MOUNTAIN GIRLS LEARNING THEIR LETTERS IN "MOONLIGHT SCHOOLS" OF KENTUCKY

Above: Some types of the "moonlight school" students. Below, right to left: An eighty-five-year-old scholar, members of the first reader and Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart, founder of the "moonlight schools."

Three years ago when Mrs. Corn Wilson Stewart of Morehead, Ky., became interested in trying to teach the illiterate mountaineers she could hardly have known how soon her work would be well rewarded. There are old folks of eighty-five attending Mrs. Stewart's schools now who are able to read and write for the first time. And President Wilson has asked that some of the "honor" pupils be sent on to visit him at Washington.

Mrs. Stewart, whose home is in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky, was first impressed with her idea when she came to know of the wide spread among the people who lived about her. She asked for the assistance of other teachers and outlined her plan for "moonlight schools" to be conducted in the country school houses after the hours of the regular schools. The teachers responded and the excellent work that has since been done has been largely possible through the painstaking efforts of Mrs. Stewart's assistants who have received no additional pay for their toils.

Thirty thousand men and women have been taught in the "moonlight schools" of Kentucky. Many of them are well past middle life. There are several approaching their ninetieth year who are now able to read and write and "think" after spending a lifetime without these aids of learning. Though attendance at the school has meant real effort and difficulty to many of them, very few have dropped out and most have applied themselves with the greatest diligence. Men who had fought in the Civil and Spanish-American wars stand side by side with their wives and learned to read from primers that are familiar to small children.

As a result of the "moonlight schools" newspapers are circulated throughout the Kentucky mountains now where they were never read before and the mountaineers who knew little of the world they lived in are now interested in events of today. Their new learning has also brought a considerable interest in church attendance and many of the old people attend the Sunday school. Preaching is always sure to attract a larger gathering than heretofore. The foolish "intellectual urge" of these mountain people has shown itself in many ways.

As great a benefit of their schooling as any has been the decline of their prejudices and college education. Where they had previously distrusted "book learning" they are now for it heart and soul. And those who can possibly afford it are preparing to send their children to college.