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To be sure, at times the proper liveliness degenerates into a sort of perfunctory chirpiness; but on the whole the book is truly agreeable reading. Moreover, the scholarship is adequate and the lavishly expressed opinions are generally sound.

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The Mail Bag

An Outraged Octogenarian Veteran Swings a Mighty Club

YOUR (February 10) review of the Mitchell case is the most discreditable thing I have read in The Outlook in ten years. Eighty-three years of open-eyed observation and of life still active—three of them on the field in the Civil War—have not equipped me for solution of the problem you offer. Your writer must have been entertained at the Army and Navy Club and kept in ignorance of the case in question and of the developments in the so-called trial of General Mitchell (for such he will remain to his patriotic fellow-soldiers and countrymen, in spite of General Staff intrigue and accumulated red tape).

If a generation of faithful and brilliant service in the Army of the Republic merits such treatment as yours for a single lapse (supposing that your estimate was as just as it is biased and unfair), no wonder we say that republics are ungrateful. But you are wrong on every point in your article. Your exaltation of discipline, with a big D, is laughable to real soldiers and citizens, who know something greater than discipline—something that discipline must follow and not lead. That something is the National defense, as little served by General Mitchell's assassins as were the tanks by the British Staff, who fought their introduction into trench warfare.

My problem is, Why was the poor old Outlook selected as the goat in this dirty tribute to the West Point and Annapolis snobbery? Why not the "Nation" or the "Mercury" or some of the Bolshevik press? The Outlook, of all the ruck!! The Outlook—once a Roosevelt supporter, when that wonderful leader was promoting and rewarding, instead of court-martialing, a naval officer for the same offense as Mitchell's. To say nothing of Roosevelt's own part in a like offense when he circulated the embalmed beef round robin in Cuba.

Why do you omit the vital facts that Mitchell had tried for years to get the matter before the country through the proper channels and that, as the mis-called "trial" itself developed, his reports were suppressed by the General Staff?

To observers on the ground here and outside the military circle Mr. Coolidge's snap action in this matter is his worst mistake since the appointment of the Secretaries of War and Navy, by whom these scandals are fostered, and he will pay for it dearly.

The General Staff, half of whom have

been denounced in the testimony of the highest of our military authorities (now safely on the retired list) as unworthy slackers—this General Staff may yet prove to be Mr. Coolidge's Ballinger.

May I suggest that your representative avoid the Army and Navy Club on his next visit? S. J. MACFARREN.

Once First Lieutenant, I Company, 3-5 Pennsylvania Cavalry, Meade's Headquarters, Appomattox campaign.

The Test of Genius

YOU seem to encourage comments on the articles in The Outlook. May I suggest that there are two sides to the arguments presented by Mrs. Cartland in her "Motherhood in a Democracy," in the number for January 27?

She adduces as an argument for large families the number of geniuses who have come from such families and who were among the latest born. In reading the instances she cites there came at once to my mind the names of John Singer Sargent, the eldest of three; Percy Bysshe Shelley, the eldest of four; Charlotte Brontë, the eldest of three, each one a genius; Abraham Lincoln, the second of three; Edgar Allan Poe, an only child; and George Gordon, Lord Byron, an only child. The number of children evidently has nothing to do with genius, it appears, and that is all we know about it, though when human heredity shall be deemed of as much importance as the heredity of race horses and prize cattle we shall doubtless learn more of its genesis and development.

In a family of twelve there is naturally more chance of a brilliant child than in one of three, but there is the same increased chance of sub-normality. Mrs. Cartland gives several instances of large families of various nationalities in which there were about equal numbers of inferior and superior children, and she claims that the quality improved through the quantity. I can give an equal number of instances where the quality of the children steadily deteriorated, owing to the mother's loss of vitality and strength through excessive maternity.

I happened to be in Los Angeles lately when the papers were giving much publicity to a "patriotic" citizen and his wife who had added twenty-four children to the city's population. I gathered from the reports that these truly patriotic citizens were sub-normal, that all their children were more or less mentally deficient, and that they lived in a hovel in ignorance, filth, and squalor. Had one of the twenty-four been su-

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