

COMMUNITY CIVICS



FIELD AND NEARING

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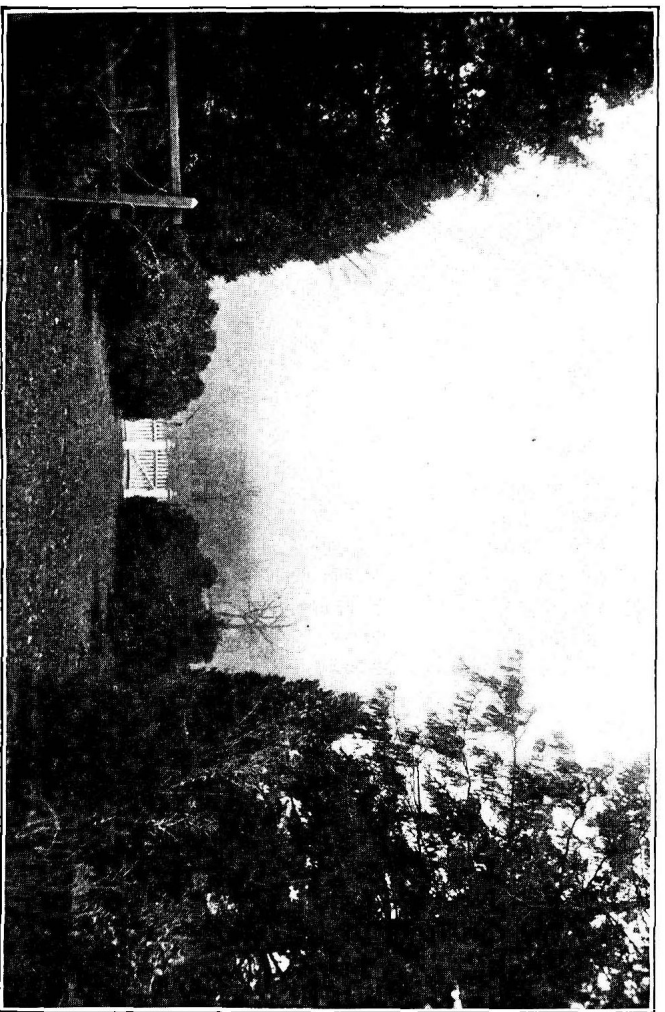
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Everywhere through the country, for those who have learned to see and understand, are lessons which point toward the richness and strength of life.

PREFACE

SCHOOLS are the laboratory for our democracy. People have a right to expect that our public schools should train their children for good citizenship. To be a good citizen means, first of all, to be willing and able to take part intelligently in the affairs of one's own community. To train such citizens, civics must be taught to children in the terms of their own lives. It must be real. It must connect with the affairs with which they are familiar in their town or neighborhood.

That is why this book on Community Civics has been written. It brings to boys and girls in the country,—to those who are away from cities, to those who are living in towns that are the center of country interests, and to those living on farms,—at the time when they are forming their civic ideals, the problems that are being met in their own communities.

When these boys and girls see their part in making their community life all it can be, they will not be satisfied with poor roads, a low rate of production per acre, a school that is inefficient, or a lack of community co-operation. Nothing else will so surely bring to them an appreciation of the opportunities of the country and a desire to invest their lives as citizens of such communities.

The authors of this book hope that it may help many teachers of one-room country schools, consolidated and township schools and of schools in towns that are closely related to country interests, to give to their pupils definite instruction in the kind of civics that will make them some day better citizens in a live country community.

INTRODUCTION

RURAL community building is the greatest social task which now confronts America. We are just emerging from the pioneer stage in our national life. The great shifting wave of population which has been moving steadily westward for two hundred years has beaten against the shores of the Pacific and is now settling back into the abandoned fields and open spaces with some promise of stability. The virgin resources in soil and forest which tempted the exploiter have been largely exhausted and man must now invest his time, his energy, and his intelligence in order to receive dividends from the earth. This means a greater interval between work and reward, higher and more stable prices for farm products, and a tendency to permanent residence in the country.

The tremendous development of industrial life during the past three decades has restored the equilibrium between the farm and the workshop and has neutralized the economic pull toward the city. The steadily increasing cost of farm products has awakened an universal interest in the farmers' welfare which is thoroughly genuine if not wholly altruistic. External conditions are remarkably favorable to the development of a more satisfying country life in America. We have reached the point

when prosperity and happiness in the country depend on the attitude of the farmer toward his own work and on community organization for the attainment of attainable social ends.

The new generation of farm boys and girls are beginning to see a new beauty in the blue skies and the growing things of the open country; they are acquiring a deeper understanding of the significance of country activities in the common life of humanity. With a conception of the inter-relations of the country community there comes a growing capacity for coöperation and leadership which is breaking down the intense individualism of pioneer times.

This new attitude comes from an intimate knowledge of one's own community. The love of home, school, neighborhood, and county will easily expand into the larger patriotism which will include State, Nation, and humanity.

In the chapters which follow, Miss Field and Dr. Nearing have presented the spirit and the essential facts of good citizenship in a vital and interesting manner. If the boys and girls of America will catch the spirit of the authors and will do the things suggested in this volume, we shall have a generation of rural community builders.

W. K. TATE.

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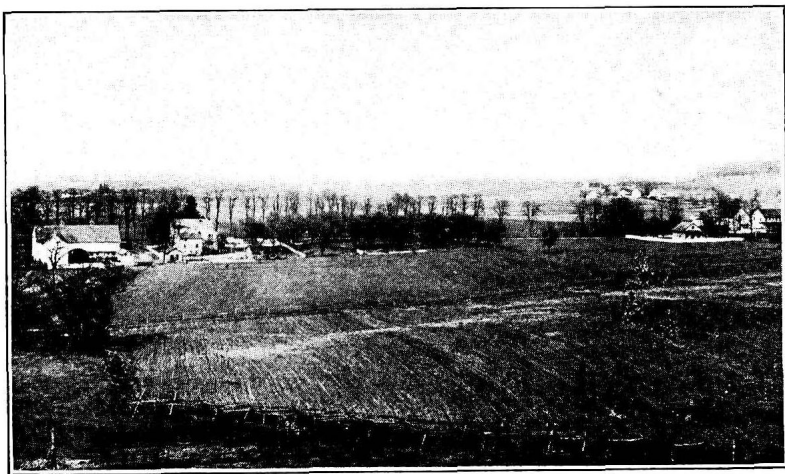
CHAPTER I

COUNTRY BOYS AND GIRLS

I. The Country Offers Many Chances to the Boys and Girls Who Live in It. — A great man once said that in thinking of all that had come to him in his life, he believed that the chance to grow up in the country was his richest heritage.

The country offers a chance to learn much of the beauty and truth and strength of the real things of life. There are beautiful wild flowers on the way to school. The soft greens of the alfalfa field and the old oak in the pasture wait for us as we go for the cows in the evening. And everywhere, we read not only a lesson of beautiful things, but also a lesson of steadfastness and strength. If stones are thrown into the brook to stop it, it flows right over them with greater strength than before, and adds to its strength a song. Plants burst the seed cases and push up through the dark soil to the light. Everywhere through the country, for those who have learned to see and understand, are lessons which point toward the richness and strength of life.

Country boys and girls have a chance to grow because they know the people around them so well. It is not unusual in the city for people who live in the same building to be entire strangers. But in the country, one is apt to know every one who lives for several miles around — the fathers and mothers



One is apt to know every one who lives for several miles around.

and the grandfathers and grandmothers and the hired men and the little children. Boys and girls in the country know when the neighbor's bees swarm; how many chickens they raise; and whether they can bake good cookies. They know, too, where the best apple trees grow and what people have the kindest hearts. And before they are very old, every country boy and girl learns the law of the country

road — that a lighter load always gives the whole road for a heavier one.

So while the country might not, at first thought, seem the place where there is the best chance to grow through knowing other people, it does offer a big chance for the kind of everyday neighborliness which counts for so much in life.

2. Country Boys and Girls Should Know Their Surroundings. — Although there are such great chances for growth through the surroundings in the country, there are many people who are blind to its beauty, deaf to its music, and unconscious of the interesting people who surround them. Two boys grew up in a neighborhood where there were masses of goldenrod every fall. They both passed by it when they were going to school. They could see its sunshiny blossoms from the fields where they husked corn, and it grew on the edges of the timber where they went nutting together. When they were young men, one of them was asked to get some goldenrod for decorations for a party, and he asked: "What kind of flower is it? What does it look like? I shouldn't know what to pick."

"Why, ask Tom," the girls said, "he knows every kind of flower and tree that grows around here." And sure enough, the other young man knew forty-two kinds of goldenrod that grew in that vicinity. Yet he had had no better chance to know about goldenrod than the young man

who did not even know what it was when he saw it.

It is only when we do not know our surroundings in the country that we are apt to think there are other places which have more life and light and beauty. The way to learn about things is to use, every day, all the powers we have for securing knowledge. Then the more we know about any definite thing, the greater our interest becomes. It is because it makes the world so much bigger and more wonderful and interesting that every one should study his surroundings.

3. The Country Calls for the Love and Loyalty of Those Who Live in It. — When we have started to learn something of the life that is around us on every side in the country, an appreciation of it comes to us. Then there are added the joy and gladness of the freedom and reality of the country and its great open places where there is room to grow, and we understand what the Wisconsin girl meant who said, when she was asked if she lived in the country: "Yes, I am a country girl, and I am proud of it."

In one county all the boys and girls wrote compositions on the subject, "Country Life — Why I Like It." There were many very good reasons given for liking the country. A boy wrote: "I like to live in the country because you can do whatever you please and it doesn't bother any one. You can whistle and sing as loud as you wish and no one cares. I

milk three cows every morning before breakfast, and in fact, it seems to me as though the louder I whistle the more milk those cows give."

Young people are seeing now, too, the great opportunities there are for scientific farming and for making up-to-date homes in the country. In fact, it is a great thing to live in the country these days when new things are coming so fast, and when there are such widened privileges for living in a worthwhile way.

Those who know the country and who love it believe that nothing is too good for country people. This is the kind of loyalty which will be in the heart of every young person in the country who understands its possibilities.



"Yes, I am a country girl, and I am proud of it."

4. The Country Needs Leaders. — When a country boy or girl is planning to make a life that will be of help to the world, he should consider the needs of his own neighborhood and think of the chance for

leadership there. In many neighborhoods families have moved away, renting their farms, and the young people, failing to see and know their surroundings, have gone to cities, until there is no one left to see what can be done and to show how to do it.

If these leaders of country life are to be really of the greatest use, they must be a part of the neighborhood. That is why this need for country leadership is of real interest to country boys and girls. The roads need to be made good — and who is there to go ahead and see that they are dragged? The school needs a new heating and ventilating plant — and who has the courage and the influence to get people to see how important it is for the children to be comfortable and have fresh air to breathe?

Sometimes young people dream of great things they wish to do, and it is right to plan for making one's life count for the very most. But boys and girls who live in the country can remember always that there is a great need and a chance for a big service through leadership near at hand.

Once a prophet asked a country woman, who had been very hospitable and kind to him, what she would like to have for her kindness, and if he should introduce her to the king. She replied: "No, I do not care to meet the king. Lo, I dwell with my own people." And so the country to-day is needing boys and girls who will learn what it means to give of their best for their own home neighborhoods.