

## A VISIT TO WEST POINT.

The name of West Point is dear to the heart of every patriotic American citizen. It is the only spot in America where the flag of the United States has floated continuously from the early days of the Revolution—or to be more precise, from the 20th day of January, 1778, down to the present hour. It was the most important post in all of the original thirteen colonies, chiefly because it controlled and protected the Hudson River, as well as the highway which crossed that river and formed the connecting link between the New England colonies and those of the South Atlantic Coast, stretching from New York to Georgia. It was the favorite fortress of General George Washington because of its military importance, and it gave him more trouble and anxiety than any other, knowing as he did that the British forces in the neighboring city of New York also realized its immense value for strategic purposes and made many attempts, though always unsuccessful, to effect its capture. The darkest hour in the whole seven years of the Revolutionary War was the one wherein Benedict Arnold, then in command of the post, so nearly succeeded, through his treasonable correspondence with Major Andre, in delivering it up to Sir Henry Clinton, then in command of the British troops in New York City. But the watchful care of that Divine Providence which so often comes to the assistance of short-sighted men, brought his plans to confusion, and rescued, apparently at the last moment, a bulwark so necessary to American freedom and independence. Nor should the toils and sufferings of the West Point troops through all those trying years be overlooked or forgotten. They were second only to those that were experienced at Valley Forge, and were not confined, like those of Valley Forge, to a single winter, but were continued with more or less severity from the beginning of 1778 to the close of the war in 1783. They suffered from cold and hunger, insufficient supplies of food and clothing, arrears of pay, the want of medical supplies, hospitals and hospital stores and accommodations, and the mouldering walls and ruined casements of Fort Putnam, on a peak overlooking the Hudson River which they guarded so well, are still mute witnesses of the effective work they accomplished under such extraordinary difficulties. But it was not so much because of the high regard in which West Point was justly held by the leading men of the Revolutionary times as a bulwark of the

American lines, nor because of its strength as a fortress never yet possessed by an enemy, that it has been held in such esteem by the American people; but rather because it has become a famous seat of learning, a military school of unsurpassed excellence, whose graduates have rendered their country most brilliant and distinguished services both in war and in peace. Education has always been recognized as a prime factor in the progress and development of our country, but our ancestors never did a wiser or more salutary thing in that line than they did when they built up from small and insignificant beginnings, through many years of doubt and discouragement, this magnificent institution of the present day. The result of the splendid education—physical, moral and intellectual—furnished to the young men sent there from every State in the Union, and taken from all classes and conditions of society, have been of incalculable value in the civil and political as well as the military life of our country. The public improvements of any considerable importance in the United States are few in number which have not been benefited more or less by the mathematical training, the engineering skill and the practical experience of West Point graduates. For example, the distinguished services rendered to the entire country by General Isaac I. Stevens, the first governor of Washington Territory, as the constructor of fortifications on the Atlantic Coast, as a brave and gallant soldier in the Mexican War, in making the first surveys across the continent through a comparatively unknown country inhabited by wild, savage and hostile Indians when he practically located the line of the Northern Pacific Railroad as since established; his successful career as governor of Washington Territory, when the situation was surrounded with difficulties growing out of its recent organization, and the Indian wars in which many of its scattered inhabitants were then engaged; his subsequent labors in Congress as a delegate from the Territory, and his magnificent conduct as a general officer during the War of the Rebellion until his life finally came to a lamentable end on the 1st day of September, 1862, at the early age of forty-four years, all bear witness to the extraordinary amount of work which may be accomplished by one man in a comparatively brief period after graduation from West Point. His thorough and complete education at this Academy enabled him to use his large fund of knowledge, energy and ability to the best possible advantage, and his life from the time he was graduated in 1839 to its brilliant close on the battlefield of Chantilly was crowded with work

of local and national importance which would have taxed the industry of Michael Angelo, or the genius of the great Napoleon himself. Yet Governor Stevens is only one of the hundreds whose names might be mentioned, many of them more conspicuous, who have rendered services of inestimable value to our country, and whose honorable records have found prominent places in its history. Their names and deeds are household words throughout the civilized world. In all probability these men would have been good citizens, soldiers and patriots had they never seen West Point—but the training and discipline received there enabled them to comprehend clearly every situation, to act with promptness, celerity and decision in all emergencies, and to make the best possible use of all their opportunities—good, bad or indifferent. It was his experience with the graduates of West Point, who were under his command in the Mexican War, that led General Winfield Scott, the commanding general of the United States Army at that time, though himself not a graduate, to say: "I give it as my fixed opinion that, but for our graduated cadets, the war between the United States and Mexico might, and probably would, have lasted four or five years with, in its first half, more defeats than victories falling to our share; whereas, in less than two campaigns, we conquered a great country and a peace without the loss of a single battle or skirmish." The remarkable success of the Union armies in our Civil War, and in the late Spanish War, have been sufficient to convince every thoughtful and intelligent mind of the immense value of that precise and thorough training along mathematical lines, which, here more than anywhere else, is instilled into the cadets who are graduated from this institution. The cost to the government of this Academy, from its earliest beginning down to the present time, and of the cadets who have been graduated therefrom, may be accurately estimated in dollars and cents, but there is no mathematician, however expert or able he may be, who can correctly calculate by any arithmetical system known to man the pecuniary or the financial or patriotic value of the services to the country and the world which have been rendered by the graduates of this now famous seat of military learning. In all the various walks of life—civil, political and military, in war and in peace, whether pursuing hostile Indians in the Everglades of Florida, or in the fastnesses of the Rocky Mountains, with Custer on the plains of the Dakotas, or building lighthouses and fortifications on the shores of the Atlantic, the Pacific, or the Great Lakes; as engineers, explor-

ers, bridge, canal and railroad builders, or in the various wars in which our country has been engaged,—their skill, endurance, ability and patriotism have been of incalculable value, and have contributed immensely to the growth and development of the country whose unparalleled prosperity we now enjoy, and whose future possibilities we are now beginning to realize. Yet there is nothing new or even modern in the fundamental principles by which this school is governed, or in the objects sought to be attained here in the instruction given to its pupils. These principles are as old as education itself, except in so far as they are made to conform to modern conditions, discoveries and developments in the various fields of science, improvement and invention. If Cyrus the Great were permitted to revisit a world wherein he was once so prominent a figure, as the head of the Empire of the Medes and Persians, nearly twenty-five hundred years ago, he would no doubt be surprised as well as pleased to know that “to learn to ride, to shoot, and to speak the truth” were the most important points in the instruction now given to the cadets at West Point, as they were the chief features in the education of the youth of the nobility of his own time and country. For, beyond question, a higher regard is paid here to the inculcation of the principles of honor, truthfulness, integrity and patriotism than in any other educational institution of our country—numerous and estimable as these institutions are in their rules and practice with reference to these invaluable features of training for an honorable, a useful and a successful manhood.

But in other respects also this Academy has justified its claim to leadership among the schools of the country. It has been the first to practice many details in its methods of instruction, which have been or are now being adopted and successfully followed in other seats of learning. It was at West Point that the blackboard was first used in our country in the demonstration of a variety of problems. Now this useful adjunct of educational processes is to be found in every school house in the land. It is here that the practice is fully developed of dividing large classes into sections, each made up of eight to ten or twelve students, and each having a professor or instructor to hear recitations. By this method every cadet is called upon at each recitation to take part in the work of reciting, and there is no opportunity of escaping the study required or the demonstration expected of each individual. Equal thoroughness is thereby secured for the entire corps of cadets.

This method is now being introduced into many of the col-

leges and universities of the United States, and it is the only method by which uniform and satisfactory work can be secured by all members of the various classes therein. It was a very fortunate circumstance that French and other foreign officers, who had been educated in the best military schools of Europe, and who were distinguished for their skill and ability as engineers and mathematicians, assisted in the foundation of the course of studies at West Point which has proved so useful, so important and so successful in imparting that mental training so necessary to correct thinking and sound reasoning on all subjects. This, added to the drill and discipline enforced at the same time, inculcating a love of order and a devotion to duty, makes a training unsurpassed in excellence in bringing up men, not only of an exceptionally high standard in military matters, but a class of good citizens in any and every walk of life. Such men were the Chevelier Du Portail, Villefranche, L' Enfant, who laid out the present magnificent city of Washington, D. C., Col. Lewis Nicola, Kosciusko, Baron Steuben, and others who might be mentioned did space permit. These men knew the immense value of military training and discipline, and their services to our country in the early days of West Point were invaluable, and their beneficial effects have been indelibly impressed upon this institution. We have always appreciated the great services rendered our country in its War for Independence by the gallant Lafayette and his French compatriots, and by the French Navy for its assistance in a time of pressing need, but I am not sure that the French officers who assisted in organizing the West Point Academy did not render our country services equally great, lasting and important. At all events, we owe them an immense debt of gratitude, which should never be overlooked or forgotten. The officers and soldiers of the Revolutionary Army suffered greatly for the want of that military knowledge and training which are indispensable to success in the conduct of military operations, and after many sad experiences were very willing to avail themselves of the assistance which these French officers were able to render in the establishment of a military school, which would, in some degree at least, supply the deficiency. That their work at the time on this line was highly appreciated is demonstrated by the fact that they received the thanks of Congress for the zeal, energy and ability they had displayed in this matter and those who wished to return to France were sent home at the expense of the government in the good ship Washington. They left behind them,

however, several younger officers, who continued the good work they had so auspiciously begun, some of whom, indeed, spent their lives in this country. The first troops to be stationed at West Point were located there on the 20th of January, 1778. From that time until the close of the Revolutionary War a garrison was maintained at that place, which sometimes amounted to three thousand men. The work of fortifying the place was begun by General Israel Putnam under the supervision of Lieutenant-Colonel De la Radiere, an accomplished French engineer, whose delicate frame succumbed to the hardships which all endured at that time, and he died the following summer. He was succeeded by Thaddeus Kosciusko, whose name is familiar to all readers of American history. The work of strengthening these fortifications went on steadily throughout the war, until a post, strong by nature and still further improved by all that art, skill, and the industry, patient labor and endurance of the patriots of that period, became almost impregnable. During the war the place was frequently visited by Washington and the leading military and civil officials of the Revolution, and its care and preservation were regarded as of the utmost importance. Its location is chiefly on a plateau of about two hundred acres overlooking the Hudson River, both above and below the point it occupies. It was then and is largely, even yet, surrounded by the primeval wilderness, rocky ridges and hills forming part of what is known as the Highlands of New York. Crow's Nest, a famous peak of the Highlands in the vicinity, on the west bank of the Hudson River and overlooking the river and surrounding country for many miles, rises to the height of 1,500 feet. The tract of land originally purchased by the United States government in 1780, which included West Point, contained 1,463 acres, but subsequently, in order to secure an adequate and suitable water supply and for other purposes, additional tracts were purchased from time to time, until the amount now owned by the government aggregates 2,556 acres. On the 6th of May, 1776, Colonel Henry Knox, then on the staff of General Washington, wrote a letter to John Adams suggesting the establishment of military academies for instruction of young men in all branches of the service. To this John Adams responded on June 2nd, saying, "I am fully of your sentiments." Later on, the same year, Knox wrote to Adams, "Military academies must be instituted at any price." September 27th, 1776, Knox wrote in his "Hints to Congressional Committee," then in camp at Harlem Heights: "Its officers can never act with confidence until they are masters of

their profession. An academy established on liberal plans would be of the utmost service to America, where the whole theory and practice of fortifications and gunnery should be taught." Another plan was also suggested, which was to educate young officers while serving with their regiments, but nothing ever came of it. On the 1st day of October, 1776, the Board of War, on the motion of John Adams, resolved that a committee of five be appointed to prepare and bring in a plan of a military academy at the army, but this resulted eventually in the organization of a Corps of Invalids, which was to contain forty officers and 920 enlisted men, and this corps was organized in Philadelphia, in July, 1777. It was to be employed in garrisons and for guards in cities and other places where magazines or arsenals were placed, as also to serve as a military school for young gentlemen, previous to their being appointed to marching regiments. Some members of this corps were, constituting until the close of the war in 1783, all there was of the military academy at that time. A certain amount of instruction was given by engineer officers, but it was limited in its scope and character. When a peace establishment was organized, the necessity of a military academy of a permanent and efficient character was urged by Knox, General Washington, Alexander Hamilton and other leading men of our country. Various efforts were made to establish a school and much correspondence took place, with debates in and out of Congress, as to the best method of carrying the universal wish into effect, but it was not until March 16, 1802, that the Organic Act of the United States Military Academy was passed substantially as it is today. This act authorized the President to appoint a corps of engineers, to consist of one major, two captains, two lieutenants and ten cadets, and limited the whole number to twenty officers and cadets. It provided that the said corps, when so organized, shall be stationed at West Point, in the State of New York, and shall constitute a military academy. This was practically the beginning of the institution, which has since grown to such magnificent proportions, and which has developed such a wide field of usefulness. Prior to this time the work was largely experimental. Washington, until the close of his life, continued to urge the necessity for such a school, and in his own words, "Ever considered the establishment of a military academy as of primary importance." Various acts of Congress since 1802 have increased the number of cadets and otherwise enlarged the work of the academy. In 1808, 156 additional cadets were authorized; in 1812 a further



addition of 104 was allowed, and by the act of March, 1843, the number of cadets was limited to the number of Representatives and Delegates in Congress and one from the District of Columbia. The number of cadets was still further increased by the act of June 6, 1900, which allowed two additional from each State and ten annually appointed by the President. The maximum allowed in 1902 was 492. In 1816 provision was made by Congress for the appointment of a Board of Visitors, and since that time such a board has annually visited the academy and reported the results of its observations to the Secretary of War. The act provides that this board shall be present at the June examinations of the cadets, and they are also required to investigate the manner in which the affairs of the academy are conducted. Strange as it may appear, no graduate of West Point ever attained the rank and discharged the duties of even brigadier-general prior to the Civil War in 1861. Political ambition and influence managed to secure or control appointments as brigadier or major-generals in the war of 1812, in the Mexican War and in the Indian wars which were constantly going on, during the first half of the nineteenth century. Military distinction was then looked upon as the surest passport and most direct road to the various grades of political preferment. The names and experiences of Andrew Jackson, William Henry Harrison, Zackery Taylor and many others of lesser note who might be mentioned and who became distinguished in the various walks, and enjoyed the emoluments of political life, and who had achieved military success on the battlefield, were always present in the minds of aspiring young men of that period. Opportunities for entering the military service were then sought for as eagerly as young men are now striving to secure large fortunes in banking, commercial, mining, transportation and other lines of business. The graduates of West Point were thus kept in the background, not because their skill, ability and usefulness were not recognized, but for lack of political influence. Their services were in great demand by brigadier and major-generals, like Winfield Scott and others, whose victories were in large measure, if not entirely, due to the skill displayed in the conduct of the military operations under their charge by the graduates of the West Point Military Academy. Testimony of the strongest character to this effect is to be found in the history of the country, during that period, or from the war of 1812 to 1861. Prior to the war of 1812 but sixty-five cadets had been graduated from West Point, but during that war these



graduates rendered invaluable services, chiefly as engineers in the construction of fortifications, roads, bridges and other works requiring engineering skill, but many also contributed to the success of American arms, and illustrated the bravery of American troops on many a field of battle. The report of the Board of Visitors to West Point in 1848 shows that of the whole number of graduates from 1802 to 1847, aggregating 1365, there were killed in the war with England, 10; in the Florida War, 12; in the Mexican War, 46. In the Mexican War ninety-two graduates were wounded, and in the same war 452 brevets were conferred upon graduates for gallant and meritorious conduct. But it was during the Civil War that the value and importance of the West Point education and training were amply demonstrated. This war furnished a test of the capacity of the men engaged in it, which was extraordinarily severe. All the qualifications of manhood possessed by both sides were fully brought out, whether of knowledge, skill, ability, courage or endurance. Here the West Point graduate clearly vindicated his claim to superiority in organizing men and leading them to victory. In its earlier stages political influences brought to the front and placed in important commands men without military education or experience, but the losses suffered in men and material, in esprit de corps, and in public esteem, resulted in their retirement, and at its close the list of generals in the regular army was entirely made up of graduates from West Point.

Of the graduates who were living when that war commenced 89 per cent. served actively in the Union or in the Confederate Army, and of those 73 per cent. were in the Union Army.

Of those in civil life when that war commenced 55 per cent. re-entered the army, about one-half on each side. Of these graduates in the Union Army, one (Grant) rose to the grade of Lieutenant-General, six became major-generals and one hundred and twelve to brigadier-generals of volunteers, or more than one-third of those engaged rose to the grade of general officers. Nine graduates received the thanks of Congress for gallant and meritorious service on the field of battle. In the Confederate Army eight graduates became full generals, fifteen lieutenant-generals, forty major-generals and eighty-eight brigadier-generals. Of the lieutenant-generals in the Confederate Army there were only two who were not graduates.

It very soon became apparent in the Civil War that the issues at stake were too far-reaching and momentous to be entrusted to political expediency, ignorance or incompetency. West Point

stood forth justified for all that it claimed and had cost the country, and thenceforth there was no question as to its support and maintenance as a national institution. Its cost was, and is, a mere bagatelle compared with its benefits to the country at large. It is not necessary to refer to similar experiences in the Spanish and Philippine Wars, the episode in China, and other recent developments. Some months ago I was appointed by the President a member of the Board of Visitors to West Point for the year 1905, and it became my pleasant duty to accept the proffered place and undertake the discharge of the duties connected therewith. In accordance with the acts of Congress relating thereto, as contained in sections 1327, 1328 and 1329 of the Revised Statutes, "It is made the duty of the Board of Visitors to inquire into the actual state of the discipline, instruction, police administration, fiscal affairs and other concerns of the institutions, and to report the same to the Secretary of War for the information of Congress." Few spots in America are more interesting to the student of history, topography or military affairs. It is not strange, therefore, that a man who so thoroughly represents American ideas, and who is in all respects so practical in his character as President Roosevelt, should make this military academy the object of his particular care and attention. It was no doubt very gratifying to him to be able to say, among other things, in his address at the Centennial Celebration held at West Point in June, 1902, that "this institution has completed its first hundred years of life. During that century no other educational institution in this land has contributed so many names as West Point to the honor roll of the nation's greatest citizens. The average graduate of West Point during these hundred years has given a greater sum of service to the country through his life than has the average graduate of any other institution in this broad land."

Every intelligent man familiar with the facts in the case will endorse these emphatic expressions. In the appointment or re-appointment of Brigadier-General A. L. Mills as superintendent of the academy, President Roosevelt would appear to have been unusually fortunate. General Mills is beyond doubt the right man in the right place to conduct an institution, so that the best practical results may be secured. He brings to the discharge of his trying and responsible duties not only the tact, knowledge and discrimination, but that enthusiasm which is necessary to secure success in any and every business, trade and occupation. On the battlefield of Sanitago, where he was supposed to have

been mortally wounded, he displayed in his own person and experience the qualities of a true soldier. The other members of the Board of Visitors appointed by the President for 1905 were Joseph C. Cannon, of Illinois; John Schroers, of Missouri; Charles F. Brooker, of Connecticut; Dudley Evans, of New York; Dr. George L. Magruder, of Washington, D. C., and ex-Governor Franklin Murphy, of New Jersey. Appointed by the United States Senate—Chauncey M. Depew, of New York, and Charles A. Culberson, of Texas. By the Speaker of the House of Representatives—Washington Gardner, of Michigan; John J. Esch, of Wisconsin, and James L. Slayden, of Texas.

The board met on the 1st day of June and organized, by the election of Franklin Murphy as president and John Schroers as secretary. The proper committees were appointed, which proceeded at once to take up the work assigned them. The various departments of the academy were visited, accompanied by the officers who had been detailed to assist the board in its investigations. The water supply and its sources were examined. The buildings were inspected and the barracks occupied by the cadets carefully gone over. The barracks were found to be old, out of date, without plumbing or conveniences of any modern character. Plans for new buildings throughout were prepared several years ago at any estimated cost of \$6,500,000, and an appropriation looking thereto of \$1,500,000 had already been made, and one of the most important duties of the board at this time was to examine and approve these plans, in whole or in part, as it might deem expedient. The necessity for new buildings was at once apparent. Not only are many of the present buildings antiquated and unsanitary, but they are altogether inadequate for the largely increased number of cadets, professors and instructors. The full complement of cadets at present is 520, which is increased whenever new states are admitted into the Union. The number of officers, professors and instructors now aggregates ninety-four, for all of whom quarters must be provided. The course of instruction, which lasts four years, is extremely strenuous. From 6 o'clock in the morning until 9:30 in the evening there is not a moment which is not fully occupied, either with recitations, drills on foot or on horseback, athletic exercises or other important requirements. A rigid system of markings is constantly kept up, no shortcomings in any particular are allowed to pass unnoticed, and any considerable number of demerits becomes a serious matter for the unfortunate cadet. The value of time is fully impressed upon all concerned, and

promptness in the performance of every duty and exercise becomes a positive necessity. One result of this admirable system is the enforcement and cultivation of a love of order, of neatness and preparation for future requirements or contingencies, which constitute an invaluable part of the training at West Point. After a careful investigation of the methods in practice here, the members of the board were fully convinced that as a military school, for all practical purposes, West Point has no equal in the world, and it is not strange that after such a training as is furnished here to the flower of American youth the results in the past should have been so magnificent, and they believe that its promise for the future justifies any reasonable expenditure of money for its proper maintenance. The board therefore approved, for the present, plans for new buildings required in the sum of \$5,500,000, believing that further appropriations will be made by Congress without any hesitation when the necessities of the academy are made fully known. The board also recommended an increase in the minimum of the standard of physical requirements; that the height of applicants for admission be increased above five feet and three inches, its present minimum, with corresponding increase of weight and other necessary conditions. It was believed that the very best only of the young men of the country, physically and in all other respects, should be admitted in order that a maximum of results might be achieved.

In view of the important events recently transpiring in the Orient, chiefly growing out of the war between Russia and Japan and possible complications hereafter involving our own country, I introduced a resolution suggesting that the curriculum should include instruction in the Japanese language and literature, but it was not favorably considered, partly because the time of the cadets was already fully occupied. A resolution to introduce the study of Latin by Senator Culberson was passed, asking the Academic Board in charge of the course of study to consider the possibility or the advisability of introducing the study of the Latin language. A noticeable feature of the administration at West Point is the absolutely impartial manner in which all cadets are treated, no matter what their origin or connections. The son of the general of the army has no more favors shown him than any other cadet, but implicit obedience to all rules and regulations is required in every instance. Another feature to be commended was the excellent horsemanship and the remarkable skill in athletics displayed by the upper classes. These exercises are calculated to bring to the highest degree of perfec-

tion attainable the physical qualities possessed by the cadets. In sword exercises, gymnastics and physical culture the academy is fortunate in having the services of Lieutenant Herman J. Koehler, who is probably without a rival in these branches of a military education.

After the experiences of more than one hundred years the Academy has been enabled to secure, it may be said, by a course of natural selection a most admirable corps of officers, professors and instructors, thoroughly equipped for the discharge of their various duties, so that never before in its history has the institution been so well prepared to carry out the purposes for which it was created as at the present day. This official corps is not only thoroughly qualified for its arduous duties, but it seems also to be fully impressed with the responsibility of the task committed to its charge. At the same time it may be said that never before has its work been so highly appreciated or the value and importance thereof been better understood by the people of the United States.

The yearly examinations and the work of the Board of Visitors for the year 1905 were concluded on the 13th of June by an address before the graduating class, one hundred and fourteen in number, and a large body of distinguished guests, by ex-Governor Murphy, the president of the board, and by the presentation to the graduates of their diplomas by the Secretary of War, Hon. William H. Taft. Addresses were also made by General Chaffee, the commanding general of the army, and by the French ambassador.

The time has not yet arrived when men with impunity everywhere can beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, but until it does come it is believed that this academy will continue to deserve the high place it has heretofore occupied in the confidence and esteem of our country and the world, and will discharge its useful and honorable functions

"Till the war-drums throbbed no longer,  
And the battle-flags were furled;  
In the Parliament of Man,  
The Federation of the World."

WILLIAM F. PROSSER.