

M. Varty Little

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE,
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND,

AT THE ANNUAL OPENING, JUNE THIRD, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND ONE.

BY THE

HONORABLE FRANK WARREN HACKETT,

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1901.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND,

AT THE ANNUAL OPENING, JUNE THIRD, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND ONE,

BY THE

HONORABLE FRANK WARREN HACKETT,

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1901.

ADDRESS.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the War College:

A year ago the honor and pleasure were mine of coming here, as a messenger, bringing to you the hearty greetings of the Navy Department. To-day I am the bearer of like good cheer. I trust that, in order to be regarded as in some sense an old friend, I need not be driven to the expedient of reminding you that during the interval we have stepped from one century into another. At all events, I can assure you that the Secretary of the Navy and those associated with him note with increasing satisfaction all that your faithful labor is accomplishing at the War College.

The enterprise is now well beyond the stage of experiment. Its friends can have no fears for the future.

Seventeen years have passed since the first steps were taken to bring into being an institution that should provide for the "higher education" of officers of the Navy. During its early struggle for existence, the Naval War College met and dissipated that cloud of prejudices which is almost sure to envelope a project in its nature novel and experimental. The College has survived for the reason that faith has been kept with the promises of those who stood as its sponsors.

Already how excellent is the record. How clearly do we now see that the work done within these walls lifts the officer into a higher atmosphere, broadens his conceptions, and brings him distinctly nearer to that ideal standard of development which it has ever been the aspiration of the American Navy to attain.

The hour and the place are propitious for an expression of grateful acknowledgment to the accomplished officer and gentleman to whom belongs the honored title of the founder of the Naval War College. His long and busy career has been characterized at every step by an ardent desire to improve and

elevate the profession which he so conspicuously adorns. In the exercise of a foresight of the highest order, this true type of an American sailor "turned to" (if I may borrow Jack's handy phrase) and brought to bear upon those in authority such force of argument, and such well-directed energy, that Congress enacted the desired legislation and gave to the country a Naval War College, the first institution of the kind that the world has ever known.

It was the dawn of a new era for the Navy.

To our good friend likewise is credit due that the institution was established where it should be—here in this historic harbor, a locality as affluent of advantage as it is of delights.

To the founder and constant helper of the War College, Rear Admiral Stephen Bleeker Luce, we extend a tribute of praise and sincere thanks. We persuade ourselves that Time likes to deal gently with him, so that the War College may still look for counsel to its Nestor during many a year to come.

What the college is, what its aims and purposes, and to what extent it may claim to have answered the hopes of those who from the first have believed in it, is to be taken, I assume, as fairly well known to all from cadet to admiral.

But it is not alone officers of the Navy who are watching with interest what you do here. That our ships, with their complement of officers and men, shall be kept always at the highest point of efficiency, ready upon the instant for war, is an object of concern to every citizen in the land.

We need not apprehend that the day shall come when an American, whether living on the coast or far inland, is indifferent to the status of his Navy. The people are alive to what you are doing here. They are well aware how much to them your work signifies of protection and security. They recognize the fact that it is for them that the War College opens its doors to annual classes; for them that the trained mind is still further disciplined, made more alert, more resourceful, more familiar with the conditions and problems of actual war.

Since the development of our naval strength must rely upon the influences of an enlightened public opinion, we welcome

the opportunity afforded by the annual opening of the course thus to remind the country at large of the results here attained.

The fact that the people, one and all, look upon their Navy with affection is to be attributed to something more than sentiment. To be sure, the sea and what is done upon it has in every age laid a spell upon the imagination of man. Allow for this subtile agency,—there yet remains on all sides a conviction that American valor and prowess on the ocean is racial in origin; that it is to be counted on as a natural outcome of free institutions such as ours. The support ungrudgingly given by the country to its naval establishment furnishes to every officer and to every enlisted man an incentive to do his utmost to make the service worthy of public confidence and pride.

But how is an officer to do his utmost? To ask the question is to bring us to the consideration of what is submitted as the leading thought of this address, namely, that every officer of the Navy for the period of his active service should undergo a continuing process of education and training—not partial and fitful, but without remission.

Were you at this moment to confront me with the query, What ought an officer of the United States Navy to be? I should refer you to the text of a letter penned by as great a man as ever sailed under any flag, John Paul Jones. It bears date September 14, 1775, and is addressed to Mr. Hewes, of the Provisional Marine Committee of the Continental Congress. Read this remarkable letter, and you are advised of precisely those qualifications that a naval officer should possess. Its concise, direct terms are for all time. The description stands forth just as apt and as sufficient at this hour as it was when the author wrote it.

Let me add in passing, that readers of the recently published *Life of John Paul Jones*, by Mr. Buell, can not too warmly thank that writer for his industry in bringing to light new material, and his skill in revealing to us the grand proportions of the man of whom he writes. Hitherto the world had known Paul Jones simply and exclusively as a sea fighter, the foremost of any age. We now, and most of us for the first time, see in him a statesman, a diplomat of rare ability,

and an accomplished man of the world. At last an adequate conception of our hero being thus presented to his countrymen, it would be an act of tardy justice to set up at Washington a memorial of John Paul Jones, where as yet none exists. Surely his statue deserves to occupy a place of honor at the Navy Department.

Much in the same way, were reasons to be demanded of me for maintaining the Naval War College, I should bid the questioner turn to the report of a board appointed by Secretary Chandler, May 3, 1884, to deal with the subject. This document, which is to be found in the Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1885, is signed by Commodore S. B. Luce, Commander W. T. Sampson, and Lieutenant Commander C. F. Goodrich. The board did their work well. Their report sets forth the need of an institution such as this, and briefly outlines the scope of what it might hope to compass. The thought occurs that you may do worse than to put a copy of this instructive paper into the hands of each newcomer upon his reporting here for duty.

Here one finds a school where facilities are offered for that broader training which is demanded of those having in charge our modern ships of war. In days gone by, it used to be taken for granted that the attainment of high rank meant that the culminating point of skill and efficiency had been reached. They were indeed grand, old sailors. Masters of seamanship, they displayed a tact in the handling of men that was the perfection of discipline. They enjoyed, all of them, an extensive acquaintance with foreign countries, and knew something of their own, along the seaboard. Their varied experience afloat and ashore (including a list of supposed hardships which they went through as youngsters) brightened their faculties, and created the type of the American naval officer, able, accomplished, always brave, such as no country in the world has surpassed. All honor to the memory of these gallant men.

But the day of these men is not our day. Alike in business, in professional life, in affairs of state, or in the art of war, a spirit of change has done its work, and much once thought

indispensable has now been discarded as outgrown. Could Paul Jones, or Truxtun, or Perry, or Decatur, come back to life and set foot upon one of our armored battle ships, he would indeed be lost in wonder. Boundless would be his surprise at learning to what extent the faculties and attainments of a commanding officer are taxed to answer the demands of his position. We are safe in saying of the naval officer of the present period that he must know more things, and know them accurately, too, than was ever demanded of him who trod the quarter deck half a century ago. New problems present themselves for solution, and some of the graver ones you deal with here at the War College.

As for education in general, I confess there is a strong temptation to discourse upon so attractive a topic. It has always been the fashion, and probably it always will be, to talk more or less about education. Now and then somebody of exemplary patience tries to fathom the subject, but we seldom hear that he meets with any great success.

As early as 1644, John Milton had composed his brief *Tractate*, condemning the methods of education then in vogue at the universities. But the production, with all the author's learning, offered scarcely a suggestion that was of practical use; though, happily, it has enriched literature by the noblest definition of education that can be conceived: "I call a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both public and private, of peace and war."

John Locke, in his "Thoughts Concerning Education," gave much excellent advice that some of our colonial ancestors might well have thanked him for. About a century later, Pestalozzi advanced a plausible theory or two that brought him numerous followers; while Lancaster, long afterwards, undertook to tell our grandfathers how to manage their children. Of living writers, an essay of Herbert Spencer yields food for profitable reflection.

After the printing of so many books, and after so much discussion, one might imagine that the leading principles of education would be found substantially reduced to a science. Not

at all. Parents and guardians are going ahead timidly now, much as they did in former times; while the average boy or girl remains as much of a puzzle as ever. For a while we try new methods, and then set them aside for others. They in turn have to give place to something else that allures with a promise. Still, out from all this partial success and failure there has come a residuum not without value. The school-master manages somehow to keep a little in advance of his pupil, apparently reconciled to the prospect that, provided he live long enough, he is sure to be looked upon as old-fashioned.

I venture to say that there may be someone present who, by an effort of memory, can recall a phrase once applied to young ladies at a boarding school, or, as it was customary to style it, "seminary." This phrase has dropped out of currency, but when it prevailed people used to say of the young woman that she was engaged in "finishing her education." For myself, I chiefly remember the expression because of a reply attributed to Doctor Wayland, an educator of eminence in his day. It is related, I believe, of the Doctor that at the close of certain graduation exercises a young lady came up to him and exclaimed: "Congratulate me, Doctor Wayland, for I have finished my education." "Have you indeed, my child?" said the good man, smiling, "you are more fortunate than I, for I am just beginning mine."

Now that we have a Naval War College, who would dream of saying of a captain, or of a rear-admiral, that he has "finished his education."

In prescribing a plan in the nature of a curriculum, the College has kept in view one cardinal proposition: Success in war lies in preparation. A simple truth, so simple indeed that you may call it commonplace, if you like. But a maxim may go unchallenged, and yet fail to impress itself upon the hearer at the moment he should be governed by it.

Being ready signifies something beyond the ability to get your ships, guns, and men at the place you want them, the very hour you want them. It means the presence on board of a master mind, that knows how to use this force to the highest advantage, the one man who can get out of it the

greatest power wherewith to defeat and crush the enemy. A master mind does not find its way to supreme command haphazard. Training and hard thinking bring it about. To have such a captain close at hand—this is preparation; this is what it is to be ready.

Only let us be prepared, the world takes notice, and here we get one of the very few conditions upon which a government can rely for conserving peace.

The Navy, a body of highly trained officers, is, it can not too earnestly be declared, sincere in hoping that a state of peace may long continue. It is doubtful if the service contains a single individual of the right spirit who does not stand ready to approve of any well-considered plan which promises to render the possibility of war more and more remote.

You who enter upon the course now opening do so animated by a desire for peace. True, you but obey a natural instinct when you seek to perfect yourselves in the lesson of being ready. It is the first duty you owe to your profession and to the country. Still, you would have it understood that the moving impulse is, that our naval strength be kept in such a state of instant efficiency that no power will hastily provoke war with the United States.

The American people cherish good will toward all other powers, and value a like good will in return. But we perfectly comprehend of what vital moment it is that every other power be impressed at all times with a wholesome dread of having the United States for an enemy. To this end, peace-loving as we are, we have announced it to be our settled policy to maintain a powerfully equipped Navy.

The people mean that in ships and guns the United States shall hold its rightful position. They never will tolerate that our seagoing force fall into an inferior rank among the navies of the world. The largest measure of safety, they firmly believe, rests with that country whose naval authorities can put the better brain upon the bridge.

Holding this high purpose in view, you assemble here that you may engage in the task of educating yourselves; for this

is a college without professor or text-book. All are students. You are to learn something of naval tactics and naval strategy. You will listen to lectures upon naval history, upon international law, and like topics; some of you will prepare and read papers dealing with naval campaigns; you will point out and discuss the causes of success or failure attending naval operations of our own and of other powers.

But the unique feature of the course is what is known as "the war game." Here one finds out empirically into what sort of a situation he is likely to be precipitated in the event that war shall suddenly come upon us. It sets a man to thinking what he had better do about it. When an officer goes away at the end of the course he carries with him a new stock of ideas. Later, upon taking command of a ship, there would seem to be no reason why he may not improve the opportunity to impart some of these ideas to junior officers. In this way the influence of the Naval War College may be exerted in numerous directions.

The sinking of Cervera's fleet was not the execution of a plan suddenly inspired. On the contrary, that memorable July forenoon saw wrought out that which, in its beginning at least, was rehearsed, so to speak, in these very halls. An incident that occurred not long after the close of the war serves to illustrate my meaning. Rear Admiral Sampson happening to be here, saw suspended on the wall a large chart of the Cuban coast. It bore certain marks that denoted the movements of war vessels. The Admiral took it to be a chart that had recently been prepared for the purpose of illustrating certain features of the Spanish war. It turned out, as a matter of fact, that he was looking at a working model that had been put to use two years before the war in the study of an imaginary campaign against Spain.

So, too, the contingency of scouting in the West Indian waters during supposed hostilities with Spain had not been neglected. For the purpose two rooms were occupied. An officer in each room represented a contending force. Each started with a like knowledge of the number, character, and the assumed disposition of the ships of the other. Each did

the best he could to fix the whereabouts of his opponent. On a signal work was stopped and the officers compared results. It is told of one accomplished commander whose ship did invaluable service as a scout on the Cuban coast, that while thus engaged he found the work strangely familiar, and said of it: "Why, it seems as though I am sure later on to hear Taylor's bell."

Another illustration of the benefits of the instruction here will, I think, interest you. You will recall the fact that during the Spanish war Rear Admiral Remey served on board the *Lancaster*, a station ship at Key West. The Admiral was the center of communication between the Navy Department and our fleet in the West Indies. How well he performed that duty you need not be told. An officer of Admiral Remey's staff is quoted as having said of the work in the Admiral's office, that it "was exactly like the work during one of the War College war games; and that no study could have better fitted one for the real thing."

Were nothing else to be gained from a season spent at the College, the participant in the game of war grows accustomed to approach a problem in maneuvers or strategy with some degree of confidence. He gains here, as he could nowhere else gain, a familiarity with many of the conditions of actual conflict. In other words, an emergency does not overwhelm him with surprise. More than this, the experience affords him an insight into what nine times out of ten the enemy is likely to do.

We may go a step farther and say that it is among the possibilities that some daring mind, kindled here with ambition to surpass his fellows, may one day conceive of an original idea in naval tactics, the realization of which will give to his country a tremendous advantage.

The United States in enlarging its borders and taking to itself foreign possessions has indeed assumed a grave responsibility. To the Navy is largely due their acquisition. Upon the people of these distant islands we are conferring the blessings of good government. For their protection and welfare

we shall continue to look, in a large measure, to the Navy. Nor shall we be disappointed.

Never before in time of peace have there been held out to officers of the United States Navy opportunities so inviting to do good and lasting service to their country.

Let the standard of the Naval War College be maintained. Then, when war comes, and the people turn to their Navy, it will be with perfect confidence that its deeds shall deserve well of the Republic.