

THE TEACHING OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE PARENTS' UNION SCHOOL.

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"God helping, we hope so to educate our children that Duty and Service will be their lifelong motive power." This quotation taken from the Conference leaflet states at once both a great possibility and a great charge, and may be taken as the underlying idea of Parents' Union School teaching on the subject of "Citizenship." There is never any question as to whether this subject should be taught or not, as all are conscious to-day of the price that has been paid through the ages for our present state of civilisation; of the labour, sacrifice and struggle which has built up the present world; and we realise that to give children some knowledge of their great inheritance is a debt we owe them, that they in their turn may pay their debt to their country and so be enabled to pass it on an ever greater heritage.

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This aim implies the necessity of a knowledge of the possibilities in themselves and others as human beings, some knowledge of their country and its government, of the Empire and, may I add, the world, that working round these ever-widening circles, they gradually realise all men and nations as but different parts of the one and wonderful city of God. It is in the idea of unity that perhaps the great hope of the future lies. This all-embracing view of citizenship seems a great ideal, but it is possible of a certain achievement if held through the ten or twelve years of regular school life, and, if we remember the power possessed by childhood and youth for apprehending large ideas; to bring them into touch with great minds through the best books of the past and present, and to give them opportunities for service, is to do much in drawing them towards a realisation of their hereditary citizenship.

To try and make this paper clear it will perhaps be better to take in order some of the ideas underlying this subject, and to say what books are set in the Parents' Union School and how they are used.

I. "Know thyself." Doubtless many of those present have read "Ourselves," written by Miss Mason, and remember how it opens with those inspired words from a great poet:—

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign [sic] power."

To know of the God-given powers common to all men, and to see in every being the Divine spark and a temple of the Holy Ghost, is bound to act as a spur to self-control, which must be all the more complete if based on some consideration of the "way of the will" and the "way of the reason." In Class II. there is no actual book set on ethics, but from "Plutarch's Lives" the children gain inspiring ideas of self-management and the qualities that make a good citizen; for instance, in this term's "Life of Timoleon," they hear how he was gentle and courteous to all men, and that the "marvellous good success" in all his doings was due to his "valiantness and virtue." In Class III. the book set is "Ourselves," which bears directly on every-day morals. This term the pupils are studying "justice" and how it is due to others, in word, action, thought and motive, and of justice to themselves in self-ordering. It is dealt with so fully that the teaching is bound to sink into their inner consciousness, and being encouraged to illustrate from their

history and literature, they realise that each has indeed a "charge to keep." Class IV. also reads "Ourselves," and the moral nature which

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has received this fundamental instruction, is further educated by the study of Wordsworth's autobiographical poem, "The Prelude." In this work the children follow the steps which influenced the growth of a poet's mind. For instance, in early years "nature" seems to have been his one thought and he wrote:—

"O nature! Thou hast fed
My lofty speculations and in thee,
For this uneasy heart of ours I find
A never-failing principle of joy
And purest passion."

But towards the end of the poem he shows us how that gradually led him to love of man:—

"In the midst stood Man ...
Of all visible natures, crown; ... a Being
Both in perception and discernment, first
In every capability of rapture,
Through the divine effect of power and love:
As, more than anything we know, instinct
With godhead, and by reason and by will
Acknowledging dependency sublime."

II. "I am a citizen of no mean city." Let us take these words of the Apostle St. Paul, to illustrate another thought on this subject. It is an undisputed fact that the greatness of a nation depends upon its cities, and these in their turn on the citizen both within and without the gates, and it is as each realises the necessity all are under to take an intelligent interest in civic, political and imperial life, that he will do much to stimulate those ideals, without which life ceases to be vigorous and progressive. The foundation of such an interest, with its possibilities of service, can be laid even in early youth by reading to the children of heroic deeds from history and by stories from many lands; history especially, in every class, is one of the greatest instructors in citizenship. The book set for Class II. is "The Citizen Reader," by Mr. Arnold-Forster, which tells clearly and simply about some of the chief laws under which English people live to-day and about the freedom which has so often been won through suffering and sorrow; in many cases these points are illustrated by historical stories, and the children begin to realise that what has been so dearly bought must be dearly prized. In Class III. the book set is Sir Walter Besant's "History of London," which tells about that city from the very foundation; its famous buildings and the changes

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they have undergone; its citizens and their work, interests and dress; its trade, plays, pageants; and lastly, its government. It is so charmingly told and illustrated that the children read it with joy, and at the same time gain a wide view of the general civic life of the last eleven hundred

years. For current history and matters of general interest they read suitable articles from the newspapers. Class IV. has no books set under the heading of "Citizenship," but from the direct teaching in their previous classes the pupils are able to recognise and appreciate the work of the great citizens of history, the happiness and mutual appreciation underlying the common weal of the nations learnt from geography, and the gifts with which different peoples have been endowed. On this last point there is a most interesting pamphlet set, "Russia's Gift to the World," in which the short essays on Literature, Science, Art, etc., show what she has contributed to the progress of civilisation. In the introduction Mr. Mackail says, "we shall never be in good and useful relations with any nation, or with any body of our fellowmen, until we take some pains to understand them and to know what they really are, what they think, what they create, what they seek to attain. This knowledge is equally essential whether we regard them as our friends or as our enemies." ... Thus from different books the pupils gain a large idea of citizenship and from the home-side of patriotism it expands until it embraces the Empire and the nations of the world. If the true progress of the future is to be firmly established it must be founded on a knowledge of the experience of the past, on a recognition of the gifts of the nations, and above all, on the instructed capacity to apply principles. To hold under God's hand our "dominion palm and pine" is to live under a great responsibility and a great debt and [p 599]

the thought of it rouses the aspiration that we may in some measure be counted worthy of this high stewardship.

III. "Bear ye one another's burdens." At no time in our national history has there come such an imperative call to each one to do what he may in this great hour of extreme need. When thousands are gallantly laying down their lives and leaving their homes sanctified by sorrow, it is left to all to pray that they may be worthy of the sacrifice; man and woman, boy and girl, has each his part to play, for, "God means all His children to be heroes." In Classes I and II the pupils have knitting and simple garment-making set under the heading "work," and although I may be accused of straying into another field of the programme, yet that work is a valuable training in citizenship, for they are learning to give both time and energy to help those who are serving their country, and if this work be salted by real self-sacrifice then each is doing his share in upholding the national honour. Classes III and IV have two small books set, one "The Supreme Duty of the Citizen at the Present Crisis," by Field-Marshal Earl Roberts; and the other, "The Woman's Part," by Elma K. Paget. In the former the writer shortly traces the steps that led up to the war, and then devotes the rest of the work to calling on every citizen to fulfil the national demands. He tells of the splendid answer to Britain's call, from all classes of the community, and he appeals to those who ignore it still to show themselves worthy of the power they hold. He tells of the traditions of good government carried on in our Dominions over-seas, and of the glorious way in which their people have responded to the needs of the Motherland. He adds a caution against what Mr. Kipling, during the Boer War, called "killing Kruger with your mouth." The book is powerful in its straightforward simplicity, and calls to that "public spirit" which makes men, yes, and children too, eager to spend and be spent in the cause of what is honourable in the sight of God and man. "The Woman's Part" gives us its substance in its title, and its different paragraphs on Faith, Courage, Prudence, Simplicity and Love, show the claim that war makes upon womanhood, and show too how ultimate success depends largely on the spirit of the people left behind. Great demands are made on woman as on man, but along the

lines of her own distinctive qualities. Classes III and IV also knit and sew, and it is suggested that where possible they should talk to Belgian children. One feels that the honest child who said, "the burden of the war is, that we do knitting instead of play" was a true citizen, for, [p 600]

as yet unseeing the glory of service, she did what she thought to be her duty. These activities bring children into closer contact with those of their own and other nations, and so go far towards fulfilling one of the claims of patriotism.

Now we can gather these different points together and realise that their accomplishment is largely assured through bringing the children into close touch with living books and through the formation of serviceable habits; by encouraging any organising capacity they possess, and by giving them a certain power of public speaking gained through exercise in narration, both of which serve to equip a citizen with some power of contributing to the welfare of a community. There may be a danger of believing that "activities" comprise the whole duty of man in this connection, but in reality the greater and harder task required is a thinking love and an instructed interest in all that concerns a great inheritance. One ventures to think that had some of those workers, recently out "on strike," received direct teaching in the principles of the Christian Faith and on citizenship in their early youth, they would not have failed in their obligations to their country at such a crisis. In "Dei Civitate Dei" St. Augustine says, in effect, that, "as the trials of the present moment are greater, so the energy with which Christians meet them should be greater likewise; that times of trouble are not the signal for discouragement, but for a painful and fruitful contest." Children who, consciously and unconsciously, constantly imbibe the underlying and great notions implied in the one word "citizenship" will gain an idea of the true values of life, and as they grow to man's estate will help to form a "public opinion" which, recognising individual and national responsibility, will set itself to fulfil personal and imperial ideals, and above all so to unite the peoples of the world, that on earth there may be in some measure a manifestation of the glorious Kingdom of God. This trumpet call sounds in Blake's stirring words:—

And did the countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold!
Bring me my Arrows of desire!
Bring me my Spear! O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!