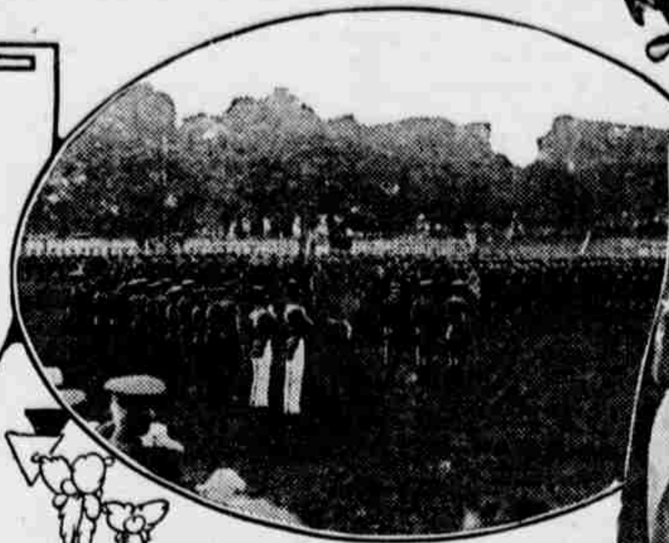
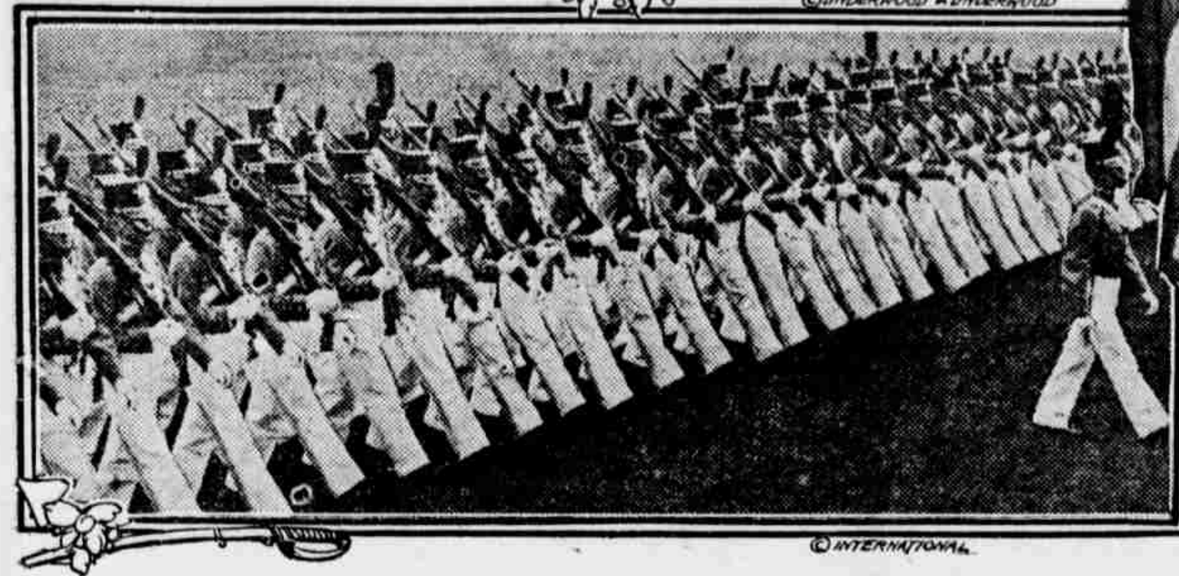
How About West Point?

SECRETARY of WAR BAKER



PRESIDENT EMERITUS ELIOT



CHARLES W. ELIOT, president emeritus of Harvard university, made an address not long ago before the Harvard Teachers' association, in which he severely criticized the United States Military academy at West Point as an educational institution.

Now, West Point is an institution of supreme national importance. If Dr. Eliot's criticisms can be sustained, it is the manifest duty of congress and the secretary of war to bring about all changes necessary to fit the institution to its high public purpose.

Representative Fred A. Britten of Illinois introduced a resolution requesting that certain information be furnished the house by the war department. Representative Julius Kahn of California, chairman of the committee on military affairs, wrote to Secretary of War Newton D. Baker concerning this resolution. Secretary Baker took this opportunity to write Representative Kahn a long communication, which is in purpose and effect a formal defense of West Point and an answer to Dr. Eliot's criticisms. In view of the supreme importance of West Point as an American institution, a summary of Secretary Baker's defense is well worth printing.

Dr. Eliot's criticisms are as follows:

1. "No American school or college intended for youths between 18 and 20 years of age should accept such ill-prepared material as West Point accepts.
2. "No school or college should have a completely prescribed curriculum.
3. "No school or college should have its teaching done almost exclusively by recent graduates of the same school or college who are not teachers and who serve short terms.
4. "The graduates of West Point during the World War, both in the field and in business offices, did not escape, with few exceptions, from the methods which they had been taught and drilled in during peace. The methods of fighting were, in the main, new and the methods of supply and account ought to have been new. The red-tape methods prescribed to the American Regular Army officers of passing the buck were very mischievous all through the actual fighting and remain a serious impediment to the efficiency of the war department to this day.

In answering criticism No 1, Secretary Baker sets forth the methods of admission to West Point by congressional and presidential appointment, competitive examinations, entrance examinations, etc. He then says, in part:

"From 1838 to 1915 the total number of candidates who have presented themselves for admission to West Point has been 17,319. Of these 8,352 have been admitted. Of the residue 4,220 were rejected for admission by the academic board; 2,746 failed to report; 921 were rejected by the medical board; 573 were rejected by the joint action of the academic board and the medical board; 698 passed, for whom no vacancies existed; 198 failed to complete the examinations; 188 declined appointments after completing the examination, and 53 appointments were canceled.

"It thus appears that the process of selection is countrywide; that the requirements, from a purely academic standpoint, are adequately high, and that the standards are rigidly enforced.

"Taking American secondary education as it is, for rich and poor, in the city and in the country, east and west, I am persuaded that no college drawing its students from a wide geographical area compares with West Point in the quality of the material which it receives, and if more uniform excellence could be obtained by sectional or class selection, surely the exchange would be a bad one for the national constituency which the academy has always had."

As to criticism No. 2, Secretary Baker says he does not attach any value to any opinion he might express as to the controversy between the prescribed curriculum and the free elective systems of collegiate education. But, he says, it cannot be conceded that West Point has a fixed, inelastic and unchanging curriculum. He mentions the appointment of a board of investigation in 1917, and says it is only one in a continuing series of investigations with the view of adapting the instruction to the demands which the World War has shown could be made upon military men. He then says, in part:

"After all, West Point is a special school, as is the Naval academy at Annapolis, as is any school of mines, or of chemistry, or of languages. This does not justify the turning out of soldiers, or mining engineers, or chemists, who know nothing else; but it does justify a course of instruction which emphasizes the specialty, while it produces an educated man. The purpose of West Point, therefore, is not to act as a glorified drill sergeant, but to lay a foundation upon which a career of growth in military knowledge can be based, and to accompany it with two indispensable additions; first, such a general training as educated men find necessary for intelligent intercourse with one another, and second, the inculcation of a set of virtues admirable always, but indispensable in the soldier. Men may be inexact, or even untruthful, in ordinary matters, and suffer as a consequence only the disesteem of their associates, or the inconveniences of unfavorable litigation; but the inexact or untruthful soldier trifles with the lives of his fellow men, and the honor of his government, and it is, therefore, no matter of idle pride, but rather of stern disciplinary necessity that makes West Point require of her students a character for trustworthiness which knows no evasions.

"I ought to point out that West Point is but the beginning of education in the army. In each of the services there are continuation schools of growing breadth and usefulness, and the plan toward which army education is tending will more and more seek only the fundamentals, both of education and character, at West Point, and look more and more to the special schools for the technical, scientific completion.

"A test may be appealed to with confidence. During the first hundred years (1802-1902) of its existence, 2,371 graduates of West Point left the army to go into civil life. The occupations of these graduates are shown in the following table: President of the United States, 1; president of the Confederate States, 1; presidential candidates, 3; vice-presidential candidates, 2; members of the cabinet of the United States, 4; ambassador, 1; ministers of the United States to foreign countries, 14; charge d'affaires of the United States to foreign countries, 2; United States consul generals and consuls, 12; members of congress, 24; United States civil officers of various kinds, 171; presidential electors, 8; governors of states and territories, 16; bishops, 1; lieutenant governors, 2; judges, 14; members of state legislatures, 77; presiding officers of state senates and houses of representatives, 8; members of conventions for the formation of state constitutions, 13; state officers of various grades, 51; adjutants, inspectors and quartermaster generals, and chief engineers of states and territories, 28; officers of state militia, 158; mayors of cities, 17; city officers, 57; presidents of universities, colleges, etc., 46; principals of academies and schools, 32; regents and chancellors of educational institutions, 14; professors and teachers, 136; superintendent of coast survey, 1; surveyors general of states and territories, 11; chief engineers of states, 14; presidents of railroads and other corporations, 87; chief engineers of railroads and other public works, 63; superintendents of railroads and other public works, 62; treasurers and receivers of railroads and other corporations, 24; civil engineers, 228; electrical engineers, 5; attorneys and counselors at law, 200; superior general of clerical order, 1; clergymen, 20; physicians, 14; merchants, 122; manufacturers, 77; artists, 3; architects, 7; farmers and planters, 230; bankers, 18; bank presidents, 8; bank officers, 23; editors, 30; authors, 179.

"Not all of the foregoing occupations are significant of intellectual supremacy or necessarily superior training, but the list is one which could not have been made by a college with an inadequate or archaic system of education. These men have stepped out of West Point into civil life and qualified in large numbers for positions from the very highest within the gift of the people, in all walks of life; a list quite too large and imposing to represent the triumph of talent over obstruction."

Discussing criticism No. 3, Secretary Baker says that the special character of the education which West Point must give limits the field of selection of its teachers. He defends the practice of teaching by recent graduates. He then points out that there is more permanency in the academic staff than is commonly supposed. Of the 12 heads of departments 7 are permanent and 5 are detailed for periods of 4 years.

Secretary Baker says, in part, concerning criticism No. 4:

"Nothing short of omniscience can analyze the intricate, multiplied and scattered activities of the war department during the recent war at home and in the field, give just weight to the circumstances surrounding these activities and apportion either the credit for success or the blame for mistake as between the persons engaged in those activities. The handful of West Point graduates, the larger handful of Regular Army officers drawn from civil life, reserve officers, officers of the National Guard, and the vastly larger body of officers hastily instructed in officers' training camps altogether comprised approximately 205,000 men, of whom the West Point graduates numbered 3,081. In the performance of their work these officers were aided by an immense body of civilians—captains of industry, masters of business; scientific, technical, commercial, industrial and all other kinds of experts worked side by side. It is my settled conviction that the commercial and industrial organization of America during the war was a colossal success; but whether it was or not, the result was not an outcome of the system of education at West Point. The thing was done by the nation and all the varied processes by which our citizens are trained contributed."

He explains why federal statutes and government regulations produce red-tape; he admits that the system may be slow at times, but holds that conservations of public safety require that these transactions be matters of record and that the person responsible for a decision should make the decision. His explanation of passing the buck is that "there is as to each question a proper person to decide it; to ask the wrong person can have but one or the other of two results, either to be referred to the right person or get an unauthorized answer." He says the fighting was not new, but old. Then he says:

"The comment seems to imply a belief, on President Eliot's part, that graduates of West Point have not shown up well in the military history of the United States. It is incredible that he could really entertain this belief. In every war in which the United States has been engaged since the academy was established, its graduates have been conspicuous, alike for heroism and success. The following list is made up of names which illustrate American history. They are graduates of the Military academy, and they are men whose memory we teach our children to revere:

"Indian wars: Custer, Crooke, Wright, Mackenzie, Cooke, A. S. Johnston, Jefferson Davis, Abercrombie, Casey, McCall, Canby, Rains.

"Mexican war: Swift, Sherman, Totten, Bragg, R. E. Lee, McClellan, Beauregard, Huger, Reno, Grant, Jefferson Davis, Early.

Civil war: General officers in Union Army, 294; in Confederate Army, 151; Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, Schofield, Buell, Burnside, Gillmore, Halleck, Hancock, Heintzelman, Hooker, Howard, Humphreys, Kilpatrick, Lyon, Meade, Merritt, McClellan, McDowell, Ord, Pope, Porter, Reynolds, Rosecrans, Slocum, Thomas, Warren, Wright, Beauregard, Bragg, Cooper, Hood, A. S. Johnston, J. E. Johnston, R. E. Lee, Kirby Smith, Anderson, Buckner, Early, Ewell, Hardee, A. P. Hill, D. H. Hill, Holmes, Jackson, S. D. Lee, Longstreet, Pemberton, Polk, A. P. Stewart, Wheeler, Fitz Lee, Lovell, Pickett, J. E. B. Stuart, Van Dorn.

"Spanish war: Otis, King, Fitz Lee, Wheeler, Bell, Pershing, Lawton, Barry.

"Explorers, builders of railroads, canals, lighthouses, etc.; Swift, Totten, McClellan, Poe, Abbott, Warren, Humphreys, Talcott, Comstock, Bache, Wheeler, Wright, Whistler, Sidell, Porter, Wilson, Greene, Du Pont, Ludlow, Meigs, Griffin, Holden, Black, Goethals, Sibert, Gaillard, Casey, Hodges.

"Public life: Grant, Polk, McClellan, Hancock, Porter, Buckner, Lee, Longstreet, Du Pont, Briggs.

"World war: Pershing, March, Bliss, Bullard, Liggett, Goethals, Summerall, Jervey, Scott, Graves, Biddle, McAndrew, Black, Richardson, Connor, et al."

CONDENSED CLASSICS

THE AWAKENING OF HELENA RICHIE

By MRS. MARGARET DELAND

Condensation by Miss Sara Ware Bassett

Margaretta Wade Campbell was born at Allegheny, Pennsylvania, Feb. 23, 1857. When only 16 she went to New York to study drawing and design and later taught them. In 1880 she married Lorin Deland, famous as sometime football strategist against the enemies of Harvard.

In 1886 appeared "The Old Garden," a collection of verse. It is a characteristic title; for many years Mrs. Deland has each winter grown in her own house in Boston great numbers of Dutch bulbs, which she sells at an annual function to her friends and the public, for the benefit of her favorite charities. As she does all the labor herself, it is a singularly personal form of good works.

Only two years later came "John Ward, Preacher," a book which won the author wide recognition. There have been many others between that and "The Awakening of Helena Richie" in 1906, including "Old Chester Tales" in 1898, in which she made famous her childhood home. "The Iron Woman" appeared in 1911.

IN 1906 Margaret Deland, after having written several other books, gave to the public the fruit of her maturer skill in "The Awakening of Helena Richie."

The story is simple.

Stripped of the charm of its setting, and the subtle delicacy of its treatment, we have a tale presenting few characters, and with no very extended scope for action.

The scene of the novel is the same small Pennsylvania town in which Mrs. Deland has placed two previous books: "Old Chester Tales" and "Doctor Lavendar."

At the opening of the story Mrs. Richie has come to Old Chester and taken up residence in the "Stuffed Animal House," so called because its former owner was a taxidermist. She is little known to the villagers, living an isolated existence, and shunning any intimacy with the townsfolk; nevertheless she is universally respected. There is, to be sure, an atmosphere of mystery enshrouding this beautiful stranger who is possessed of a culture and poise that place her a stratum above the simply bred inhabitants of the sleepy little settlement, but since she goes to church, is quiet and decorous, and gives herself no airs, she furnishes no cause for criticism.

Her only visitor is Mr. Lloyd Prior, known to Old Chester as her brother.

As the story proceeds, however, we are made aware that Prior is not her brother, but is a Philadelphia widower with one daughter whom he idolizes; and that he and Mrs. Richie have for thirteen years been living together awaiting the death of Frederic, Helena's husband, whose demise will leave them free to marry. Frederic has been a dissipated man who, when not himself, has been responsible for the death of the Richie baby; and he is now living a dissolute life in Paris. The tragedy of the baby's death has been the culminating factor in turning his wife's hatred and contempt for him into revulsion, and determining her to desert him and go to Prior. To her lover she gives all the affection which the loss of her child and the destruction of her hopes have turned back into her nature.

Prior, on the other hand, has loved her in the past, but now, after thirteen years of deferred happiness, his passion is burned out. He is tired of her. Alice, his daughter, is growing up, and he realizes the indiscretion of the entanglement; furthermore his business demands his time; it is less and less convenient to come to Old Chester; and he is no longer young. He is a selfish, sensual being, with the typical masculine distaste for everything that renders him uncomfortable either in mind or body. While he is willing, in an indolent sort of way, to continue his relation with Mrs. Richie; is even honorable enough to marry her if he must, it is obvious that he would gladly be rid of the whole affair.

But to Helena Richie this incident is not an "affair." It is her life. She loves Prior with a devotion engendered by her lonely, heart-starved existence, and she looks forward to the moment when Frederic's death shall release her from her present precarious position, and allow her to confront the world with a clear name. That an ultimate marriage between them will wipe out the blot on their past she does not question. In the meantime she can only possess her soul of patience, and make the best of her enforced seclusion. No one knows her secret. No one can know it. Therefore she feels quite secure—that is, as secure as is possible in the face of the ever-present danger of exposure.

Into this fevered life of hers three important characters project themselves: Doctor Lavendar, the minister of Old Chester; Dr. William King, the village physician; and David, an orphan child whom the rector has befriended, and for whom he is desirous of finding a home. Of all Mrs. Deland's creations none, perhaps, is more beloved than is Doctor Lavendar. Wise, benign, humorous; yet just at all times—a man who is never to be turned aside from a principle by idle sentimentality. Doctor King is not unlike him in this unflinching fealty to duty and to honor.

These two persons put their heads together to decide that since Mrs. Richie leads such a solitary life and is abundantly able, she is the one to take the homeless David. The conspirators proceed with extreme caution. The child is brought to Doctor Lavendar's house, and Mrs. Richie is given the opportunity to see him.

He is a quaint, winsome, appealing little fellow—a decided personality, and one of the most delightful and consistent child portraits in modern fiction. His greatest attraction lies in the fact that one can never be sure what he will say next. Once, when Doctor Lavendar is telling him a story he keeps his eyes fixed so intently on the man's face that the old gentleman is much flattered.

"Well, well, you are a great boy for stories, aren't you?" remarks the delighted minister.

"You've talked seven minutes," said David thoughtfully, "and you haven't moved your upper jaw once."

As can be imagined the child makes instant conquest of Mrs. Richie, who insists on fitting him out with tiny garments, and brings him in triumph to the "Stuffed Animal House."

Day by day the tie that binds her to David strengthens until we see this affection the dominant motif of her life. It even overshadows her love for Prior, although it is some time before she is conscious that it does so.

In the meanwhile, quite by chance, the security of her miniature world is shaken to its foundations. There lives in Old Chester a youth much Mrs. Richie's junior, Sam Wright, who has drifted into the habit of calling on her, and who falls in love with her. It is the blind worship of one who has never known passion, and in an attempt to break up the boy's infatuation his doting grandfather comes to Mrs. Richie, and half in irritation accuses her of not being a good woman. The shot is a random one, but the instant the charge is made the speaker realizes he has hit upon the truth. Helena's anger at his gibes and sarcasm is like the whirlwind.

But the Lord was not in the wind.

It is Sam Wright's suicide that first brings home to her the gravity of defying social responsibility. What she has hitherto regarded as a scorn for convention she now sees to be a crime against humanity. All her being is rocked with self-reproach.

But the Lord was not in the earthquake.

It is not until Doctor King forces her to confess her guilt, and tells her she must give up David, that we reach the climax of the drama. Then all the wild mother instinct of the woman leaps into being. She is a lioness fighting for her young. She will give up Prior; in fact she does give him up. But she will not part with David. She begs, bribes, prays; but Willy King's conscience will not permit him to listen to her entreaties. She must send the child back to Doctor Lavendar, or he must acquaint the good minister with the entire story.

In an effort to forestall this action Mrs. Richie herself goes to the rectory and before she leaves it she looks into the face of her own soul and pronounces her doom.

"The whirlwind of anger had died out; the shock of responsibility had subsided; the hiss of those flames of shame had ceased. She was in the centre of all the tumults, where lies the quiet mind of God."

When Dr. Lavendar asks her if she thinks herself worthy to keep the child she humbly whispers: "No."

And after the fire, the still Small Voice.

At last the woman's conscience is aroused, her repentance is sincere, and we have the true "Awakening of Helena Richie."

How wisely Dr. Lavendar meets this crisis in the shattered life, allowing her to taste to the full the dregs of remorse and suffering; and yet how mercifully and gently he leads her upward toward hope and a desire for restitution constitute the remainder of the story.

The kind old man suggests that she make her future home in a distant city where her past will not follow her and where she may start anew, and he asks that on the morning of her departure she come to him for a package which he wishes her to take with her on her journey. The reader shares her shock of joyous surprise when David emerges from the corner of the stage-coach crying:

"I'm the package!"

"Dr. Lavendar took both her hands. . . . 'Helena,' he said, 'your Master came into the world as a little child. Receive him in your heart by faith, with thanksgiving.'"

So ends the novel.

To tear the skeleton of the plot from its exquisite setting is almost a sacrilege. It is like dragging the perfume from a flower. One must read the book to gain a true sense of its exceptional beauty and fineness.

It has been successfully dramatized and the title role ably and artistically portrayed by Margaret Anglin; there is also an "Anglin Edition" of the story attractively illustrated by pictures taken from the play.

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