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AMERICANIZATION AS A NATIONAL ISSUE ON THE ROAD THAT IS LEADING TO A SAFER AMERICA

WHILE WE ARE still waiting for words from the Attorney-General of Oregon, regarding the status of the Literacy Test Law, which is now definitely in the statute books of this state, since the law was ratified by the constitutional amendment sustained by the people at the last election, it might be of interest to know that the Supreme Court of the State of New York recently upheld the Literacy test qualification for voters enacted in that state, and authorized the New York State Board of Education to define what is meant by the phrase "read and write English understandingly." In its decision the Board answers that in order to read and write understandingly a voter must have a knowledge of English equivalent to that demanded in the sixth grade of the state public schools.

The Oregon law does not require this, but it does require that an applicant to register and vote shall be able to read some fifty printed words of the state constitution and write at least ten words of the matter read before being permitted to register.

Just where we are to begin; if it is to be necessary to have a general re-registration of the electorate in Oregon under this new law, or if it is to apply only to foreign-born citizens, and if all of these must re-register in order to take the test, is a matter still to be determined; and the Attorney-General should lose no time in giving his decision, so that the inefficient voters may have proper warning and take steps to prepare themselves in order to defend the suffrage right in their franchise, before the next state election brings the situation abruptly home to them.

In view of the fact that New York State, by patriotic speakers in the west, is generally held up as a horrible example of an American community where the foreign-born are outnumbering the native-born, it is indeed very interesting that New York State leads all other states in setting the standard of intelligence

in citizenship so high that only those properly qualified may exercise the franchise. Leadership in this respect is something of which New York may indeed be justly proud.

Upon this phase of the new intelligence standard in citizenship which has been set in New York, Imogene B. Oakley writes most interestingly and intelligently in the January issue of the Atlantic Monthly. Here are some of the high points in the Oakley discourse on the subject:

But even in the confusion created by our naturalization laws and policy there exists a legal way to check this influence of alien racial groups. The Constitution as amended declares that the right to vote shall not be abridged by race, color, previous condition of servitude, or sex, but it does not intimate that it may not be abridged by ignorance. Several states require that voters shall be able to read and write some language, but it was left for New York State to adopt a constitutional amendment which withholds the franchise from any citizen, native-born or naturalized, who cannot read and write English understandingly. The State Supreme Court has upheld this amendment

It is possibly true that a man who can neither read nor write may be a better citizen than one who knows and speaks the English language in its purity, but a man of the most truly patriotic intentions who can not read and mark his own ballot, and must depend upon assistance, never can really know for whom or what he has voted. He is forced to depend upon the honor of the watcher at the polls who gives the assistance. By requiring an educational qualification for the franchise and making it binding in New York City, where it has been possible to naturalize aliens fifteen to the minute, and where every native or foreign-born citizen, however ignorant, has been able to leave his impress on the government, New York State has blazed a trail toward a safer and saner America.

The helplessness of the citizen who stumbles into the polling place on election day and is handed a ballot containing the names of many opposing candidates for any number of higher and lower offices and also containing a number of measures of major importance to the well-being of the community, the state and the nation, is so appalling that it tends to bring tears into