

A Kentuckian Answers for Fayette County

Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart

IN THE LEXINGTON HERALD recently one signing himself "A Lover of Kentuckians but also of Truth," challenged some statements made by the editor relating to the intelligence and culture of Fayette county citizenry, and went so far as to question whether there is any spot in Kentucky where the citizens are as well educated as those of New England, whether education is valued and worked for by Kentuckians as it is by New Englanders and Westerners, and among other things asked what Kentuckian has a national reputation today.

This challenge was first to Fayette county. Since no citizen has seen fit to answer for his county, surely a Kentuckian may with propriety answer for the State.

I am not one of those Kentuckians, let me say, who believe in flaring up every time it is asserted that Kentucky does not excel in everything under the sun. We excel in some things and in others we are deplorably behind. Let us face the facts and acknowledge the truth. It will be the first step toward removing our deficiencies. At the same time, let us continue to present the excellencies of our people that all lovers of Kentuckians and also of truth may appreciate and acknowledge the things in which we are superior.

There are spots of culture, many college-bred men and some fine old homes in Fayette county. It has much wealth and excellent roads, two evidences of culture and thrift. On the other hand, its school attendance is low, its illiteracy higher than the average for the State, and tuberculosis more prevalent than in any other county in Kentucky. It is not the history of cultured people that they permit disease to spread and learning to die out in their midst.

New England's Advantages.

New England has the advantage of earlier settlement and closer proximity to the older civilizations of Europe. It is so dotted with colleges that the youth of that section have easy access to their halls. New England has more great scholars than has Kentucky. That we are bound to admit. "New England started," says Shaler, "with an educated clergy and bar." To say that the scholarship on the average of any of the newer states, South or West, measures up to the scholarship of New England would, perhaps, not be true. Culture, however, is not to be learned altogether from books. One definition of culture is "refinement of manners and taste." In my opinion, this definition of it is Webster's best. It is possi-

ble to be scholarly and yet not be cultured. Kentuckians excel in ease and grace of manner as much as the people of New England excel in scholarship. I do not believe that any fair-minded citizen of New England or the West would assume that their people can equal Kentuckians when it comes to social ease and grace.

The bookstores of Lexington may not have in stock any but works of fiction and text-books, but is it not a fact that in towns the size of Lexington, and especially those in close touch with the great book markets of the country, books are ordered as required and not kept on the shelf? Also, has Lexington not a public library, which is unusually adequate?

What Our Clubs Are Meaning.

In clubs in Kentucky and in clubs East and West there are men who discuss nothing but politics and business. There are clubs in Kentucky, however, where history, art, world problems and philosophy are discussed. Without making investigation on the subject, one frequently hears of such discussions in these clubs. Within the last few days I have heard a librarian comment on the comprehensive topics discussed in a men's club in Central Kentucky, which draws on the library in her charge. Also, in a sermon a short time ago, I heard a minister say that his theme had been suggested by a discussion he heard among some men a few days before in their club. The subject they had discussed was, "What was the dynamic force which caused Christ to rise from the dead?"

The best source of information we have as to the intelligence and culture of rural Kentucky is the Kentucky Library Commission. This commission caters to the rural population, mainly, and especially to those who have not access to a public library and who have no libraries of their own. This commission, I am informed, has never made an effort toward building up a well-rounded collection, but has only purchased books to fill the demands. In looking over this collection, one finds it strong in history of all countries, in literature, including the classics, criticism and drama, in fine arts and music, sociology, religion, useful arts and philosophy.

Politicians Kentucky's Curse.

Kentucky has its illiterates and New England its immigrants, which lower the civilization of both. New England's concern is for higher education, Kentucky's concern is that all of her people shall receive some education, even though few become scholarly. Kentucky was the first state in the union to establish a system of

common schools. Whenever the question of extending education has been submitted to the people of Kentucky for a vote, it has carried by an overwhelming majority. We do not spend as much as do the western states for education, but that is not that the people desire to be niggardly with their schools, but that the politicians, who are Kentucky's curse, have held the purse strings. Kentucky started the campaign to wipe out illiteracy which is now being adopted by the other states. It is doubtful if in any New England state as many men could be induced to travel over the state, as Kentucky's public men have done, at their own expense, campaigning for education, or if as many teachers could be enlisted to teach the immigrants voluntarily as Kentucky's teachers have been teaching the illiterates for some five years past. "The same spirit which led those buckskin pioneers to found libraries and colleges to encourage the arts" led Kentuckians to wage the crusade to teach every man and woman to read and write.

There is not only one but many Kentuckians today who have national fame. There is a remark going the rounds, and quite too popular among Kentuckians themselves, that "Kentucky is no longer producing great men." This is absolutely untrue. There are more Kentuckians in positions of leadership today than at any time in its history. Kentucky is not producing them altogether for Congress as she once did, but is contributing men to every line of useful endeavor. There was a time when the Kentucky Legislature had in it more brilliant men than could be found in the National Congress. Few states have ever at one time produced such a group of statesmen, and perhaps it is not given to any state to twice produce such a group.

Great Kentuckians of Today.

Kentucky has not recently given to Congress a Clay, a Breckinridge, or a Carlisle, it is said. But she has given to it a Swager Sherley, whose work as chairman of the Appropriations Committee has been a monumental one, and of whom Mark Sullivan, editor of Collier's, recently wrote as one of the three ablest men in Congress, whose deliberations on the floor of the House, if published, would make the greatest parliamentary guide in the world. As speaker of the House of Representatives, it has given Champ Clark to preside. Kentucky is the only state that furnishes two justices of the Supreme Court of the United States, Justice Brandeis and Justice McReynolds both being native sons. If it is in the medical profession you seek famous men, Dr. Simon

Flexner and his brother, Dr. Abraham Flexner, are in the front rank. As a journalist, Henry Watterson eclipses them all. What author in America excels James Lane Allen for classic English? What poet is more renowned than our own Cale Young Rice? To sculpture, Kentucky gave Endo Yandall; to painting, Duveneck, the Covington artist; to music, Riccardo Martin, the famous Hopkinsville tenor; to the stage, Mary Anderson, who, though retired, recently played with her same old charm to the soldiers in London.

Among theatrical producers, Kentucky leads off with Marc Klaw, of Klaw-Er-langer, and with D. W. Griffith, the greatest of moving picture producers. Among editors, George C. Lorimer, editor of the Saturday Evening Post, and Charles Hanson Towne represent the Bluegrass State. Among college presidents, none is better known than Dr. William Goodell Frost, of Berea. In the business world, Walker D. Hines, of Bowling Green, heads the nation's railroad administration, Irvin Cobb, of Paducah, is America's greatest humorist. Admiral Rodman, of Frankfort, is one of the shining lights of the American navy. As a diplomat at a trying post during the world's greatest crisis we can point with pride to David R. Francis, Ambassador to Russia. Kentucky women rank equal with her men. When the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the National American Woman's Suffrage Association and the National Republican Committee recently looked over the forty-eight states to choose seven women for their executive boards, each chose a woman from Kentucky.

437 Famous Children.

One could go on to considerable length, for Kentucky is the birthplace of four hundred and thirty-seven persons of distinction. About half of these have gone where their careers called them, and the other half have remained at home. Vermont has three hundred and thirty-eight distinguished citizens, and only one hundred and ten of them reside in Vermont. New Hampshire has produced three hundred and forty-seven and all but one hundred and eighty-two of them have emigrated. Kentucky is no exception when it comes to giving up her famous ones to the wider fields that call them. Had Gall-Curet remained in Italy, America would not know her today.

What Kentuckians have to be ashamed of is not that they have no culture nor that the State has ceased to produce brilliant men, but rather that some men of such stock in such a State have been deprived of education.