

THE WORK OF THE GOOD CITIZENSHIP DEPARTMENT.

It has often been asked what is the object and special work of the Good Citizenship Department, and there has been a generally felt difficulty in knowing just what should be reported under this department. Every year the same difficulty arises, and the result is that it has never been possible to write an Annual Report which shows clearly what the work has been, on account of the overlapping of the different departments, and the failure to discriminate between the special work of each one. It is easy to understand the reason of this, for when we begin to ask what is the work of the Good Citizenship Department, we find there is hardly anything we can take up which is not connected with our life as citizens, and it becomes exceedingly difficult to lay down definite lines. In this paper I want first to speak of some of the general principles of Good Citizenship, and then to suggest special lines of activity to which these principles should be applied.

The aim and object of this Department, known in America as the Department for Christian Citizenship, is clearly implied in that name; it is to endeavour to bring Christian principle to bear upon everything which pertains to citizen life, to ensure that religion shall not be divorced from our political and civic duties, but that these shall all be guided and controlled by our religious principles. The first principle of Christian life, as it seems to me, whether for the individual or for the community, is the subordination of the part to the whole, of the lower to the higher, which in its highest aspect means the subordination of the human to the Divine. And the second, which is in fact the complement of the first, is that the mainspring of Christian, and therefore of citizen life, is devotion and obedience to the highest we know or can recognise. These principles seem to me to contain the essence of Good Citizenship, and it is only in proportion as we make them the rule of our life that we can lay any claim to be regarded as good citizens.

From these basic principles may be deducted certain practical aspects of citizenship, the carrying out of which in all our social relationships would tend to promote that justice, purity, and righteousness which alone can

make a nation truly great. "Righteousness exalteth a nation." (1) The practical application of the duties of citizenship bears mainly on the external regulations—the machinery, we might say—by which all civic matters are managed; one of the first essentials of citizenship is therefore an understanding of the laws and regulations for the ordering of the life of the community, and the effects of their operation, of anything which results in injustice or bears hardly on any section of the community, and of the methods which might be adopted for the prevention of such injustice.

(2) Then must follow the endeavour to foster in the public mind a sense of the need of regulating one's own individual life strictly in accordance with the regulations laid down for the ordering of the life of the community. It is only as each individual strives in everything to conform to such regulations, even at the cost of some personal inconvenience, that there can be a balanced, well-ordered civic life, and it is only such individual conformity that gives the right to initiate needed reforms in all such conditions, habits, customs, and general conduct, as are not conducive to the well-being of the whole.

(3) Another most important point which should be a first consideration with all possessing the rights and responsibilities of citizenship is the education of the citizens of the future to secure that the influences surrounding the children, whether at home or at school, are such as are calculated to develop all the good that is in them, and to eliminate all evil tendencies, and that their occupations, whether at work or at play, shall be wholesome, elevating, and health-giving; setting before them, almost unconsciously, high ideals and principles, upon which their after lives will be based and their characters developed in a perfectly natural manner; and recognising the need of right physical conditions in order to ensure right mental and moral development.

Bearing these points in mind, it should not be difficult to trace the lines upon which Good Citizenship work should be carried on, and they may be classified under four headings.

1. Study of the Constitution and Laws of our Dominion, both Parliamentary and Municipal. A general knowledge of National Law is necessary for the proper understanding of Civic Law, though it is the latter we

specially need to make a study of for our citizenship work; but the two are closely connected, and cannot be separated. Under this heading should also be included a knowledge of Parliamentary Procedure, Rules of Debate, the conducting of public meetings, and everything connected with the proper conduct of all kinds of classes and study-circles.

2. Electoral Reform. This includes an understanding of the principles of representation, of the defects of the present methods, and the best way to remedy them; also everything that has to do with the carrying on of an election, the methods of voting, and how they could be improved; and the details of work in preparation for a poll. One point needs to be specially emphasised here, the existence of the two rolls, the Parliamentary and the Municipal, and the distinction between them. This might almost appear to be superfluous, but for the fact that even now many of our women do not know of the existence of the Municipal Roll, and the necessity of seeing that their name is placed upon both rolls in order to ensure the exercise of their full rights as electors; consequently, at every Municipal election, a certain number, who have voted at the last General Election, and therefore imagine they have done all that is necessary, find themselves unable to vote because their name is not on the roll. Specially connected with this also is the question of the representation of women, the importance of women's presence and influence on all local bodies, and the need for women possessing the necessary qualifications and having the time at their disposal, to offer themselves as candidates for all civic positions, not only on school committees and Hospital Boards, but on Education Boards, City Councils, and any other local body on which they feel there is work for them to do. Why should anyone feel that electoral work cannot be looked upon as Christian work; there is nothing in life that is worth doing that cannot be brought into touch with our religious life. It is only so far as this is the case that our work is of real value, and it is because women have the power to emphasise this religious touch, that it becomes of such special importance for them to take a part in all matters equally affecting both men and women. But in doing so every care should be taken not to arouse a feeling of antagonism by seeming to advocate a