

THE STUDY OF CIVICS.

[An address by Principal Henry Harvey Stuart, of Douglastown, N. B., Superior School, to the United Teachers' Institutes in Bathurst, September 25, 1915.]

There is no more important subject than Civics on the public school curriculum. Its recent inclusion is a most favorable sign of the times, and the teacher who truly loves his country will do his best to present the subject intelligibly to his pupils.

The prescribed text (R. S. Jenkin's Canadian Civics) is an admirable one, covering nearly all the points of importance and giving suggestions whereby the wide-awake teacher is enabled to supply the rest.

The aim of true education being the development of good citizens, it follows that the study of Civics is absolutely necessary to that end, and at last we have a book to guide us in teaching the subject.

The text is very thorough. It first considers the world as a whole, then divides it into Powers, great and small, noticing their different kinds of government. Then our Empire is similarly treated. The constitution and government of the Dominion of Canada is considered pretty exhaustively and in a manner to rivet the child's attention. The existence of political parties is explained, and the intricacies of political platforms, conventions and other meetings, the manner of selecting and nominating candidates, the way of voting, etc., are laid bare, and the duties and powers of each department of government are described.

The chapter on Taxation and National Debt is a good one. Its discussion of the Tariff, protection and free Trade is unbiased, and the way in which our government raises its revenue is made plain.

Following that of the Dominion comes an explanation of the provincial system, then of the municipal. Then the procedure of Law Courts is described, and the educational system, and the book closes with a few well chosen words on the duties of the citizen.

No adult should fail to read the text book, and no parent should allow his children to be deprived of its lessons in school.

The question arises as to when and how to teach it.

No particular time being assigned, Civics is presumably authorized for all grades. The inclusion of Civics questions in the High School and

Normal School entrance examinations, this year, indicates that pupils who do not study it in Grade VII, or Grade VIII at the latest, will suffer by not doing so.

Civics can be taught in all grades, even the first. In this case we should not follow the order of the text, which begins at the outside and works towards the centre, the proper course when beginning with one of the higher grades, but should begin with what comes under the pupil's own observation, working from that outwards to matters more general and abstract.

Children of Grade I have seen a policeman and have some idea of what he's for. Starting with what the child already knows, the teacher can easily lead him to understand who appoints and pays the policeman and assigns his duties. The little fellow's knowledge of roads and bridges, street lighting, the town water system, etc., can all be made starting points for lessons in Civics. The very fact that the child is in school leads him to question why, and from that question he can be led to understand something of our school system. So in all grades.

Geography lessons incidentally overlap into the domain of Civics, as the geography of no country or district is complete without references to its stage of civilization, government and power, and its peculiar institutions.

Long before the Civics text is in the pupil's hand, he should have learned much about the district school system; how the County and Town Councils are elected and how municipal taxes are levied and spent; how a citizen votes at school meetings and in County, Town, Provincial and Dominion elections.

When should the pupil have the text? Not later than Grade VII. For if he doesn't complete the text in Grade VII the chance is that, due to the fact that the great majority never pass that grade, he'll never complete it, and that he'll be thrown on the country an ill-informed citizen of more menace than value to the body politic.

Most citizens object to paying taxes, not, let us hope, because of inherent unwillingness to bear their fair share of the public expenses, but because they do not understand how the taxes are apportioned and why so much is needed, or because they mistrust that they are not fairly apportioned or impartially collected.

Failure to understand the real difference between