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EVENING RECREATION CENTERS

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF CHILD HYGIENE, RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION

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EVENING RECREATION CENTERS*

By CLARENCE ARTHUR PERRY

ACROSS the deserted spaces of Tompkins Square Park a January storm was sweeping. The benches were empty; the iron play apparatus stood stark and useless within its enclosure while, farther on, the chutes, swings and sand-heaps furnished sport only to the chilling night winds. A few persons, tight-buttoned and shivering, were moving rapidly along the asphalt walks. One passer-by, however, struck by the sharp contrast between this scene and the one which had greeted his eyes during a former visit to New York in the month of July, stopped and looked about.

Then the benches had been filled with tired men smoking their evening pipes and women watching their babies in nearby go-carts, while in the less illuminated spots young couples were engaged in conversation. On the playgrounds noisy, happy children were climbing and swinging, or digging in the sand. The grass-plots were occupied by groups of tiny toddlers attended by older sisters and, here and there, an exhausted laborer lay stretched out on a newspaper fast asleep. It had seemed on that warm night as if the bursting

*This pamphlet is a reprint of Chapter VIII of the "The Wider Use of the School Plant," by Clarence Arthur Perry.

tenements which hemmed in the park had overflowed, depositing their cramped and perspiring inmates upon its hospitable sward.

As now the traveler started down East Ninth Street he wondered how that surplus humanity was stowing itself when the summer annex to its living abode was no longer habitable. The tenements were no larger and their occupants no fewer than they had been in July. Where could the boys and girls of these homes find space for recreation on a winter's evening? This question, made all the more insistent by the sight of narrow buildings, small windows, ugly fire-escapes and garbage receptacles—placed in front because there was no driveway to the wretched court in the rear—was still pressing for an answer when his attention was attracted by a five-storied edifice of brick and stone whose dignified architecture contrasted strangely with the surrounding squalor. The two end wings of the building came out to the sidewalk and were connected by a high brick wall that was surmounted by an ornamental stone coping. In the middle of this wall was a wide gateway approached by several steps leading up from the sidewalk, through which could be seen a small courtyard and the central part of the building. The ground floor and the one above it were brilliantly lighted. Some boys came running up the steps and passed on towards the main entrance. The building was plainly a school house, but these lads did not have the appearance of evening pupils

and so, driven by curiosity, the passing stranger followed them inside.

The entrance room, pleasantly warmed by steam radiators, appeared to be as wide as the building, but though entirely devoid of furniture the effect of its natural spaciousness was lessened by heavy pillars which supported the upper stories and broke up the vast concrete floor into more or less distinct sections every one of which was now occupied by an animated group of boys. Immediately in front a number of youths standing in a circle were passing a ball as large as a pumpkin, back and forth, while a lad in the center attempted to intercept it. Just beyond, a preoccupied group were engaged in a game of shuffleboard. Over on the right a dozen boys took turns at tossing rings of rope, each aiming to pitch his quoit over the point of a stake which hung in a frame at the middle so that it oscillated back and forth. Nearby was a quartette of youngsters with toy racquets playing ping-pong around a long table.

A room on the right was equipped as a gymnasium. At one end two lines of eager little fellows stood waiting their turns to participate in the lively potato race then in progress. To give the event novelty the clean, well set-up young man in jersey and "gym" trousers, who was conducting it, had each pair of starters lie face up on a mat at the head of the lane through which they were to run. When he cried "Go!" they sprang to their

feet and darted for the potatoes with the greatest agility. The contestant who first finished gathering his vegetables into the waste-basket set at the starting-place made a score for his side which was chalked on the floor amidst the lusty cheers of his co-players. Across the room was a line of older boys following their leader in a series of "stunts" on the horizontal bar while at the farther end others amused themselves vaulting over a buck or swinging on the flying rings. "At seven-thirty, when the boys first come in," explained the teacher, "they are allowed a few minutes of free play. Then we put them through a stiff setting-up drill. All-round development is our aim."

The visitor was next conducted through the main hall to a more brilliantly lighted room in the rear which was comfortably filled with groups of boys sitting round small stands and tables. Some were playing checkers while others were deep in the intricacies of chess; parchesi, authors, geographical and historical card games were also in use, and so intent were most of the players that few noticed the presence of spectators. This was called the "quiet-games room." In the farther end was a long table at which sat a number of youths poring over magazines and newspapers. Nearby a businesslike young man was recording and giving out books to some eager lads standing in a line which was being constantly replenished by those who had made their selections from the shelves. One carried off "Robinson Crusoe"

while the next received "The Boys of '76." "Treasure Island" was obtained by a third, and a youth of more serious mien asked for a book that would help him prepare for the Civil Service examinations. The books formed one of the traveling libraries which belong to the New York Public Library and were changed at regular intervals.

The left wing of the building contained an immense room similar in appearance to its counterpart but entirely without apparatus or mats. Except for ten active fellows in jerseys, short pants and rubber-soled shoes, and a man with a whistle, its floor was clear of persons up to the fringe of spectators, one or two rows deep, that lined its edges. High up on the end walls were the familiar iron hoops and twine nets which constitute the narrow goals of basket ball. At that moment the rush of the players was halted by the shrill whistle of the referee and a curly-headed youth was given the ball to make a "try" for the goal because of a "foul" committed by the other team. The ball struck the hoop, circled around it and finally dropped through the trailing net. Thereupon the crowd in the opposite corner emitted a deafening outburst of cries, cat-calls and applause. "Those are the Wingate rooters," remarked the principal. "That point ties the score."

"And who might the Wingates be?" asked the visitor.

"One of our clubs. Their team is defending this goal while those representing the Saranac

Athletic Club have the other. You see all the fellows who come here are asked to join a club. We have now twenty-two of them. After these fellows get through, the Young America and the Roosevelt clubs will have a chance to play and meanwhile the Cosmos and the Levity clubs are having their turn in the gymnasium. By organizing the boys into societies we are able to arrange a schedule whereby everybody has an opportunity to enjoy systematically all of the privileges. My staff consists of two gymnasts, one game-room teacher, and one club director. There are 475 boys and young men in the building this evening and the benefits they receive cost the taxpayers about four cents apiece."

After ascending a flight of stairs visitor and guide passed down a long corridor and presently found themselves in an ordinary class room. The teacher's place was occupied by a young man with a gavel, while at his side sat the secretary writing in a blank book. Scattered about the room behind desks were a score of alert youths listening to the report of the arrangement committee concerning an "open meeting" of the society soon to be held. A card in the hands of one of the boys was labeled "Membership Card" and bore the owner's name, the number of the "evening recreation center," a column for each of the nine months from October to June in which to note attendance, and these words: "Dreadnaught Literary and Athletic Society." On the back, above the names

of the principal and the club director, appeared the following legend: "*Remember*—that the success of your club depends upon your regular and prompt attendance. *That* membership entitles you to the *Basket Ball* and *Athletic Privileges*."

Several other class rooms held similar clubs. Some were composed largely of one race, others included Italians, Hebrews, Hungarians and Poles as well as Irish and Yankees, all working harmoniously together. Their occupations were as varied as their features. Errand boys, factory hands, store clerks, stenographers and high school students mingled with "toughs," just plain boys, and Sunday school scholars. The members of the Whittier Society were hearing one of their number recite Lincoln's Gettysburg address, while the director of the Lowell Club was giving a lecture on the plays of Shakespeare. Across the hall the Princeton Pleasure Club, an athletic organization, was consistently realizing its nominal purpose in a vociferous and exciting election of officers. In the Hamilton Forum a debate upon the resolution "that immigration be further restricted" was in progress. The affirmative was being upheld by Messrs. Perkovitz and Gruenbaum, and their speeches showed a delightful unconsciousness of the possible effect upon their own fortunes which would have resulted from an earlier enactment of the proposals they were now urging with such noisy "patriotism."

Each club met in this way once a week from

7.30 to 9.45, and on the other evenings (except Sundays) the members were at liberty to come for games and gymnastic exercises. While the greater number of the clubs had been formed at the outset for athletic purposes, nearly all had gradually developed into literary and debating societies and a few were so energetic that they had obtained the use of class rooms for a meeting place during the summer evenings when the other privileges of the center were not available. One of the functions of the club director was to organize new societies and for this purpose the game rooms downstairs served as recruiting grounds.

A part of the building somewhat removed from the group of class rooms used by the clubs contained the study room. The boys in the other departments had all been fourteen or over, no pupils of the elementary schools being allowed to become members of the clubs or enter the game rooms if it could be helped. This room, however, was used exclusively for day-school children and was nearly filled with boys, all sitting at desks, with books open before them, sometimes two in the same seat. Some were writing, some were talking in low tones with their neighbors, and others were quietly studying. A woman teacher with an intelligent face and kindly manner moved quietly about the room, now and then saying a few words in response to an appeal from a pupil, and giving the kind of counsel that stimulated rather than replaced effort. The children came

simply to study in quiet surroundings the lessons assigned to them in the day schools. It was entirely voluntary on their part, and the privilege was given only to those who had attained the fourth grade, at which time home-work begins to be required. Before admission each one was obliged to present a card signed by his principal, containing his name, age, address, school, grade and the subjects needing study. To be admitted, children had also to bring their books. The room was not open Friday, Saturday or Sunday evenings. "We have an average of about sixty-five boys every evening and some of them have told me that since coming here they have received 'A's' on their reports for the first time in their lives," the principal explained.

After expressing his appreciation of the things he had seen the visitor registered his name and passed out into the night. The wind had died down, but it was still bitterly cold. The street was dark and empty. At the gateway he looked back at the light streaming from the school house windows, and then went on his way.

THE NEW YORK CENTERS

During the season 1909–10, thirty-one evening recreation centers were maintained by the Board of Education in the boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx and Brooklyn. With the exception of five they were open six nights a week from October to April. The use of these five was continued two

evenings a week until the beginning of June. The aggregate attendance for the season reached 2,165,457, making a nightly average of 12,985 for all thirty-one centers. Study rooms were available at twenty-seven of the centers, bathing facilities at twenty-four, and the staff of principals, teachers, gymnasts and other employes numbered nearly 200. One-third of the school buildings devoted to this enterprise were for the entertainment of women and girls only, and they enjoyed the same opportunities as their brothers except that the gymnasium was more often used for folk dancing than for athletics, though games of basket ball and wand drills were occasionally held.

For most of the men and boys the gymnasium is the principal attraction, with its exercises on the mat and on parallel and horizontal bars; though in large centers, like that at Public School No. 188 on East Third Street, basket ball, indoor baseball and track sports are also very popular. Policemen and firemen are frequently found wrestling at the High School of Commerce, while in another center there is a special "gym" class for deaf mutes. For several years athletic tournaments have been held, the final contests taking place in one of the large armories. One winter a local newspaper offered medals for boys and pins for girls as prizes in a series of basket ball games and athletic sports. Immediately the best players were organized into midget, middle and heavy-weight teams and the inter-center contests began. During the pre-

liminaries fifty athletic meets and 250 games of basket ball were played, each successive event heightening the general enthusiasm. The finals took place in the Twelfth Regiment Armory before a large audience which cheered to the echo the winners as they received their prizes at the hands of a representative of the newspaper that donated them, and of the wife of the president of the Board of Education. During the annual meet of 1909 there were from one to three entries from each boys' center in every contest and it was reported that "no more enthusiastic audience ever filled the vast building."

That year the total number of active clubs was 575, and while their names indicate a predominant, initial interest in some one field such as literature, debate, athletics, civics, the drama, or glee and orchestral music, the regulations under which they are organized induce uniformity and these distinctions are tending to disappear. Except for a few adult clubs devoted to civics or purely social diversions they are all scheduled for periods of gymnastic training, athletic sports and quiet games. Each club is also required to hold a weekly business meeting under the supervision of the club director, and to possess some knowledge of hygiene, civics and American history.

The variety of instruction given in these clubs is well shown in the following extract from the 1906 report of Miss Evangeline E. Whitney, who had charge of the recreation centers during the

period of their remarkable growth, namely from 1902 till her death in January, 1910. "The range of books read in the clubs extends from fairy tales and historic stories to Ruskin and Ibsen. We have scores of young men and women who critically study economics and Shakespeare; and many that make but slow mental advancement. In the latter class the teachers prepare illustrated talks on nature, the dress of different countries, their implements of industry and of war; tell thrilling stories of adventure; introduce topics of public interest and thus lead them into debates which send them to the library for information. One teacher who had several clubs of bright office boys could not get them to undertake any literary work until he stimulated their ambition by reciting selections learned in his own youth. The effect of his fine elocution brought the desired results, and essays, orations and debates were soon forthcoming. One night he recited 'King Robert of Sicily.' After he had finished there was a moment of tense silence, then a boy got to his feet and thus addressed the club: 'Fellows, I don't care what some people say, we've got to believe that there's a God in Heaven. Yes, fellows, there's a God in Heaven all right, and He's watching us and keeping tab on everything we do, and you can't bluff Him, or get away from Him; so, fellows, it's up to us to make good, that's all.' . . . Instruction has been given, by means of improvised dialogues, on how to make

proper applications for positions in various offices or business houses, how to perform successfully the duties of a toastmaster, and to formulate terse after-dinner speeches. Rules of etiquette, correct phraseology, and many subjects of kindred nature have emphasized the importance of observing the gracious forms of social life."

One of the more ambitious clubs composed of ex-high school boys took for its weekly discussions such subjects as "a comparative study of the drama of the Greeks, Romans, early and modern English, German and French." The Alcott Club of a girls' center in the heart of the East Side, during the past winter gave a dramatization of two scenes from "Little Women" for which a stage was formed by curtaining off one end of the capacious game room, and use was made of "properties" brought from the members' homes. In one or two other centers, playlets and comediettas have also been given. The practice of public speaking is encouraged by declamation contests and debates. One year, teams from various centers met in twenty-five discussions of live topics, and upon the conclusion of the final debates ebony and gold-mounted gavels were presented by a newspaper to the winning clubs, one to the young men and the other to the young women. The same paper also gave handsome medals to the two who received highest honors in a declamation contest held that season.

An attractive little paper containing prize

stories and gossipy notes from neighboring clubs is published by the Gavel Club of Public School 172, and the Irving Literary Society of No. 188 has started a publication of similar character called the *Observer*. Among the other activities common among the clubs may be mentioned concerts and literary entertainments to which the members invite guests, banquets given in honor of their instructors, and occasional balls given by those groups which have some social strength. One of the East Side girls' clubs acts as an auxiliary to the Ambulance Service Society connected with a nearby hospital, and it is a common thing for clubs to apply the money raised at social functions to the needs of ill or unfortunate comrades.

At Evening Recreation Center No. 188 the Lassie and Travelers' clubs were allowed to ask their young men friends one Wednesday evening to attend a dance. The behavior of the couples was so satisfactory and the occasion so enjoyable that a series of weekly dances was planned. The principals of two neighboring centers recommended a number of gentlemanly boys who with the girls' clubs mentioned formed a dancing class. An executive committee of five boys, and an equal number of girls was appointed to pass upon the names of proposed members, who had to be well endorsed before they could be presented. The dues were five cents a week payable by the members of both sexes and the funds thus raised not only met the expense of providing a violinist and

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of waxing the floor, but left a surplus large enough to afford the members additional enjoyment through entertainments and outings. At these weekly reunions members of the center staff gave instruction not only in the regular waltz, two-step and lanciers but also in folk dancing. Strict supervision was exercised and young people seen dancing in an objectionable manner were cautioned and shown a more decorous way.

During the season of 1909–10 there were six centers where mixed dancing classes were held, several of them becoming so popular that waiting-lists were made up of applicants who could not be accommodated on account of the restricted space. Dr. Edward W. Stitt, who has succeeded Miss Whitney in the charge of the centers, relates that on the evening of St. Patrick's Day he visited an East Side dancing class and found 150 young people enjoying themselves in a wholesome manner, while in a notorious dance hall across the way, both larger and easier of access, there were only thirty on the floor.

So remarkable an innovation as social dances maintained in public school buildings and organized by employes of the Board of Education was not made without some preliminary experimenting. For several years there had been social occasions when the girls assumed the rôle of hostess and entertained boys of known character and proved gentlemanliness. Musical entertainments, amateur theatricals, athletic exhibitions by the

boys, checker contests and other table games were the chief amusements at these assemblies. Dancing was enjoyed occasionally, but it was the folk dances and others that contained the game spirit rather than the waltz or two-step which were indulged in. As these social affairs progressed their effects became noticeable. One principal wrote: "We have watched many of our girls change from the silly attitude toward the boys to that of practical indifference, or open, frank comradeship, and have seen the boys, who at first came in untidy of dress and unclean of person, appearing with clean linen and hands, tidy clothes and freshly shaven faces."

The beneficial results of the club activities show themselves in unexpected directions. A civic organization composed of forty young men and women resolved to work all summer for cleaner streets in the neighborhood of school and home. Several years ago a club of boys was formed with the purpose of working "for the betterment of the Italian race in America." With a roll of over 200, meeting weekly in hired rooms for mutual improvement, and with many charter members returning monthly to their former director for counsel, this club has grown to be a civic force of incalculable influence. One of its early regulations made attendance at evening school obligatory upon the members, and so close is the connection between education and the work of the recreation center that the latter has come to be regarded, to a

certain extent, as a recruiting ground for the public night schools.

Concerning the aid afforded by these play centers to the social assimilation of the large masses of foreigners in our population, Mrs. Humphry Ward has contributed some interesting testimony. At a banquet given her by the Playground Association of America, she thus describes a visit to one of the centers: "We found a thousand girls, divided in the same way between active physical exercise and club meetings (by the way, while one of the boys' clubs was debating Mr. Bryce's American Commonwealth, the girls were discussing Silas Marner); and, in the third, perhaps most remarkable of all, five hundred girls were gathered debating whether you should retain the Philippine Islands, with a vigor, a fluency, a command of patriotic language and feeling which struck me with amazement. Here were girls, some of whom could only have arrived in your country a year or two ago, and all of them the children of aliens, appealing to your Anglo-Saxon forefathers, and talking of your Revolutionary War and the Monroe Doctrine, of liberty and self-government, with an intensity of personal appropriation such as no mere school teaching could have produced. It was as though I was in the presence of those children whom you will remember in the story of the Pied Piper—the children whom the Pied Piper led to the mountain, which opened and closed upon them again, entomb-

ing a whole generation. Browning had heard vaguely that somehow and somewhere they re-emerged. And here they are! The parents have been entombed and imprisoned for generations. But their children are now free—they are in sunshine. Hence, this energy, this astonishing sense of power and life."

Miss Whitney's annual reports to the city superintendent record many instances of striking changes in the character of the young men who have patronized the centers. "Last fall, a noted 'tough' of nineteen years strolled into a center for the declared purpose of 'clearing the place out.' He discovered that a few determined athletes had something to say about that, and subsided into a quiet observer of the evening's sports. The principal noticed that he became a regular attendant, and invited him to join a club. He did so, and was told about the study room—the longed-for oasis in his desert life. Earnestly he applied himself to take a civil service examination, and when the term closed in May, he was acceptably filling the position of a junior clerk in one of our city departments."* The following incident selected out of "scores of incidents" that came to her notice demonstrates clearly Miss Whitney's belief that no matter how bad a young man may be, the acquisition of "the athlete's code of honor is a triumph over lawlessness, the beginning of a citizen's conception of duty." "One club of

* Report of the City Supt. of Schools. New York, 1906, page 364.

street loafers organized last winter," she wrote, "seemed as unpromising as any we ever attempted to reform. The leader, a swaggering, unclean fellow, fortunately had 'the vulnerable heel.' He began to observe expert performances, then to obey instructions, until pride and skill were so developed that by the end of the season he outranked all the athletes in his center and made his club equal with the best."*

That the benefits to character are not confined to the male sex alone is shown by the following statement in her report of 1908: "One of the marked instances of the year was the rescue of what the police designated 'one of the worst gangs of girls on the East Side.' In the club of twenty young women, now tamed and decent, one would not recognize the hoydens of a few months ago."

Considering the important part played by athletics it is not surprising that gymnasts should be favored when selecting workers for these centers. The ability to secure immediate respect from street boys gives a leverage not possessed by women, though many of the latter have been highly successful. It has been found that altruism is a prime qualification for the principalship and herein lies the usual secret of the woman worker's power. The degree to which the work has been organized is illustrated by the fact that weekly and monthly reports are regularly sent to the superintendent's office covering the attendance, contests, debates,

* Report of the City Supt. of Schools, 1909, page 551.

books read and activities in general. In the study rooms the teachers use a card-system, reference to which tells them just the kind of assistance each pupil needs.

The centers as a whole are administered by a corps having the usual grades of superintendent, inspector, supervisor, principal and teacher, but in spite of the uniformity to be expected from so much system and so large an organization, each center has individuality, due to the character of the building, the personnel of the staff, and the kinds of people who frequent it.

Inspectors begin with a salary of $1500 which in six years is automatically raised to $1750, the other employes being paid as follows:

RECREATION CENTER SALARIES

Supervisors	$6.00 per day
Principals	4.00 per session
Teachers	2.50 " "
Assistant Teachers	1.75 " "
Teachers of swimming	2.00 " "
Librarians	2.50 " "
Pianists	2.00 " "

In 1909 the expense of the thirty-one centers in New York was $79,565.74, which with a daily average of 12,084 persons cost the taxpayers $6.58 for each participant in the season of fun and healthful enjoyment.

BEGINNINGS IN OTHER CITIES

For several years the Newark, New Jersey, Board of Education has maintained a recreation

center in one of its buildings that is open four evenings a week from 7.30 to 9.30, to both school children and older people. The privileges afforded are those of a gymnasium, reading and quiet-games room, and four people are employed to supervise and give instruction. In addition the gymnasiums of two other schools have been used during the evenings, while in several buildings classes in folk dancing have been open to the girl pupils immediately after the close of the afternoon session. The expense of this work during 1908–09 amounted to $1553.49. In Chicago during the 1909–10 season two evening recreation centers were established under the charge of day-school principals, which, without the advantage of assembly rooms or gymnasiums, were nevertheless very successful. The wide corridors gave the boys space for basket ball and the girls gymnastic opportunities. There were study rooms for those who wished them, a double room for reading and single ones for choral singing, illustrated lectures on travel, and folk dancing. Volunteer workers assisted the principals in the conduct of these activities, which were carried on only two evenings a week. In other schools permission has been given to use the gymnasiums for basket ball and indoor baseball games upon the application of responsible persons and societies.

In Philadelphia, Milwaukee and several other cities enterprises having similar features have been carried on, but since they are locally known as

"social centers" their description has been reserved for the following chapter. The gymnasium classes under trained teachers held in several of the Cincinnati buildings have already been mentioned in the discussion of evening schools, but in addition voluntary organizations are allowed the use of four other buildings in which to conduct debating clubs and wholesome recreations for boys. In St. Louis, through the co-operation of the Public Library and the Board of Education, a reading room for young people is opened three nights a week in one of the public schools.

The Playground and Social Service League of Newton, Massachusetts, maintained during the summer evenings of 1909 a quiet-games and reading room in the Bowen School, and in Portland, Maine, a similar work is conducted by the Fraternity House social workers. In many cities undertakings of this sort go by the name of "boys' clubs" which are usually organized and supported by voluntary organizations or philanthropic individuals. In Cleveland, the Daughters of the American Revolution have the use of one school building in which they conduct three juvenile clubs; Syracuse has two clubs which are supported by public-spirited persons and directed by a former Y. M. C. A. man with a medical training. An illustration of the origin of such a club is found in Pittsburgh where the principal of the Oakland District School threw open several class rooms for evening study. While the attendance

was fairly good it did not come up to expectations, but meeting in that way developed a social cohesiveness among the boys that finally took the form of an organized club with pronounced athletic tendencies. Indeed "athletic" is the touchstone of success in work with boys, and the skilful director not only lays emphasis upon physical training and organized sports, but, like the Buffalo worker in charge of the Evening Club of School 29 which gave a "horseback fight" and bar-bell drill at the spring playground demonstration in Convention Hall, he sees to it that his boys are stimulated by frequent public exhibitions.

LONDON EVENING PLAY CENTERS

In thirteen of the London County Council schools, play centers open to boys and girls between the ages of five and fourteen are maintained five evenings a week, from 5.30 to 7.30, and for an hour and a half on Saturday mornings. The occupations afforded comprise various kinds of handwork such as cobbling, woodwork, basketwork, painting, plasticine modeling, needlework and knitting. But work is not all, or even the main thing, at these places. In a quiet room draughts, halma, picture-lotto, puzzles, deck quoits, brick-building, fish ponds, and many other games are provided; toy-rooms contain dolls and teasets, bricks, engines, block puzzles and picture books for the little ones, while the toddlers amuse themselves in the "babies' room" which is

furnished with small chairs and light, low tables instead of with desks and seats. A library stands ready to supply story and picture-books. In the large, bright halls the older girls make merry singing "The Keys of Canterbury," "Mowing the Barley," or playing some of Mrs. Gomme's games, like "London Bridge" or "Here we come up the Green Grass." The exercises of the "Drill Classes" are interspersed with dances, and when the measures of Sir Roger, an Irish jig, or a Danish dance begin to sound through the room the happiness of rhythmic motion seizes little bodies which usually feel only fatigue and the shame of raggedness. For the boys there are calisthenic drills and exercises upon the apparatus of the school gymnasium. Cricket during the summer and football during the autumn and winter months are encouraged by play leaders, and many matches in these sports are held Saturday mornings on the school playgrounds.

The use of the buildings, lighted and heated, is furnished by the London County Council, but the work is carried on by an Evening Play Centres Committee composed of twenty-two members, including representatives of the nobility, officialdom, the Church, and society. The organizer of the movement, Mrs. Humphry Ward, is the chairman, honorary secretary, and treasurer of the committee, and it is from her report for 1909 that the following account of the organization of the work is taken: "Each centre is under the direction

of a paid superintendent, who is responsible to the Play Centres Committee, and is assisted by both paid and voluntary workers. . . . The children attached to each centre are chosen, in the first instance, by the teachers of the four or five schools, as the case may be, within easy reach of the centre, who are asked to make the *need* of the children their basis of choice. Each child attends a centre normally twice a week, but a third attendance is allowed for the library or quiet games, or for a lantern lecture, while in the case of children coming from neglected homes, or whose parents are obliged to be out at work until late in the evening, arrangements can be made for their attending the centre every evening. The evening is generally divided into two sessions of one hour each, attended by different sets of children. At three centres, however, we work on a one-session time-table, only one set of children being admitted during the evening, but remaining for an hour and forty minutes. Each child, on joining a play centre, is registered and given a colored badge, which admits him to one of the two sessions on two nights in the week. Thus, a blue badge admits to the first session on Mondays and Thursdays, a yellow badge to the second session on Tuesdays and Fridays. Many of the Wednesday children attend as a rule on Saturday mornings; but Wednesday is a one-session evening—that is to say, only one set of children is admitted, but they remain for an hour and a half, changing occupations at half-time. The centres

are open during forty weeks in the year, from September to July." The benefits of the centers now reach between 9,000 and 10,000 children; their maintenance depends upon the annual contribution of over $15,000, making the cost per child approximately $1.50 a year.

Readers of "Robert Elsmere" will be interested to learn that this undertaking is an offshoot of that scheme of pioneer philanthropy in which the brave clergyman found the solution of his painful problems, and which is foreshadowed in the following passage: "And sitting down again on a sand-hill overgrown with wild grasses and mats of sea-thistle, the poor pale reformer began to draw out the details of his scheme on its material side. Three floors of rooms brightly furnished, well lit and warmed; a large hall for the Sunday lectures, concerts, entertainments, and story telling; rooms for the boys' club; two rooms for women and girls, reached by a separate entrance; a library and reading room open to both sexes, well stored with books, and made beautiful by pictures; three or four smaller rooms to serve as committee rooms and for the purposes of the Naturalist Club which had been started in May on the Murewell plan; and, if possible, a gymnasium."

This institution, then a vision in the mind of the author, received embodiment afterwards through her own efforts in a now well-known social settlement and became a starting-point for many new activities, of which that undertaken by the Evening

Play Centres Committee is but a single example. The origin of this enterprise can best be described in the words of its prime mover: "In 1897 the Passmore Edwards Settlement, in Tavistock Place, started some evening classes and games, as a counter-attraction to the life and loafing of the streets, for the children of the neighboring elementary schools. These classes have now developed into a large Children's Recreation School, or Play Centre, open five evenings in the week for an hour and a quarter, and from 10 to 12.30 on Saturday mornings. . . . The success of this work led, in the winter of 1904, to the raising of a Fund and to the formation of a Committee for the establishment of Evening Play Centres in Council School buildings, in some of the poorest and most crowded parts of London."

The aim of the Committee is to secure the permanence of its work through its adoption by the public authorities, and to this end Mrs. Ward is working most ardently, expending her energies not only in personal championship, but also in documentary appeals, distinguished by literary charm and convincing facts. These are addressed to the London County Council and to the English public through the medium of *The Times*. The government school inspectors have already filed encouraging reports about the handicraft work in these classes, and although the party of economy in the Council still (January, 1910) stands in the way of full support, the hopes of the Committee

have been raised by a small government grant recently made for light woodwork.

THE MOVEMENT ELSEWHERE IN ENGLAND

Upon this topic the 1909 report of the Evening Play Centres Committee contains the following: "But, in addition to the growth of our own centres, we have to report the spread of the movement outside our Committee. Lord Iveagh has opened a centre in Dublin; the large play centre attached to the Jewish Free School in Whitechapel has been opened, and is working admirably; another centre has been organized by the governors of the People's Palace, Stepney. For these centres we have been able to supply superintendents trained for a longer or shorter time under our Committee. Fresh proposals also are constantly being made to us." In support of the latter statement the report then tells of applications for assistance which had been received from Paddington, Bermondsey and Deptford.

The Recreative Evening Classes Committee of Manchester, which is organized under the presidency of the Bishop of Manchester and includes the mayor and several titled personages among its vice-presidents, has a sub-division known as the Children's Happy Evening Section. This body has surrounded itself with a band of voluntary helpers who carry on weekly entertainments in school buildings and other suitable quarters for the benefit of the neighborhood children. The

season's program includes concerts, gramophone entertainments, competitions in singing and reciting, contests in draughts and skipping rope as well as battledore and shuttlecock, and other games. Football and cricket are played in the basements while in the quiet room the children amuse themselves with bead-laying, crayon drawing, and similar occupations. Three municipal schools were used during the season of 1908–09 at which the weekly attendance ran between 200 and 250.

The Bradford Cinderella Club which has for its object "the feeding, clothing and entertainment of poor children," describes in its 1908–09 report a similar enterprise: "One of the most interesting departments of our work is the provision of 'Treats,' consisting of tea and entertainment, to parties of poor children almost every Saturday during the winter months. During last winter we organized twenty-five of these treats to parties of 300 children in all the poorer quarters of the city, in schools which were kindly lent us for the purpose." They find that a "treat" for 300 children costs between $18 and $19.

As has been suggested already there are, in both America and England, undertakings not mentioned in the present chapter which nevertheless provide recreation during the evening in school buildings. Their activities are predominantly social in character and they thus belong more properly under that title. The line of demarcation between the recreation and the social center is

difficult to draw, but the obvious necessity of some sort of classification, if they were to be discussed separately, made an attempt at definition obligatory. For the purposes of this study, therefore, a recreation center has been regarded as an institution providing chiefly those pleasurable activities wherein the enjoyment is always dependent upon the use of some article or apparatus, or involves physical exercise in accordance with certain rules or standards, and is little affected by personal distinctions. In the social center, on the other hand, the enjoyment is more contingent upon the mutual companionability of the individuals participating, demands little or no apparatus and involves intellectual rather than physical performances. No existing institution, of course, provides activities wholly confined to either one of these classes, but usually one type has been sufficiently emphasized in excess of the other to furnish the basis of a working classification.

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See also the annual reports of the voluntary organizations mentioned in the text.