws too often conflict with nature's laws and that the burden is put upon the children. It is pathetic when society allows its children, with much show of justice, to feel that law is their natural enemy. Not long since a group of boys met me on the South Side and appealed for a playground. They said: "We can't play in the schoolyard, we aren't allowed to play in the street. If we play in the brickyard the cop drives us off. We haven't any place to play." I was sitting on the porch of a well-known clergyman in Pittsburg. He had just called his two boys in from the street where they had been playing ball. They demurred somewhat, but happening to catch sight of a policeman they hastened into the yard and said: "Thanks, father, for the tip, the cop is coming." This antagonism of the boy against authority is greatly intensified in many cases and becomes a serious menace to his proper re-

appropriations). There was once a judge before whom appeared a perplexing case. When law failed him, when precedent was wanting, when testimony conflicted, he had recourse to psychology, and Solomon has been known through all these ages as the wisest of judges.

Why teach a child to play? One might as well ask why teach a child at all. Play was the mother of education. Species and races have advanced proportionately as they have played. Nay: as they have taught play. With what perfectly adapted and entrancing steps does play still lead the young child unto knowledge and efficiency! And when finally he is taken into the school, his education is effective proportionately as it gathers inspiration and force from the great "stream of humanity" which, vastly more than the individual himself, determines the issues of each individual life. To try to educate children otherwise is to fly in the face of the immutable purpose of God Himself, which He has revealed to us in the story of evolution.

