

ADDRESS OF MRS. CORA WILSON STEWART

President of Kentucky Illiteracy Commission, Before the Kentucky Press Association
at Its Midwinter Meeting December 29th, 1914—How
Kentucky Is Overcoming Illiteracy

The campaign against illiteracy in Kentucky has gathered momentum faster than even its most zealous and ambitious promoters had dared to hope. Within one year after it started in Rowan county, it embraced eight other counties; in the year 1913 it had extended to 25 counties and during the year just closing, since the work has come under state authority and has had the championship of the press of the entire state and the support of other strong and active influences, it has extended its lines to 60 counties, half the counties in the state, and in these is waging a fierce and unrelenting warfare against the foe, illiteracy. The brave and noble teachers and the faithful and valiant editors have fought side by side this year, as it were; the teachers giving time, strength, talent, energy, in unceasing effort and unremitting toil, attacking illiteracy afresh at night after a continuous battle all day, and vanquishing it in an attack in the homes of illiterates when failing to allure the timid, the obstinate, or the misguided victims of this awful curse to the school; the editors wielding the pen, even when worn and weary, searching the columns of other newspapers diligently for every item to copy that would encourage the workers and strengthen the cause, giving space to the illiteracy campaign for which advertisers had bid and which sometimes could be ill spared, chronicling the establishment of each moonlight school, featuring every progressive teacher and heralding each heroic deed that others might be inspired to be progressive and heroic too; disseminating information, silencing criticism, removing or neutralizing opposition, inspiring the courageous to deeds of greater valor, shaming the indifferent into interest and action, recruiting the ranks of the faithful and even drafting the cowardly and the unwilling into service.

Others besides the teachers and the editors of the state have given wholehearted support and rendered valuable service in the illiteracy campaign. Governor McCreary in recommending to the Legislature the creation of the Illiteracy Commission and in appointing as members of that commission only men and women whose hearts were devoted to the cause and in issuing the first proclamation ever issued against adult illiteracy, and in every other way, in fact, that an executive and patriot could unselfishly serve, has lent his untiring efforts to this cause. His proclamation caused many recruits to enlist and was a proclamation which enthused educators all over the nation and afforded them an example which the Governors of other states will be proud to imitate.

Hon. Champ Clark, Senator Ollie M. James, Senator J. N. Camden, Congressmen Fields, Cantrill, Langley, Thomas and other members of the Kentucky delegation in Congress have stimulated the teachers by the offer of generous prizes and have demonstrated their loyalty to the best interests of the state.

No mention of the campaign would be complete without taking into account the faithful efforts of the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs from time to time, and particularly the campaign waged by that organization last spring with Mrs. Richard P. Lacey, its president; Mrs. Helm Bruce, Miss Hazel Cornell and Mrs. Charles P. Weaver, as leading spirits, in raising a large fund to send the pioneer moonlight school teachers on a tour of northern cities in the United States and in the Dominion of Canada.

Most notable and valuable service was rendered in the recent brilliantly conducted campaign inaugurated by the Kentucky Society of Colonial Dames, with Mrs. Gilmer Adams at the head, a campaign which included all women under the name of the Woman's Forward Movement, and which had as its aim the raising of \$20,000 for the Kentucky Illiteracy Commission, to enable the commission to do its work more effectively and to properly equip the moonlight schools.

Other campaigns of a similar nature and likewise far reaching in effect are planned, as was announced at the last meeting of the Kentucky Press Association, and will be launched under the direction of the Kentucky Illiteracy Commission soon, but while it is planned to have other forces at times to strike a swift and strong blow with such mighty force as to dislodge the defenses of the enemy, none fail to recognize the fact that, after all, it is the volunteer teacher who must actually face and conquer the foe and the volunteer editor who must keep on the firing line, and that these two must war continually, showing no quarter, permitting no cessation of hostilities, declaring not a single truce nor agreeing to a single armistice.

All true and patriotic citizens will support, will aid, advise and abet this army, but none can take the places of these two forces in this fight—the editor and the teacher, both leaders and builders in their communities.

We are overcoming adult illiteracy in Kentucky chiefly by means of the institution originated for that purpose—the moonlight school; and the district which has the largest and most successful moonlight school is overcoming it with the most ease and rapidity, while the county which has the largest number of moonlight schools is stamping out illiteracy most speedily. In such schools illiterates in large numbers, as well as semi-illiterates and educated persons, can be gathered together. Where they can be taught in six or seven evenings to read simple pages and to write legible letters, and in a few weeks' time they can acquire more knowledge of these branches and can acquire the fundamental principles of arithmetic, the essential facts in history, geography and other branches as well. The moonlight school undoubtedly affords the most effective plan for combatting adult illiteracy. That we are overcoming illiteracy through the moonlight schools is the sworn testimony of hundreds of volunteer teachers in their reports and the written testimony of thousands of men and women redeemed from illiteracy. These letters from redeemed illiterates, which are flooding every mail, tell their own story of their efforts, their joy and their gratitude for their emancipation. Some deplore their lack of previous opportunity, declare their appreciation of the new institution—the moonlight school—and express their hope in it for their further development and all indicate their desire that others everywhere may enjoy the privileges which they have so enjoyed. They usually close with a pledge to stand forever for education and to advance it and themselves at every opportunity. I have hundreds of such letters here with me, all legible, from men and women known to some of you, all testifying to the value of the belated opportunity as earnestly as the saints testify to the joy of salvation.

In addition to eradicating illiteracy entirely from many districts this year, a community interest has been aroused, education has been popularized, illiteracy has been stigmatized, a new spirit of progress, builded upon a substantial foundation, has developed in isolated communities and stagnated communities and all sorts of communities where moonlight schools have been established and properly organized.

Many persons have been reached by individual instruction, making a beginning under the direction of the teacher at home, and some have been made more thorough after the session closed by continuing under the instruction of the teacher privately. Many former teachers have enlisted to instruct one privately, several lawyers have volunteered to teach illiterate clients, a few women have volunteered to teach in their homes, and school children in some cases have enlisted to teach one or more. So gradually we are securing and will secure from these ranks and others a force for picket duty.

In several jails in the state classes of illiterates are being taught, and this work is to be extended to all the jails. The reformatory at Frankfort has passed a resolution that none shall leave its walls illiterate and instruction is now being provided for all illiterate inmates.

A beginning has been made in some of the mining camps in the state, and the milling districts have been invaded.

The Federation of Women's Clubs will start on their new campaign in January which will include the teaching of providing of instruction for any illiterate employed in the household of any member of the Federation, and some other plans of equal merit and of equal interest.

The Traveling Men's Campaign soon to begin is in process of organization, will include the carrying of such stickers on the salesman's grips and trunks as these: "No Illiteracy in Kentucky After 1920;" "Everybody Reads and Writes in Kentucky—In 1920." These traveling salesmen will be asked to carry to each country and small town enchanter the message for his illiterate customers, that illiteracy is an evil and a disgrace to exist any where; that it is a yoke which can be thrown off in a week or two by such as earnestly seek instruction, that adults learn with unusual ease and rapidity and that none are too old since "Uncle John" Hatfield learned in a moonlight school at the age of 94, and a Hardin county woman has begun her education at the age of 95. The traveling men's campaign will include a stock of stories such as drummers delight to tell, illustrating the handicap, the crime and disgrace of illiteracy.



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literacy.

The speakers' campaign soon to be launched next by the Kentucky Illiteracy Commission is one in which 120 of the statesmen, educators and talented orators, men and women of the state, will join in a campaign of oratory against illiteracy.

There are, perhaps, but two dangers to the campaign against illiteracy in so far as its interests lie in the support of the press. The one is that the press may grow inert before the task is accomplished, and the other that it may dilute or weaken its efforts by adding too many other features and other phases of the same subject. There are persons who would overshadow or minimize this movement by attaching to or confusing with it sundry and divers of other things pertaining to school work, who would belittle it by assuming it an incident to something else or by recognizing it only a means to some other long desired and unrealized end. It is incident to nothing, but is a scheme and plan and effort all in itself. It is a means to no end, only the one for which it was designed—the eradication of adult illiteracy.

The moonlight school is for the education of adults. The illiteracy campaign is for the purpose of emancipating illiterates, to give them their freedom and power, to fill their barren lives with hope and joy and beauty and usefulness. It is to afford them an opportunity at whatever age they choose to seek it, and if they do not choose to seek it at all, to induce or persuade or allure them. It is to convert the waste material in citizenship into intelligent, useful, usable material. It is to educate, not 10 or 20 years hence, but immediately, for better homes, better ballots, better roads, better business. It is for the purpose of placing a pen in every hand, to give expressions to thoughts long repressed, and to place a newspaper and good books in every home, to give the inmates new ideals, and a broader conception of life. The 208,084 men and women who have eyes to see and see not and have hands to write but write not, and perhaps 208,084 more who read but poorly and write but laboriously, are to be the immediate beneficiaries of this movement. But if in the end, as after effects, it should bring the antagonistic and the indifferent into sympathetic and intelligent co-operation with the school, should increase the attendance and promote regularity of attendance, should create demands for more efficient schools and a stronger compulsory school law, should make illiteracy appear a calamity when unavoidable and a disgrace when intentionally endured and should make for such conditions educationally as would render illiteracy in large degree impossible in future this state, we shall be gratified, intensely gratified, and grateful that it has served other end so well while serving its own.

I desire to commend the far seeing wisdom of this body of Kentucky editors in adopting as their own to promote the two great constructive movements which today are agitating the public mind and which undoubtedly are destined to revolutionize the state—the eradication of illiteracy and the building of good roads. Both were adopted by this organization while they were yet in the pioneer stage and I trust that you view the results attained this year in both campaigns with a sense of pride and proprietorship so just and natural in those who have so successfully and splendidly promoted a good cause.

When the members of the Kentucky Press Association pledged themselves in their annual meeting at Dawson Springs on the tenth of June, 1914, to

promote the campaign which had been inaugurated against illiteracy in the state, I felt a sense of security as to its welfare and an invincible hope for its ultimate success which I had never known before. How splendidly you have adhered to that policy and how zealously you have advocated that cause needs no examination of the files of the newspapers in your offices to determine, although such examination would reveal an unparalleled example of devotion, proof of pens forcibly, frequently and faithfully wielded, columns unstintingly used, the best in display and headline and all that goes to give prominence and effectiveness to an article known to the newspaper craft contrived, and in fact, all else that could have been done to prove your deep and abiding interest. But the best test of any scheme or effort is its results. In the tremendous public sentiment created in the spirit of co-operation aroused, the recruits enlisted and the forces set in motion, the Kentucky press may justly view with pride the achievements for which in a large measure they are responsible. I congratulate you one and all upon your efforts and your success. I esteem it an honor to be an editor and to be a member of this body, more than I can express. For your support of the cause of emancipating men and women from illiteracy I can not thank you sufficiently, and with propriety can not thank you at all, for the cause is yours and the state is your field for development. Both as editors and patriots you owe it to yourselves and to the state to lend your most enthusiastic efforts until the battle is fought and won. Yet, I am sincerely gratified at your remarkable zeal and earnestness; I love you for your loyalty and I honor you for your patriotism and I am deeply grateful to you one and all for the hundreds of personal kindnesses and honors which you have so lavishly bestowed upon me.

GERMANS HONOR KAISER'S BIRTHDAY.

Amsterdam, January 27.—A dispatch from Berlin says: Never did the German people give more striking testimony of their loyalty to the Fatherland and their love for the Emperor than they did today, on the occasion of the celebration in honor of Emperor William's fifty-sixth birthday anniversary. It had been requested previously in a notice issued by the Prussian ministry of state that the greater festivities in celebration of the Emperor's birthday be omitted, "in view of the seriousness of the times." In accordance with this notice the usual court festivities which in the past have been attended by royal and princely persons from all parts of the empire, were omitted from the program. But the popular festivities, those indulged in by the general public, were carried out with an almost unprecedented display of enthusiasm. The churches of all creeds throughout the empire were thronged at the special religious services in honor of the day. The cities were bright with flags and in the windows of almost every house hold were displayed pictures of the Emperor and other members of the royal family. All the newspapers of Berlin today devoted leading articles to the anniversary of the birth of the Emperor, and published retrospects of his reign and flattering comments on his conduct of the war.

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