

Report of The Kentucky Illiteracy Commission.

HISTORY.

The year 1911 marks the beginning of opportunity for adult illiterates in this country. There were 5,516,163 men and women in the United States according to the Federal census of 1910 who could not read or write. It was a problem which had baffled educators and for which no solution was being offered. "Once illiterate, always illiterate" was the general rule and the popular supposition was that those out of the school age were too old to acquire the art of reading and writing. Night schools existed in cities for continuation classes and for the instruction of the foreign born in English. An occasional illiterate may have found his way into the elementary classes, but such a thing as a campaign to "stamp out" or "reduce illiteracy" was unknown.

Kentucky was the first State to inaugurate the movement to redeem adult illiterates. There were 208,084 illiterates in this State, 120,314 of them being under 45 years of age. The power and usefulness of these, if converted into enlightened and literate citizens, seemed a potential force for bettering their communities and building up the Commonwealth. Moreover, all of these, regardless of age, were clearly entitled to their opportunity.

The first illiteracy campaign was waged in Rowan county, where in 1911, moonlight schools were established under the direction of the Chairman of this Commission, who was at that time, Superintendent of Rowan county schools. The crusade was waged mainly through the moonlight schools, where illiterates were gathered in and taught at night by volunteer teachers. But illiterates were also taught in their homes, and extensive propoganda against the evil of illiteracy was spread abroad. Of this experiment the United States Commissioner of Education said in a bulletin of the Bureau of Education, April 4, 1913:

"I submit herewith for publication as a Bulletin of the Bureau of Education, a statement showing in some detail the amount of illiteracy in the United States among men, women and children over 10 years of age according to the Federal Census of 1910; also a brief statement of an experiment which has been conducted for nearly two years in one of the mountain counties of eastern Kentucky having a large number of illiterates in its population, to ascertain if it were possible to teach these illiterate grown up men and women and older children to read and write, and whether other men, women, and children with very meager education would respond to the opportunity to learn more of the arts of the school. The success of this experiment, made under very difficult circumstances, has been so great as to inspire the hope that, with the co-operation of schools, churches, philanthropic societies, cities, counties, States, and the Nation, the great majority of the five and one-half million illiterates over 10 years of age in the United States may, in a few years, be taught to read and write, and something more; while millions of those whose school days were very few and who are little above the line of total illiteracy may be helped to make good to some extent their deficiencies due to lack of opportunity in childhood."

After the moonlight schools had extended to some 25 counties in the State, the Legislature created the Kentucky Illiteracy Commission. The crusade, already three years old, was thus placed under State auspices and given the backing and approval of State authorities. Following this action, the United States Commissioner of Education, issued a bulletin and sent it throughout the country, an extract of which is quoted below:

"It will be part of the lasting glory of the State of Kentucky that it has taken the lead in this movement. It is the first State to undertake to offer to all the people, of whatever age an opportunity to learn to read and write and thus break from the prison walls of sense and silence within which the illiterate man and woman must live. It marks the beginning of a new era in Kentucky and for all the country for the idea will be taken up by other States and the work will go on until the curse and shame of illiteracy have been lifted from every State in the union."

DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION.

The first of the Commission's duties specified by the General Assembly was "to make research, collect data and statistics and procure surveys of any and all communities, districts or vicinities of the state looking to the obtaining of a more detailed, definite and particular knowledge as to the true condition of the State with regard to its adult illiteracy." There was not a single record of any sort in the State, showing the conditions with regard to adult illiteracy. Skepticism as to the accuracy of the Federal Illiteracy Census was general and constituted a barrier to progress. Many school officials resented the publication of the illiteracy statistics of their communities. It was necessary to produce the names of the 208,084 illiterates as taken by the Federal Census and those names were in Washington locked up in a dark vault and were not supposed to see the light of day. With the assistance of General W. H. Sears, one of Clara Barton's former Lieutenants, the Chairman of the Commission induced the United States Census Bureau to depart from its long established policy of concealment and to open up the records for the copying of certain names. Once open, the matter was followed up for the Commission by Congressman W. J. Fields and the late Senator Ollie M. James until the name of each and every one of the 208,084 illiterates in Kentucky was furnished. This was at a cost to the Federal Government of

\$2,104. This record was not only in keeping with the Act "to make research, collect data and statistics and procure surveys of any and all communities, districts or vicinities of the State looking to the securing of a more detailed, definite and particular knowledge as to the true conditions of the State with regard to its adult illiteracy," but it, also, silenced most of those who disputed the statistics of their community. In 1914, a volunteer census of illiterates was taken by the teachers and in 1915, the same was taken by school trustees. A law was passed in 1916, requiring school trustees to take the census of illiterates but no compensation was allowed and the census returns, while fairly correct for some districts were incomplete in others. The 1918 census was an improvement over the 1916 report, but without compensation for the census takers, it is impossible to secure the census in full.

The Illiteracy Commission has collected in the various census reports mentioned above, different surveys or census reports of the illiterates in the State. Finding a complete lack of information it has cost considerable effort to locate and place the illiterates on record. Today the records gathered together on the subject fill 102 volumes of 10,200 pages and occupy four shelves in the Commission office. These records are most revealing. They show illiteracy existing in places where it was least expected. They give proof conclusive of the fact that illiterate parents keep their children illiterate, or as one educator expresses it, "illiteracy begets illiteracy." In nine cases out of ten, the name of a father and mother on the illiteracy census is followed by the names of all of their children.

The Commission was empowered "to interest persons and institutions in the dispensation of and all funds and endowments of whatsoever kinds, which will aid in the elimination of adult illiteracy in the State." Under this provision financial campaigns have been waged at various times. The first in 1914 by the women of Kentucky under the name of the Woman's Forward Movement with Gilmer Speed Adams as Chairman, resulted in \$6,170 raised by popular subscription. In 1916 the organization of Women's Clubs, through the Committee of One Hundred, Mrs. Morris Bartlett being Chairman, raised \$4,410.10. In 1917, eleven men representing the eleven Congressional Districts formed an organization, known as the Thirty Thousand Campaign Committee and promptly raised \$10,951 to finance a campaign to teach Kentucky's illiterate soldiers. These men were: First District, W. A. J. Second District, Geo. E. Wilson; Third District, Lawrence B. Finn; Fourth District, Harry A. Mers; Fifth District, Bennett H. Young; Sixth District, Claude B. Terrell; Seventh District, J. W. Ter; Eighth District, Frank P. James; Ninth District, J. W. M. Stewart; Tenth District, Judge V. S. Harkins; Eleventh District, Gov. James D. Black. The Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs through its Education Committee, raised \$11,255.61 in 1919 and purchased books and school supplies for illiterates. These funds, together with a few individual contributions, amounts to \$36,413.02, the Commission has received directly and indirectly under the provision of the law quoted above. The fact that most of this fund was donated in gifts of \$1 and less attests the great popular interest in the work.

The Commission has not been like the man that buried his talent. Started out by the Legislature without a single penny, it carried on its work through private contributions for two years. It supplemented the small appropriation of the 1916 session and the larger, but still inadequate one, of the 1918 session and has accumulated from private sources and distributed for the purpose of reducing illiteracy in the State the sum mentioned above.

These financial campaigns have not only been a means of supporting and extending the work but have been a sort of propaganda; enlightening all who gave, and many who did not, as to the need of better educational facilities for Kentucky's men, women and children. It is not easy to raise money for public education. Private institutions are sometimes endowed, but public education is so obviously the business of the State that, as a rule, the public will not contribute to its support. The amount of support for the Illiteracy Commission's work through small gifts shows something of the public favor which the work has been received.

The law specifies that the Commission "may do or perform any other act which in their opinion will contribute to the elimination of the State's adult illiteracy by means of education, instruction and enlightenment." The carrying out of this provision of the law is the one thing to which the Commission has devoted itself most assiduously. The General Assembly did not assign to the Commission a particular number of illiterates to teach nor did it at the outset, give it any specified time in which to complete its work. The Commission, however, fixed its own goal. Kentucky had long ranked from the bottom in the list of States. It seemed most desirable that she should be elevated to the highest possible notch. Some suggested the slogan, "Kentucky third from the top in 1920." More ambitious, and believing that "not failure but low aim is crime," thought that Kentucky should not deliberately aim to stand below any of the other States, so "No illiteracy in Kentucky in 1920" the slogan sounded. This is the high goal which the Commission has striven to attain. It is one which has inspired the forces to do their utmost. Because it was a high and worthy goal, teachers and workers have enlisted who would not have been attracted by a lower or less honorable aim.

The number of illiterates according to the Federal census of 1910 was 208,084. The number according to the State census taken by school trustees in 1918 was 90,000. The number listed in 1920 has not been definitely known until the Federal census is announced, but the Commission estimates from the best reports that can be secured that fully 130,000 of Kentucky's illiterates have been redeemed

Each sign should read:

Among the States in this important branch of education, in which she has been imitated and followed.

James W. Jewell
 J. J. Asher
 W. H. Pinckley
 W. B. Jackson
 Miss Lizzie Kinsolving
 Miss Elizabeth Baker
 Miss Ora Pruden
 Miss Clara Leedy
 Miss Sallie Ford
 Miss Augusta Hubbard
 Miss Grace Lancaster
 Miss Grace Daly
 Miss Anna Powell
 Miss Martha Riley
 N. L. Ross
 Carlisle Morse
 Bert Watson
 Miss Sue A. Miller
 Miss Irene Houston
 Miss Versa Pace
 Miss Fannie Curry
 Mrs. Roxye B. Alexander
 Herbert Crick
 Miss Ava Winton
 Miss Myrtle Marrs
 Miss Ora Mae Layson
 Jonah Gibson
 Miss Emma Chapman
 Miss Audrey Chapman
 Miss Mayme Elliston
 Miss Escher Whitley Burch
 Mrs. Jeannette Lewis
 Mrs. Kate Buttimer
 Walter Hooker
 S. S. Wolfe
 Mrs. Rose Blessing Craft
 Milburn Humphrey
 Miss Nancy Cooper
 E. E. Seale
 Mrs. Harvey Helm
 Mrs. R. N. Beauchamp
 A. L. Scott

Miss Fleety Lynn
 J. H. Rust
 H. H. Mills
 L. O. Siler
 Miss Ethel Arterburn
 G. W. Ellis
 R. W. Kincaid
 R. N. Baldwin
 Mrs. E. Poe Harris
 Miss Ethel Rupley
 Miss Martha B. Arnett
 Charles E. Bridwell
 Miss Leora Layman
 Judson Jenkins
 Mrs. Lois Waterfield
 E. H. Smith
 Miss Lela Jane Harris
 Miss Bessie Conkwright
 C. R. Payne
 Mrs. Thomas Jefferson Smith
 Miss Mamie McCann
 W. R. Thomas
 Miss Lula Hearn
 Mrs. Mary C. Warrington
 R. H. Spurrier
 Miss Susie West McClanahan
 Miss Margaret Woll
 Howard Whitaker
 Morris J. Hardwick
 Mrs. S. J. Douthitt
 Colfax Butler
 John Caudill
 Mrs. Millie Nash
 Miss Hettie Williams
 Miss Matilda Wallace
 Miss Susan Simrall
 Miss Folsom McGuire
 Miss Zilpha Roberts
 Miss Bessie Best
 Miss Lena Wells Lykins
 Miss Jennie Lind Etter
 Miss Annie Underwood
 Mrs. G. R. Haley

Miss Clara Toney Sellers
 Mrs. Lois Alexander
 Miss Laura Spence
 Curtis J. Reed
 Miss Mary McGimpsey
 Miss Katie Carpenter
 Mrs. J. B. Ross
 W. L. Jordan
 Miss Anna Hackney
 J. Cooper Williams
 William Garrett
 Miss Annie Davis
 Miss Mary A. Norris
 Mrs. Muzetta Primrose
 Miss Dora Seale
 Miss Nancy Boudinot
 Miss Priscilla Duncan
 Miss Addie Mae Yeager
 Lovel Liles
 Harry Upchurch
 Miss Mary Crit Hickman
 Miss Mary Cary
 Miss Elizabeth Daly
 A. N. May
 Miss Lucy Foust
 H. R. Riley
 Miss Mary Robert Loyd
 Mrs. W. L. Mills
 G. G. Cornett
 Miss Alice Record
 Miss June Barnes
 Miss Ida Belle Hammond
 Miss Etta L. Moore
 John C. Brammer
 Z. T. Osborne
 Miss Catherine Taylor
 Miss Deba Goodrum
 Mrs. Lucile Grogan Jones
 Miss Miriam Bell
 Guy King
 Miss Addie M. Lawson
 Miss Georgia Kennerly

KENTUCKY FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS.

The Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs has given its moral and financial support to the illiteracy work in a most generous and unselfish way. The Federation has recognized and rewarded, wherever possible, the volunteer teachers, has furnished books to illiterates, provided funds to carry on the Commission's work, when the State has withheld its aid, and has shown a devotion to the work almost unparalleled. There have been times when the Commission had no support other than that provided by the Federation and illiterates would have gone to school handicapped for lack of books had not the women of the Federation toiled and given funds to meet the needs. Always interested in education, and first to sound the alarm of Kentucky's appalling position educationally, the Federation has written into history, pages of valiant service and brilliant accomplishment. Actual teaching of a large number of classes and individual illiterates, the soliciting of funds, giving of time for travel and speaking and days of conference and counsel during the Legislative sessions and other sacrifices too numerous to mention have given the Federation a record for service second to none.

STATE AND COUNTY OFFICIALS.

The Illiteracy campaign has been distinguished for the most remarkable co-operation of the public and of State and county officials especially. State officials, United States Senators, Congressmen and other citizens have traveled at their own expense and spoken in behalf of the work. County School Superintendents have actively taken the lead. Judges and County Attorneys have assisted, and jailers in the prison campaigns have rendered conspicuous service.

found education necessary to enable them to do so. The reformatories are provided with a paid Chaplain, Warden and other officials, but have no paid superintendent of school work and no trained teachers or supervisors. The school work is haphazard, done by volunteer teachers, drawn from the ranks of prisoners, and is conducted in the corridors with the poorest equipment imaginable. Even with these handicaps, many have learned to read and write, and those who had some education have advanced. The State Reformatory is not a reformatory worthy of the name unless it provides for the education of those who are committed to its care.

School attendance officers for the prevention of illiteracy in future has been one of the things insisted on by the Illiteracy Commission. This Commission, having for two years past, had the county illiteracy agents working under its direction to act as attendance officers, has made the first experiment along this line and has demonstrated to the school authorities that this was the way to secure school attendance. Prior to this experiment, a school attendance officer was not favored as a part of Kentucky's educational machinery. Now that the law has been passed by the Legislature of 1920, this feature of the Commission's work is done and illiteracy in the coming generation will be more easily prevented.

Summarized below are the Commission's recommendations:

1. A Department of Adult Education to build up and standardize a State Department of evening schools.
2. The teachers of such evening schools paid reasonable salaries.
3. A Commissioner of Adult Education appointed by the Governor.
4. A State School for Adults.
5. A Superintendent and trained teachers in charge of the school work at the State Reformatory and Penitentiary.

VOLUNTEER TEACHERS.

The public school teachers of Kentucky have volunteered to teach illiterates, and none of them have claimed a cent of compensation from the State for their work. Wherever a county or community rewarded a teacher it was in such modest terms, that it could hardly be considered a compensation at all. The teachers have given the largest single contribution to the cause. They have given themselves—their services at night at the close of a hard day's work in the schoolroom. Could their service be measured in dollars and cents, at even the present low rate of compensation for school work, it would amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Kentucky owes her public school teachers a debt of gratitude. This debt can best be paid, perhaps, by properly recognizing their pioneer efforts and paying for future school work at night as other States, which caught the idea from Kentucky, are paying their teachers for such work. The names of these teachers make an illustrious list and they deserve a volume all to themselves, but the list is so long that it is impossible to include it in this report.

DISTRICT ILLITERACY AGENTS.

The District Illiteracy Agents of the Commission traveled extensively selecting County Agents, supervising their work and giving every possible stimulus to the workers in the field. Only two of these agents served the year round—Mrs. Lucile Grogan Jones who was in charge of Western Kentucky and Mrs. Mary C. Warrington whose field was Eastern Kentucky. The others assisted in the work only during the time of strenuous campaign. The list is given below:

Miss Jessie O. Yancey (1918)	Calvert Wallace
Mrs. Lucile Grogan Jones	John T. Roach
Mrs. Mary C. Warrington	Miss Emma Hunt
C. R. Payne	Sergeant William Sandlin
Miss Lena Wells Lykins	

COUNTY ILLITERACY AGENTS.

The County Illiteracy Agents served for salaries, which in most cases barely covered their expenses. Some of them even sacrificed good positions to engage in this work. The story of day and night travel, difficulties overcome and hardships endured by these patriots would make a thrilling tale. The county agents were required to have at least two years' experience in teaching or its equivalent—a college or university diploma. In only two or three cases was the equivalent accepted in lieu of actual teaching experience. A high standard was maintained, graduates of Columbia University and other leading institutions being among the number employed in this capacity. A county agent's Institute was held at the State Capitol where agents were instructed and trained for their work. All who served were required to attend this Institute. The County Illiteracy Agents acted as attendance officers, and used every means to keep the children in school, being the first of such officers to invade the rural districts of Kentucky. The result of their visits to the homes was shown in an increased attendance in school. They were the pioneer school attendance officers in Kentucky and had they not focused attention upon this phase of educational work and made it popular it is doubtful if the new law creating an attendance officer for each county in the State would have passed the recent Legislature. The list of agents is given below:

CHURCHES AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

The churches and Sunday schools have participated generously in the campaign. Ministers have preached sermons on illiteracy, not only on Illiteracy Sunday, the day set aside for such sermons, but at other times.

They have made frequent references to the work and have offered many prayers for its success. Sunday schools have taken up contributions, had illiteracy programs and called attention whenever possible to the campaign.

TRAVELING SALESMEN CAMPAIGN.

The traveling salesmen enlisted in the campaign to carry the message to those in their territories and have talked "no illiteracy" to their customers and associates, arousing interest which has led to moonlight schools in places where, otherwise, none would have been held. The traveling salesmen have many redeemed illiterates to their credit and many children in school who will "call them blessed." Mr. R. L. Slade, of Lexington, Chairman of this branch of the campaign rendered yeoman service, and Mr. Will H. Hays of Lagrange, the present head of the Traveling Salesmen's Campaign has been a powerful ally of the Commission.

BANKERS CAMPAIGN.

The bankers of the State were assigned duties in keeping with their opportunities and have fulfilled these duties well, some of them going beyond what was expected of them. Illiterate patrons who made their marks on checks and notes were urged by the bankers to learn to read and write. Books and supplies were furnished many illiterates through the bankers, and illiterates were placed under instruction where possible. Some few bankers taught illiterates, and several offered generous prizes to illiterates who would learn and to teachers who would teach them.

COLLEGES AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS.

The part assigned to colleges and private schools, was to placard their walls with illiteracy charts and to assign for commencement addresses, the subjects of "Adult Illiteracy" and "Moonlight Schools." These proved valuable sources of enlightenment to those who did not come in contact with the campaign in any other way. Many of the colleges and private schools carried these plans out faithfully.

THE PRESS.

The space given by Kentucky's newspapers to the illiteracy campaign, would have, if paid for at the regular rate, cost a large sum of money. The articles and editorials contributed by the press would, if strung together, make a boundary around the State. The press has been in advance of even the school officials in some sections, and has aroused the school forces to the conditions and to their duty. No small part of the work of the Illiteracy Commission has been propaganda against illiteracy and in favor of education. This propaganda has all been a contribution from the press. Kentucky's editors have led the press of the nation and in most of the States, the press matter on illiteracy of recent date is almost a replica of Kentucky's editorials, showing conclusively their origin.