

Our Villages—Clubs and Associations

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After the First World War, one first began to more intensively form clubs. These were mostly choirs or clubs for culture or general education, which were started in the colonies. Choirs existed already in earlier times. This club life formed places of great importance in the education of young and old. People who were concerned for the well-being of the youth and wanted to do good for their general education also thought how they could repair some grievances in our villages. In earlier times the youth spent their time in the streets. It often happened that they drank too much wine and, while intoxicated, got into fights and brawls. In the evenings they congregated at different street corners, played and danced. Thus several became employed with that, which offended against good customs and morals. This mischief should be remedied by creating various associations. After a few years their usefulness was recognized, and the idea of associations reached even the smallest village. One can say that before our resettlement to Germany such an association was present in almost every village. Building sites were bought under the greatest financial sacrifices of the club members and, with the help of everybody, the largest and most magnificent club premises were created.

Finally the youth had a place where they could meet. Young and old met there. Frequently one encountered difficulties and resistances, because many members of the older generation were expressed opponents of the establishment of such associations. Only the imperturbable faith in the good things, in the huge advantages of these associations, gave them the strength and energy to carry things through, even when the opposition and resistance was still strong. Also they—the opposition—had to convince themselves of the immense use of the same; because they were true centres of culture. Here different performances and lectures were held. Teachers and others made themselves available for these purposes. Many of our students and others described to us their impressions, which they gained in Germany, in particular in Wuerttemberg, our home land. Everyone listened intently to their statements. Their words were directly devoured. They could hardly believe that these people were allowed to live, to learn and to move around in the homeland of the fathers! This awakened a longing in everyone, and an intense desire, to be also allowed to experience and see Germany, and above all Wuerttemberg, just once!

The theatre evenings brought pleasant diversions. On these occasions the most beautiful German folk songs were sung and folk-dances in the national costume were demonstrated. A group of boys and girls in their national costumes was a marvelous sight! Following the theatre performance, the dance began. Many couples moved in the rhythm of the music. During the interval, one visited the best furnished refreshment room. Pies, fancy cakes and various beverages could be bought. Roasts of chicken and goose, plus the rolls with butter, and bratwurst were meant more for the men. Everyone was merry and lively. In this environment one could not be different at all. The best jokes were told. These meetings lasted into the early morning hours. One talked about them for many days. How many of the young were smitten here. After a short time they introduced themselves as being engaged. Customs and habits, as well as the native language, were nurtured here. Good social manners were taught by the older to the younger ones. Thus old and young had become a community. They no longer avoided each other, but went with one another. The juveniles' zest for life saw itself suddenly connected with the experience of the elders. Both sides saw that they absolutely belonged together so that they must no longer work and live opposing each other, but alongside and for each other. The spirit of comradeship, the feeling of fellowship prevailed. Youth and old age were welded together. Young and old became an inseparable community.