

The Citizenship of the Future

MRS. ROSE HENDERSON.

The Canadian Municipal Journal has been, and is, rendering splendid service to the municipalities throughout the Dominion in interesting its citizens to take a greater interest in civic and national problems, cleaning up and setting in order the larger home—the community. There is no greater business, and certainly no more honorable calling than that of "City Father," or "Chief Magistrate." Yet such is the peculiar conception of civic government and political administration in Canada that men fight shy of nomination for public office lest they be accused of having "sinister motives," personal "selfish interest" at stake and, unfortunately, this is often true. To graft rather than administer seems to be the incentive calling some men to office, and it seems as if this is inevitable and likely to go on until, as some of our pessimistic friends assert, "we change human nature." Meaning, of course, that human nature is more evil than good and that there is little hope, since the Creator himself saddled and handicapped the race in this way. Poor human nature! How we slander thee! Bismarck once said: "You cannot have scrambled eggs without breaking the shells," he might also have added that neither can you unscramble scrambled eggs. We cannot have good citizens, efficient and worthy of the people's trust, or an electorate of intelligent voters, determined on having their wishes, faithfully carried out by their representatives, until we break the shell of our ignorant and superstitious belief that citizenship is something that is inherited or imbibed with the air and demonstrated once in two, three or four years on election day when a bit of paper is marked and deposited in a ballot box.

No! Citizenship is more than this. Citizenship is something to be acquired through teaching, training, and participation, and not an inherited instinct or a natural law like the desire for food.

The stone walls most children have to contend with today is the ignorance of their own parents; the ignorance and selfishness displayed in bad housing, dirty streets, impure food and lack of play centres; the un-modern and machine-like school curriculum which tries to give a smattering of any and everything but the good essentials of home making and nation building; and the soul-killing and chaotic industrial machine before they are half grown.

Life is a scramble for most people from cradle to grave. Children scramble through school, then scramble for jobs,

in order to exist, later they scramble a few dollars together to get some bits of furniture and a marriage license, and no sooner have they started to live than they have to begin to think about dying. Again comes a scramble to get together enough to take out a life, or rather a death, insurance policy, and so life goes for most people. To unscramble this scramble is the herculean task of the future—a cut and dried policy which even Bismarck didn't formulate, other than to say: "If you want the nation to carry through any great idea, take and incorporate it in your school curriculum," the truth of which is being too eloquently demonstrated in the efficient but damnable German war machine which has devastated so much of God's good work. If the German children could have been trained to become such efficient life destroyers, why cannot our Canadian children be trained to become ideal citizens and life conservers? They can, and herein lies the salvation of this and all other nations.

Most people are mentally all mixed up; they don't know good citizenship from bad. They have no idea of administration. Civic beauty and idealism are lacking in community consciousness without even an elementary knowledge of the common by-laws.

Life therefore being such a mix-up and scramble, I agree with the pessimist who dolefully says you must "change human nature."

I have little hope of changing the mind and attitude of adults. There is nothing people hate so much as change, or, to part with their old fogie notions. The nature and mind of the child, however, is plastic clay awaiting the deft fingers of the artist to mould it as he will. The child has no hide-bound theories of any kind, therefore open to teaching and conviction. With the child lies our great hope for a better and saner future. Good citizenship is the rock on which national prosperity is founded. How and where to begin its training is the question of the hour.

To this there is and can be only one answer—begin in the schools—"Mercy me!" The teacher exclaims, another formula for the harrassed pupil to expound," nevertheless there is no other place where citizenship can be more effectively demonstrated than in the community school. It has been applied, tried out and pronounced successful beyond question.

In my next article I will try to point out how good citizens can be made out of the raw material of childhood, without injury to teacher or pupil, and with beneficial results to all.

Making the Autos Pay for the Roads

Some novel features will mark the five-thousand-mile highway system proposed for the State of Illinois. Conspicuous among them are the plan to build the roads especially for motor traffic and the proposal that the automobilists shall pay principal and interest of the sixty millions expended. This is to be done by adjusting the license charges to that end. A contributor to "Engineering and Contracting" (Chicago) notes that road-building has been financed in the past, first by personal labor with the alternative of a poll-tax, and later by a tax on adjoining property. This latter plan, he says, was quite satisfactory as long as the property-owners who paid the highway taxes obtained the major benefit from the roads which these taxes made possible. But:

"The growth of automobile traffic has injected an entirely new element into the situation, not only because of the creation of a large body of highway-users who are not owners of real property, and who therefore have not contributed in proper proportion to the cost of constructing the highways, but also because the use of the improved highways has become very largely a matter of recreation rather than of business. . . .

"With due regard to the efforts which have been made along this line by the State of Maine, it has remained for the State of Illinois to present the first comprehensive scheme of highway construction based on a complete abandonment of the old methods of financing highway construc-

tion (the poll-tax and the property-tax) and to propose a new adjustment of the burden of construction and maintenance costs, the distribution of this burden being made through a graduated license fee collected from all motor-vehicle users. Of course, the automobile license is nothing new. But the use of licenses as a means of collecting the entire cost both of constructing and maintaining a large highway system is new and deserves the careful consideration and the thoughtful study of all who are interested in highway development. . . .

"Under present-day conditions, a State highway system is, above everything else, a vast recreation system. Future development may change this aspect of the matter more or less. The truck may be developed to a point where it will convert State systems into freight-traffic routes. However, this contingency is fully covered by the provisions for making truck-owners pay liberal license charges. . . .

"In passing it should be noted that Illinois, very wisely, proposes to retain the old system of property taxation as a means of raising funds in excess of those raised by the poll-tax, in so far as the old system applies to the smaller governmental units. Moreover, a portion of the motor-vehicle license money may be used as State aid on local roads, though the proportion is relatively small, as, in justice, it should be, for the local roads differ from the roads on the State system in that they are largely built to meet the demands of business instead of the demands of pleasure-seekers."—Literary Digest,