Kentucky Teachers Asked to Aid Moonlight Schools

FRANKFORT, Ky., July 13.—Students in the moonlight schools this year will be taught to memorize patriotic songs and poems in addition to reading, writing and arithmetic.

Moonlight schools in this State open July 25 and will continue for six weeks. Four days each week, Monday to Thursday, inclusive, will be devoted to moonlight school work.

In letters to teachers of the State who have signed their intention of teaching moonlight schools, Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart, president of the Illiteracy Commission, says that each teacher is responsible for the redemption of each illiterate in his or her district.

The letters to the teachers follow:

"To the Teachers of Kentucky:

"An unusual situation confronts those engaged in teaching in this state. It is one which will put to the test your patriotism and your devotion to education, as well.

"In June 1930, 30,000 boys in Kentucky signed the State's illiteracy marked June 5 by mark, being unable to sign their names. These are not confined to any locality, but are scattered throughout every county in the state. They are not colored, but mainly white. These figures must stagger every thoughtful Kentuckian. They would shame us to the point of concealment but for the need of these young men for immediate relief. Concealment works no cure. Only prompt and decisive action can do that.

"These young men are not to blame for their ignorance. They are the enlightened citizens of Kentucky who have tolerated lax compulsory attendance laws and have submitted the non-enforcement of such school attendance laws as are on our statute books, are mostly to blame. But there is no way to waste in crying 'shame' or in fixing blame. This is a time to act in such measure as we may.

"It is unfair that these young men should be torn from their homes and dear ones and sent across the water without being able to read a letter or write a line of English. Constant actual engagement in battle, the most momentous event in the life of a soldier is the arrival of a letter from home. To his anxious mother a letter from her soldier boy is a comfort above price. No third person, however willing, can convey the sentiments and secrets of these two to each other.

"The Y. M. C. A. provides an abundance of reading and writing material, but these boys can only gaze upon it hungrily as a thing they crave to use but cannot. Such printed reminders, posted about in the Y. M. C. A. camp as 'Write home.' 'Have you written to mother today?' are uninteresting to them.

"A committee hands to each boy a pocket testament as he passes through the port of New York to embark for the war zone. 30,000 Kentucky boys can get no comfort or counsel from the Bible, even when it is given to them.

"These young men may be called into camp September 1. Beginning July 23 we can give them a six weeks' elementary course in the moonlight schools, such as will enable them to read and write their own letters and to peruse elementary books and to read most items in the newspapers. Such as cannot attend the moonlight schools can be taught individually at home. Public school teachers, who are already in their schools, have the best opportunity. Every one of these, I am sure, will gladly serve, but in counties where the schools are not in session, and where the teacher is not on the ground, former teachers and educated citizens can start night classes in the public schoolhouses.

"This is partly an appeal to schools, mainly, and through individual teaching in emergencies, every one of these 30,000 can be taught.

"There may have been a time when these young men were sensitive about this affliction, or when they were impressed with the present, but that time is past. It is an hour of crisis with them, and they will be seeking teachers as earnestly as teachers could possibly seek them.

"It is the duty of every public school teacher in Kentucky to volunteer. Some have already done so on written request. There will be need for many. Some even, who are not teachers, have volunteered. It is a high privilege to render to these unfortunate ones, and to our state and nation, this service. We may have been unable to invest in Liberty Loan Bonds, but we may be able to invest our boys to France to minister to them under the Red Cross, but we can add to their comfort, their self-respect and their efficiency by giving them this training before they go.

"May 30,000 illiterate men in France! Who should stand any? Hasn't she an Illiteracy Commission, 11,000 public school teachers and patriotic people as ever the sun shone on? To the guns, yes, every man of them—enough though with their affliction they might well be exempt from military duty—but to the books first, and then they will go to the guns more content and with less embarrassment and less handicap.

"Let the lights burn for the soldier boys on the evening of July 23 in every rural village and city schoolhouse. It is not a time to make the point that you will volunteer, and let us provide you with books and plans."