To Make Them Real Americans

The Ringing Call in Secretary Lane's Americanization Bill Which Seeks to Cure the Grave Evils Latent in Illiteracy, Amazing Revelation of the Numbers That Live in Darkness.

STARTLING FACTS EVERY AMERICAN SHOULD CONSIDER.

The number of illiterates in the United States is estimated at 8,000,000—a number equal to the combined populations of Nevada, Wyoming, Delaware, Arizona, Idaho, Mississippi, Vermont, Rhode Island, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oregon, Maine, Florida, Connecticut and Washington.

In certain American industries as high as 85 per cent of foreign-born helpers are employed. One-quarter of these cannot read or write their own language.

In men drafted for the war hundreds of thousands could not read or write.

Over 17 per cent of the persons in the east-south central states have never been to school.

Approximately 16 per cent of the people of Passaic, N. J., must deal with their fellow workers or employers through interpreters.

The non-English-speaking races in the anthracite region are shown to be twice as liable to death or injury as the English-speaking workers.

If the labor of an illiterate is worth $5 a week less than that of a man who can read, then the teaching of the 8,000,000 would yield the nation $2,000,000,000 annually in excess of its present earnings—enough to pay the interest on the war debt.

BY CLIVE MARSHALL.

"WHAT boots it to pass a pure food and drug act to protect the user against deleterious mixtures or an adulterated product when, as far as the illiterate person is concerned, the package may read: 'Poison, filled with the most pernicious of preservatives'? He cannot read it."

Thus strikingly, in a hearing before the committee on education, of the house of representatives, at Washington, Herbert Kaufman, special assistant to Secretary Lane of the department of the interior, accented one of the many points in favor of the Smith-Bankhead bill for the extension of national aid in the education of illiterates in America. This bill was prepared at the suggestion of Secretary Lane. It was introduced in the 65th congress by Senator Hoke Smith and Representative Bankhead, perished with the calendar at final adjournment, and is to furnish one of the important issues before the 66th congress.

The Aims of "Americanization."

This measure is called in common terms an Americanization bill. Its provisions are expected directly to reach something like 8,000,000 of our population; its benefits will extend, when once it shall come into full operation, practically to our whole great national being, affecting society, industry, all progress and the daily life. The illiterates whom it will affect are more in number than the people of Canada. They exceed the combined populations of Nevada, Wyoming, Delaware, Arizona, Idaho, Mississippi, Vermont, Rhode Island, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oregon, Maine, Florida, Connecticut and Washington. It is startling, indeed, to think of such masses of people living in intimate touch with the affairs of the country, doing the country's work, helping to a degree to control its destinies, and unable to read its simplest laws.

The necessity for some action to remedy the ills of illiteracy is amply clear. Under our form of government, the nation is bound to proceed with the work only in co-operation with the states. Sovereign Uncle Sam, in the measure promoted by Secretary Lane, proposes to join hands and match appropriations with such of the sovereign commonwealths as shall respond to his invitation. And his guarantee of good faith will be an initial appropriation of $5,000,000, for the current fiscal year, with $12,500,000 coming annually hereafter, up to the fiscal year 1926, with additional sums, first of $250,000 and then of $750,000 annually, for co-operative work in the preparation of teachers, supervisors, directors of education, etc.

Of our foreign-born helpers in industry, it is calculated that steel and iron manufacturers employ 58 per cent; the slaughtering and meatpacking trades, 61 per cent; bituminous coal mining, 62 per cent; the silk and dye trade, 34 per cent; glass-making enterprises, 38 per cent; woollen mills, 62 per cent; cotton factories, 69 per cent; the clothing business, 72 per cent; boot and shoe manufacturers, 27 per cent; leather tanners, 57 per cent; furniture factories, 59 per cent; glove manufacturers, 33 per cent; cigar and tobacco trades, 33 per cent; oil refineries, 67 per cent, and sugar refineries, 85 per cent.

One-quarter of the above workers cannot even read or write their own language. It is proposed under the Smith-Bankhead bill to secure to these and other illiterates "education in the English language, the fundamental principles of government and citizenship; the elements of knowledge pertaining to self-support and home-making and in such other work as will assist in preparing such illiterates and foreign-born persons for successful living and intelligent American citizenship."

Education under this measure is to fall to persons 16 years old or more. Participating states must, in addition to matching each its share of the national appropriation, provide for "the instruction for not less than 200 hours per annum of all illiterate minors or minors unable to speak, read, or write the English language, more than 16 years of age, at schools or places or by other methods of elementary instruction, until such minors have completed a course of English generally equivalent to that supplied by third-grade schools."

The Need Is Country-Wide.

It becomes, in view of the co-operative feature of the scheme, greatly important that the scope and purpose of the plan shall receive a country-wide appreciation. There is no corner of the republic which has not its own immediate interest in this Americanization enterprise.

Speaking for the bill last February before the house committee, Secretary Lane called attention to the fact that while we are spending, nationally, millions of dollars in treating diseases that attack the animals of this country, we are spending approximately but $200,000 a year on the whole subject of education through the bureau of education.

"Our neglect in these matters," he continued, "was brought out during the war. Then they discovered that we had drafted into our army a large number of men—I do not dare to say what the percentage is—a large number of men, hundreds of thousands of men, who could not read or write, who did not understand the orders that were given them, who had to be given an elementary education, a primary education, not in reading of the language and in writing English, but in understanding English. If we could have been given a few hundred thousand dollars for the education of those people, that humiliation would not have been suffered by the United States.

"Now, just fancy this picture: A drill sergeant at Camp Meade standing in front of a squad of men conscripted into the army of the United States and teaching them the meaning of the word 'forward'; teaching them the meaning of the word 'halt'; and that was the picture that was presented in every camp in the United States. That was a most humiliating picture. We spent millions of dollars in presenting to the country the reasons why we were at war, and more than 10 per cent of the money that was spent was spent fruitlessly, because the people who got the literature, who got the speeches, who got the appeals, could not understand one word that was written. We have to vocalize through some foreign paper, some paper printed in a foreign language, or through some padrone, or some man who can interpret for Uncle Sam to his own people.

"When I left home this morning my little girl said that it was Valentine's day, and that she had just received a valentine. Now, I want to present to you a valentine: Here is a picture of Uncle Sam shouting through a megaphone to the people of the United States in a time of war: 'Forward, march!' and here are 10 per cent, perhaps less, perhaps 5 per cent, of these people in this great army that is lined up who have the hand up to the ear like that (indicating) and saying, 'We cannot hear you.' Now, that is the exact condition that existed at the beginning of this war. Here was Hoover shouting to the people of the United States: 'Stop eating wheat,' and here were the people looking up at him with gaping mouth and saying: 'We do not understand what you say.' Here was the president explaining in eloquent way what the significance was of this draft that was made upon these boys, and the boy was saying, 'I cannot understand.'"

"The war was mostly fought for this class of people. Theirs is the larger share of victory; their share is greatest in the guarantee of a secure democracy because they have the farthest to go to realize it, and if we are to prorate their share of the victory and prorate its cost, we have expended over one billion and a half dollars to keep the door of opportunity safe for them and to keep the road leading to it clear, and this is merely a bill to give them a key with which to open the door to greater poportunity."

—Herbert Kaufman before the Committee of the House.

Thorough understanding is one way, it is urged, by which money spent on Americanization will come back to us. But there are ways more direct, in an ecomonic sense, by which it will return. To quote Mr. Lane again:

"You can figure this thing in a hundred different ways as to the economy of giving these people an education. More than 50 per cent of the men in many of our largest industries are of foreign birth. If you increase the ability of a man he is entitled to a better wage, because he produces more. I have figured that if you increase the ability of these men by teaching them the English language, what the 'no smoking' sign means, what the 'turn to the right' sign means, what the 'warning' sign means, saving their hands and their arms and their legs, saving them from accidents, teaching them enough to enable them to read a printed plat of directions, as to what to do in their industries—if you should, by this means, be able to increase by 50 cents a day the wages of the men who are engaged in industry who cannot understand the English language when spoken or when written, you would be able to develop a fund for the United States of approximately $2,000,000,000 a year."

In addition to a profitable new efficiency in industry, too, to be acquired through the banishment of illiteracy, there will be incalculable gain in the solving of labor situations when it shall come to pass that, all through the works, man shall understand fellow man, and employe and employer enjoy a mutual comprehension in words and ideas.

Mr. Kaufman, who was quoted briefly at the beginning of this article pursued in his further hearing the economic arguments brought forward by Secretary Lane. The handicap of the uneducated he had found not only in the forces for war, but in all lines of public enterprise calling for masses of men. The venture contemplated by the bill in hand, he was sure, would "save us, by every national dollar that is invested in this work, at least $10 that will have to be expended by various national departments themselves as they meet with such phases (of economically inferior labor)."

Herbert Kaufman's Plea.

"This law," said Mr. Kaufman, "is really a law to validate the estate of 8,000,000 Americans and potential Americans in all the facilities, in all the instruments of progress in the United States. When you build a postoffice, you build a share of it for them; when you build a congressional library you build a share of it for them; every forward movement, and every institution to advance democracy and to uplift men, predicate their pro rata use of it; and we have hundreds of million of dollars invested for them of which they are unaware and to which they cannot take title until we certify their title by making them literate and aware of it.

"If this act will validate and bring to use hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of national facilities for each of us, the education of these 8,000,000 will lower the national overhead on every product which they learn to utilize. For example, today those people are not potential customers for any of the forms of merchandise which are sold through advertising. They are not customers for any publishers; they are not customers for the magazines, for the newspapers, for any product of the printing trades. They cannot even read a moving picture title.

"The elimination of illiteracy also means the gradual elimination of falsified merchandise and the reduction, the practical elimination of cheating manufacturers and retailers who rely mainly upon illiterate customers for their support. We passed the pure food and drug act for these people as well as for our literates, but for them it does not exist. Thus, most of the greatest benefits which our democracy has conferred upon its people are lost to these. If ignorance reduces potential earning capacity by a minimum of $5 a week, as compared with that of a literate, this bill is almost a validation of our promise of betterments, of haven, of opportunity, because it translates it into terms of humanity and of protection."

SECRETARY LANE'S "STRONG STATEMENT" IN NAMING A NATIONAL NEED.

There has been a very considerable lethargy on the part of the federal government with regard to matters of education. We do not treat the boy and the girl or the man and the woman of the United States with the same consideration that we do the hog and the cow. Now, that is rather a strong statement, but we are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, millions of dollars in treating the diseases that attack the animals of this country, and we are spending approximately $200,000 a year on the whole subject of education through the bureau of education.

Americanization and Health.

There are sanitary and hygiene arguments behind the bill under review, too. Dr. Frankel, head of the National Health association, told Mr. Kaufman that the association's work, "the work of raising the health average of the country, will be advanced not 10 per cent., but far beyond that ratio if some means is afforded, means that do not now exist, of reaching these people and bringing them to an appreciation of the values of sanitary surroundings and self-protectioin. This is the area which affords them the greatest amount of difficulty in carrying on their programme. It is the source of most of health menaces with which we are dealing, because, living in ignorance, they live in a very, very benighted state. They do not know, they do not understand, they are medieval in their habits and in their practices, and this bill validates their estates, their health estate."

So far in this article, the dealing has been with the Smith-Bankhead bill in so far as it relates to the foreign-born. The measure is drawn, however, so as to cover the interests of the native illiterate. In this phase the problem of education reaches, Secretary Lane tells us, "people who are in the United States and have been in the United States for generations. . . . Those are people who vote, and yet they cannot read or write. Is not that a matter of national concern?"

The secretary feels that the country is absolutely behind his bill. This confidence he gathers from the reading of many hundreds of newspaper clippings which have come before him. And certainly some assurance seems justified when editorial indorsements come with equal heartiness from Massachusetts and California, New York and Florida, Michigan and Texas.

DINERS AND THE DEMON ABOUT TO PART COMPANY FOR GOOD

Head Waiter Bemoans Hard Times Which He Foresees When Prohibition Legislation Becomes Operative.

BY JAMES J. MONTAGUE.

(Copyright, 1919, by the Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

"IT WILL never be the 'same,' sighed the head waiter. "They'll eat, just like they always did—most of 'em 'll eat more—and they'll be just as troublesome about payin' one-sixty-eight for a eighteen-cent lamb chop—but when they ain't lit, en' know they ain't lit, how you goin' to throw 'em out without their goin' to the police magistrate an' makin' trouble? That's what I want to know."

"It always used to be easy. Of course we never pulled nothing rough up here. This ain't the kind of place where you go over the top with caraffes when a couple of rah-rah boys gets to singin' the 'Boolah' an hour after closin' time. That kind of tactics don't worry the customers of places frequented by sporting reporters and comic artists and night prowling actors. But we're genteel up here, and if our patrons was to be disturbed between courses by fragments of broken glass and the wails of the wounded they wouldn't come back. There's a sort of prejudice among the burgoyce diners-out against hein' around where the reserves is very likely to come up with the wagon and tell all hands to go an' tell it to the judge.

"The boss here conducts a nice refined place, with ice skatin' an' jazz, and everything but trained seals and William J. Bryan by way of entertainment. Prices of course is according, and I'll say for the widely denounced demon that he acted like ether when it come to the painless extraction of large sums of money from people who take their meals at places recommended by all-night taxi drivers.

"Now in the 'dear dead days of long ago,' as the song says, when we began pilin' up the chairs to make gangway for the scrub women, the giver of a dinner party would call me and say:

"'Garson, the bad news.'

"When I give him the check he would look at it and remark:

"'What, $73.25 for all that food for three whole people? Why you're practically running an ellemosynary institution, ain't you? And he'd began peelin' bills off a roll.

"Then, like as not his wife—if it was that kind of a party—would grab the check, take a look at it and say:

"'Why, Elmer, this is an outrage. We couldn't have eaten all that stuff. I can run the whole house a week for less money than that and have enough left over for a new foulard.'

"But by that time of night, $75.25 would seem like practically nothing to a guy who was getting $75 a week, and without even looking at the items he would hand out a $10 tip and ask some member of the party to telephone around to a garage for a limousine.

"Of course, sometimes they got messy. In that case the sight of a police whistle usually brought 'em round, an' when they actually refused to come across it was easy to plump 'em quietly an' genteely in the stomach, and collect from one of the other birds while the bus' boys was hurryin' for water to revive 'em.

"It was never necessary to get very rough. One good unostentatious punch below the belt will make almost any heavy eater cease from troubling, and always in any party of three or four the big majority is for peace at any price.

"You see the knowledge that they ain't exactly responsible is always what the newspapers call subconscious in restaurant patrons. Sort of haunting 'em is the newspaper headlines over the police court proceedings the next day, and the statement down at the end of the item to the effect that 'all of them had been drinking heavily.' That sort of news ain't pleasant reading to the old folks at home, and a man is never too far gone to know it. So as a rule they gave no trouble, and seldom it was that we had to revive the old, old days, when all of us was happy and care free and the patrol wagon was always backed up around the corner waitin' for the business that was sure to arrive before the clock in the steeple struck four.

"But it won't be like that any more. You take a man who has had nothing harder to drink than ice water for a whole evening, and hand him a check beginnin' with 50 cents a cover and windin' up with 25 cents a throw for a half an ounce of coffee and he's going to be fussy about it.

"And the old stuff won't go, either. A man in that condition will take out a lead pencil, figure out for you where a stuffed tomato quoted at $1.50 can't possibly cost more than 13 cents to serve, including the overhead and defy you to prove that you wouldn't make Jesse James look like a Sunday school superintendent.

"And if you call in the cop on the corner, he'll show the cop the figures and the cop will likely as not agree with him.

"Yes, its goin' to be a lot different. Most of the education a fellow gets in a place like this will be wasted. He'll be a good deal like the captain of a ship who has spent all his life learning to find the way over the waves, and then they suddenly ring in airplanes on him and all he knows suddenly ain't good for anything.

"I was 10 years perfectin' a method of tellin' a man, who I knew was dining with his wife that a lady wanted him on the telephone. If he had an edge on he'd give me a piteous look, and I'd say I'd made a mistake and get a five when he went out. But if you worked that on a perfectly sober man you'd probably get arrested.

"Then once in a while when a guy showed up with a new girl and ordered wine, I'd ask him if he wanted the same kind of wine he had last night, and confessin to another mistake was good for five or ten.

"I'll be out a tidy income by the change. Regular millionaires as all waiters know is usually tight wads. That's how they got to be millionaires. But the man who thinks temporarily that he is a millionaire, bein' led to that supposition by the contents of a few bottles, is loose as the driftin' sands.

"But what I'll be out is nothin' to what is goin' to happen to the boss. Just imagine a lad who hasn't been etherized with four or five cocktails lookin' at one of these modern bills of fares and ordering anything off it. I can see only one way out, and that is hereafter to charge what the stuff is worth. And I'm afraid most of the restaurant proprietors has long ago forgotten how to do that."

Mexican Lower House Too Large.

MEXICO CITY.—President Carranza recently renewed his recommendation to congress that the constitution be amended so as to decrease the membership of the chamber of deputies, the lower house of congress, from 249 to 150. He asked that representation be based on population, one delegate for every 100,000 inhabitants, with due provision being made for states which are sparsely populated. The president pointed out that at present the chamber of deputies is a cumbersome, unwieldly body that does not lend itself readily to lawmaking, and suggested that in a more compact form it could enact more rapidly certain reform measures now needed.