AND the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.” Thus Zechariah in five hundred and twenty B. C. But there were fewer automobiles in Zechariah’s day than there are in ours. The children now need, for their play, some place safer than the street. More important than the playground, however, is the play. It is well that children should play in a safe place, but it is absolutely necessary that they should play somewhere if they are to grow up at all. For there is no doubt now, I think, in the minds of educators that play builds the child. It is the method that Nature has provided for his development. Play indeed is the positive side of the whole phenomenon of infancy. The reason the higher animals, and man above all, are born so helpless and unformed is that they may be finished by this especial method. It is for the sake of play that infancy exists, that there is such a thing as a child at all. The child who is deprived of his chance to play is deprived of his opportunity to grow up.

There are still quiet streets in which play can be safely carried on, and there are pastures and spare lots and the children’s homes in which some of the best playing can be done. But the provision for outdoor recreation falls far short of actual needs. For not only does the lack of playgrounds in our cities cause the death and maiming of hundreds of children every year, but our threatened loss of play, and of the great games in which the best play is embodied, means the moral and intellectual maiming of our entire future citizenship.

Our first playgrounds were the old town commons, an English institution planted in America in the early part of the seventeenth century. Boston Common, for instance, was established in sixteen hundred and thirty-four, and it is an ineradicable part of the faith of every true Bostonian that the American Revolution was brought on by the attempt of General Gage to prevent the Boston boys from playing football on it. So that our first playgrounds are an inheritance from the England of the Elizabethan age.

And we got much more from England than simply the place to play. Newell in that fascinating collection of folk-lore, his “Games and Songs of American Children” (from which most of the succeeding information has been abstracted) tells us that up to the middle of the last century we had a richer play tradition than any other country, owing apparently to the fact that we had for two centuries been more out of the current of events and so remained more primitive and
unsophisticated. The America of that time was, in some ways, a piece of the England of Elizabeth, isolated and preserved as such.

The games played by American children were apparently much the same all over the country, going back, as they did, to a common origin in England before the streams of immigration separated. And the play tradition was as strong in Puritan New England as in the South or in the Middle States. So that one great stream of play and song we get from old England, and it is a stream that ought to be preserved.

This play tradition from old England is really not English but European. "Oats, pease, beans and barley grows," was played by Froissart and Rabelais, and is still a favorite in France, including Provence, and in Spain, Italy, Sicily, Germany and Sweden. Hop Scotch seems to be a nearly universal game, its range being from England to Hindustan. In Austria, the final goal in this game was called the temple; in Italy, the last three divisions are the Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso. Jackstones seem to be of Japanese origin, but have put a circle round the earth, until America has received the tradition from both East and West.

Our American games are as notable for the antiquity of their origin as for their wide distribution among the nations. Horace tells how, on the famous journey to Brundusium, Maecenas went out and played tennis while he and Virgil were kept in the house, one by a weak stomach and the other by weak eyes. Aristotle recommends "the rattle of Archimedes" for children of about the age of six. Dolls are found in the catacombs of Egypt, and ball games go back at least as far as Nausicaa and Atalanta. (The latter, to be sure, on the occasion most generally remembered was not engaged in ball but in track athletics; but the fact that she stopped in the middle of an important sprint to chase after a ball, is more significant than if she had brought in the winning run for Thebes.) The Roman girls used to play ball, and children’s balls were made with a rattle inside, and with gaudily colored divisions like the lobes of an orange, as they are today. Ball seems to have been especially a game for girls during the Middle Ages, and is mentioned as such by Walter von der Vogelweide. The parable in the New Testament of children sitting in the market-place and crying, "We have piped into you and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you and ye have not wept," seems to refer to a kind of dramatic game like some of those still played.

Many of our games had something of a religious origin or association. Stool ball—which seems to have been a sort of grandfather
CROWNING OF MAY DAY QUEEN IN CLEVELAND, OHIO: A TYPICAL INCIDENT OF THE GREAT MODERN RECREATION MOVEMENT.

BOYS AND GIRLS AT PLAY IN GLASS PARK, SPOKANE: A WELL EQUIPPED AND CONSTANTLY PATRONIZED PUBLIC PLAYGROUND THAT HELPS TO GIVE THE CHILDREN HAPPY OUTDOOR EXERCISE AND WHOLESOME MERRIMENT.
YOUTHFUL SKATERS RACING ON THE ICE AT BROOKSIDE PARK, CLEVELAND, OHIO: A WINTER ASPECT OF THE BIG PLAYGROUND MOVEMENT THAT HAS BEEN RECENTLY SWEETING AMERICA WITH SUCH ENCOURAGING RESULTS.

ONE OF THE "OLE SWIMMIN' HOLES" OF TODAY, AT FORT WAYNE, INDIANA, WHERE HUNDREDS OF BOYS ENJOY THIS DELIGHTFUL, INVIGORATING SPORT.
A SHADY CORNER NEAR THE BAND-STAND IN PIONEER PARK, SALT LAKE CITY: WHERE CHILDREN AND PARENTS FIND REFRESHING OUTDOOR AMUSEMENT TOGETHER,

PICNIC PARTIES ON A WOODED RIVER BANK IN FOSTER PARK, FORT WAYNE, INDIANA: ONE OF AMERICA'S MANY LOVELY NATURAL PLAYGROUNDS THAT HAVE BEEN DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH AND HAPPINESS OF HER CHILDREN, YOUNG AND OLD.
WATCHING A LABOR DAY PLAY FESTIVAL FROM THE GRAND-STAND OF A MUNICIPAL PLAYGROUND IN EAST ORANGE, NEW JERSEY: THE MANY THOUSAND SPECTATORS TESTIFY TO THE POPULAR INTEREST IN THIS PICTURESQUE FORM OF ENTERTAINMENT.

AN EAST ORANGE PLAYGROUND WHICH WAS ORIGINALY A SWAMP: ONE OF THE MANY INSTANCES OF THE PROGRESSIVE RESULTS ACHIEVED BY THE WIDESPREAD RECREATION MOVEMENT IN THIS COUNTRY.
of baseball—was especially an Easter game. In the diocese of Auxerre, it was an ancient custom to play in the church on Easter Monday a solemn game of ball while singing anthems appropriate to the season. At Vienna, a dance and ball game was conducted by the archbishop in his palace. (Is this the origin of "giving a ball"?) Newell thinks that we have here a survival of the ancient games of the spring festival. And baseball is still a harbinger of spring.

There are a number of games that reflect the religious conceptions of the Middle Ages—games in which the scales of St. Michael and the keys of St. Peter are represented. There is the game of Old Witch, the witch usually limping because of her cloven hoof, and the game of Iron Tag, in which touching iron preserves from pursuit, as of evil spirits.

London Bridge, especially, is supposed to represent the perpetual warfare of angels and devils over departed souls. The special relation between bridges and the enemy of mankind long antedates bridge whist. There are Devil’s Bridges in all parts of Europe. The devil in these traditions represents the ancient spirit of the land, who resented the presumption of man in making safe roads across his streams to rob him of his natural toll of deaths by drowning, and sought revenge. In consequence, he always did his best to destroy the bridge, and very frequently succeeded. In order to make it stand firm and sure, he had to be propitiated, and there are many stories of compacts between the architect and his infernal majesty, under which the latter was entitled to the soul of the first person crossing over the bridge—though he was generally cheated out of it by various infantile devices which he never seemed able to anticipate.

That is why London Bridge is forever falling down, why the children who cross it are continually being caught, and why the game finally ends in the tug of war (between good and evil spirits) to settle their ultimate destination.

Perhaps the largest class of games are those of courtship; and these, like most of the others, were originally games of grown-ups. Madame Celnart in "The Complete Manual of Games of Society," of which the second edition appeared in eighteen hundred and thirty, is quoted by Newell as recommending kissing games, especially for business men. The lady says: "For persons leading a sedentary life, and occupied all day in writing and reckoning (the case with most men), a game which demands the same attitude, the same attention of mind, is a poor recreation. . . . On the contrary, the varying movement of games of society, their diversity, the gracious, gay ideas which these games inspire, the decorous caresses which they permit—all this combines to give real amusement. These caresses can alarm
neither modesty nor prudence, since a kiss in honor given and taken before numerous witnesses is often an act of propriety.” These and other games are not, as is often supposed, the amusement of peasants and primitive kinds of people, but are, on the contrary, the diversions of what is called “society,” in the more technical sense. Many of our children’s games, including for instance a sort of hill dill, were common diversions of the court ladies at the time of Queen Elizabeth.

Of course many games are representations of war, Prisoners’ Base being an example. The game of football derives from the German kämpfen, to fight, its ancient name of camp ball, prophetic of its modern expounder, Walter Camp.

But besides the great English tradition from which we get the great number of our ordinary games, there is another inheritance I want to speak of, and one which it is especially important to remember at the present time.

NOW to come down to the relation between our play inheritance and the Playground and Recreation Association of America, I believe the most important thing the Association can do is to preserve the best of our ancient games and promote any new ones that may be worthy to rank among them. The work of any playground is to be judged not on the playground itself but in the surrounding neighborhood. It is through the games it has planted that its greatest influence is seen. It is what the children are obsessed with, the game they play in the streets and backyards and empty lots, before breakfast and on the way to school, that they dream of when they have gone to bed at night, that is having the real influence over them.

A great game is like a plant growing up among the cobblestones, it will force its way if once it strikes root. You can no more kill baseball than you can get plantain out of a lawn. It grows in the most unexpected and impossible places. If we should succeed in planting prisoners’ base in all the cities and towns in the country, it would be played for a large part of the year in every village and on half the city streets. It is particularly true of children in their more insistent demands that where there’s a will there’s a way—that where there’s a game there is play—especially in what is going to be the children’s century. If we can only sow the right games, there will come up a crop of healthy children as sure as the sun rises. The cities will find that they can grow them as well as the country, and they will have to grow them.

And there is need that some one should undertake this task of rescuing our ancient games, for we are at present in imminent danger
of losing a large part of the precious tradition. The danger, like so
many others that threaten our social life, arises largely from the
crowding of our cities and the increasing loneliness of our country
districts, circumstances which constitute a serious departure from
the ancient conditions under which our play tradition grew up.

The life led by our ancestors, which molded their customs and
traditions in play as in all other respects, was for thousands of years
a life in small village communities. From the days of Tacitus and
beyond, the Germanic peoples (and the other races also, for that
matter) lived in small communities. The old tribal life was fairly
reproduced in the English village, with its common land and its
village green, which in its turn was transplanted without material
change, so far as neighborhood influences are concerned, to this
country. In this ancient tribal and village life, people lived near
enough together to meet for purposes of defence, of government and
of recreation, and yet were not so crowded but that there was room
for every sort of play and game. The village community is the cru-
cible of the race, the soil in which it grew—its nest, its natural habitat,
its second home, to which its social mind has reference.

UNDER the conditions of our modern life, however, the intro-
duction of machinery and other improvements in the art of
agriculture have had the double effect of greatly enlarging our
farms, and thereby rendering our country population far more sparse,
and of making possible the enormous growth and crowding of our
cities. The result has been the suffocation on the one hand, and the
attenuation, almost to the point of disappearance, on the other, of
much of our recreational and social life. You can play baseball with
a base line ninety feet long; you can play it fairly well with one of
half that length; but you can’t play it when the distance is less than
three feet or more than a mile. And something the same is true of
other games.

Immigration, the other cause of danger to our recreational life,
has hitherto had a curiously sterilizing effect. The immigrant has
not brought his own games with him, and except for baseball, crap
shooting and marbles, seems to absorb very little of our American
tradition.

These three influences, the crowding of the city, the loneliness
of the country, and unlimited alien immigration, have had a most
serious effect upon all our institutions, but nowhere is this effect
more clearly shown than in the loss or lessened vogue of many of our
ancient games. Never before, probably, has a nation been threatened
with the loss of its play tradition. And such a loss would be almost
an irreparable one. The play instinct is eternal, but the plays and games in which it is expressed are a social not a physical inheritance. Children's games are like the sublimated form of play we call the fine arts, embodiments of human genius. They are the interpretations that all the ages have accumulated and handed down of the eternal spirit of play, the precious legacy of all the generations of children to the children of the present day. The loss of a nation's play tradition would be almost as serious as the loss of the tradition of oral speech or of the great legal and constitutional methods which the ages have gradually evolved. For life can no more go on without play than it can without language or without laws.

The danger indeed has in a way been realized and, so far as general attention to the subject of play can accomplish that result, seems likely to be averted.

Some idea of the rate at which we are going, and of the problem that our Association is confronted with, can be gathered from the fact that thirty-five cities started playgrounds for the first time in nineteen hundred and ten, that forty cities started in nineteen hundred and eleven, and forty-three cities in nineteen hundred and twelve, making one hundred and eighteen cities starting out anew in this field in those three years. Millions of dollars are spent every year by these and other cities in buying and equipping new playgrounds and in making all sorts of provisions for play and recreation.

The object of the Playground and Recreation Association is to guide this movement, to try so far as we can to see that the money shall be wisely invested. A very little guidance of the right sort applied now will make all the difference in the world as to what this investment shall mean to the children in the long future in many cities of this country.

The way we are doing this is in the first place by getting together the best information to be had as to how playgrounds should be selected, equipped and carried on. We also collect facts upon what is being done in playground matters throughout the country and as to results obtained. We believe that instead of each community's making its own mistakes, and finding out everything for itself by hard experience, each thing ought to be found out only once; and that when it has been found out everybody should have the benefit of it.

The subjects of the questions that come to us seem numberless. They cover such matters as dance halls, music, pageants, forms of city administration, as well as the more obvious playground questions. And they come not only from all parts of this country, from England, France, Germany, but from China, Japan, Russia, India and South America.
RESTORING THE PLAY INHERITANCE TO AMERICA

WE HAVE specific doctrines on the subject of recreation. I have said that we seek to guide rather than to push the movement, and we have certain policies as to the way of guiding it. In the first place we want to have the playgrounds reach all the people all the time. In order to do this they must reach the girl, and they must reach the grown-up. We want to bring it about that the American workingman shall make not only a living but a life—that his success shall mean a little more than that he contrive to exist a certain time and die. Accordingly we are interested not only in playgrounds in the narrow sense, but in music, drama, dancing and story-telling. And we are interested in sports that will make the play season last the whole year round—in skating, coasting and swimming, and in beaches and home gardens.

And we want play carried on not only for the people, but by the people themselves. The playground is not merely a place, it is an institution, it is a center of neighborhood interest and membership. In order to get everybody playing, we need to learn some lessons from England and from Germany, to each of which, as I said at the outset, American playgrounds already owe a debt. From England, we must adopt the idea of looking a little more for fun in games and a little less exclusively for competition. Our American idea of competition is all right in its proper place; I should not like to see it weakened; but we want to learn that the competitive spirit in play is not the only one. Our younger children, especially, ought not to be prematurely subjected to the hard, dry, fierce competition which may be appropriate in college games. Our little children's games are dominated by their older brothers, and these are largely governed by the newspapers. We want to have more of what Mr. DeGroot described to me some time ago as the "play" game—games in which the children laugh and romp, roly-poly games which are not confined to experts, but in which everybody takes part. We want to have "hill dill" and "hunt the squirrel" and "prisoners' base," especially for children under ten. We want to get back into the play spirit that came over in colony days along with the town common from old England. From Germany we should learn two things: first, music, especially in the form of large choruses and singing at public festivals.

Let us give our children the ideal of making themselves the sort of men and women the country needs, the sort of stone of which our temple can be built. Behind the idea of standard, we must put the patriotic motive. There is hardly anything such a standard cannot accomplish. *Do it for America!* That is the motive we have got to put into the mind of every boy and girl.