

CONDENSED CLASSICS

THE AWAKENING OF HELENA RICHIE

By MRS. MARGARET DELAND

Contribution by Mrs. Sara Ware Bassett



Margaret Deland was born at Allentown, Pennsylvania, Feb. 23, 1837. When only 10 she went to New York to study drawing and design and later taught there. In 1858 she married Lorin Deland, famous as a sometime football strategist against the enemies of Harvard.

In 1868 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 1904, including "Old Chester Tales" in 1884, in which she made known 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 dominating 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 engagement; 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 self-indulgent 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, it 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 loyalty 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 deflected 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 racked 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 acquiesce 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 retribution 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 departs 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:

"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 fitness."

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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CONDENSED CLASSICS

BEN HUR: A TALE OF THE CHRIST

By LEW WALLACE

Contribution by Prof. William Fenech Here



Lew Wallace, generally known by the shorter name Lew, was born in 1827 at Brooksville, Indiana, and perhaps was, quite unconsciously, potent in spreading the idea, to some, that in that state is located the literary center of this country. He died in 1906.

Like the students of today in the great struggle, he left his books for the Mexican war. He served again in the Civil War and rose to be major-general in the volunteer army. As after the Mexican episode, he returned again to the law; he was Governor of Utah from 1878 to 1881, and minister to Turkey from 1881 to 1885, when as a good diplomat he won the respect of the late unimpaired Abdul-Hamid and could really put through business with that obstinately dilatory tyrant.

He is known by his "three books," "The Fair God" (1873), "Ben-Hur" (1880), and "The Prince of India" (1882). The first is a very clever reconstruction of the story of the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards. The reader feels a great sympathy with the highly developed natives who fell helpless before the superior arms of the invaders. The story, however, is in no means to be put in the same class with "Ben-Hur." The skill, the knowledge, the reverence with which the story of Christ is told (largely through the lives of others) have made "Ben-Hur" one of the books to take a serious hold on the public, both as book and on the stage, where the famous chariot race has won a classic place.

"THE workmen put their hands to the cross and carried it, burden and all, to the place of planting. At a word, they dropped the tree into the hole; and the body of the Nazarene also dropped heavily, and hung by the bleeding hands. Still no cry of pain—only the exclamation divined of all recorded exclamations: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

"The cross, reared now above all other objects, and standing singly out against the sky, was greeted with a burst of delight; and all who could see and read the writing upon the board over the Nazarene's head made haste to decipher it. Soon as read, the legend was adopted by them and commemorated, and presently the whole mighty concourse was ringing the jubilation from side to side, and repeating it with laughter and groans:

"King of the Jews! Hail king of the Jews!"

"The sun was rising rapidly to noon; the hills bared their brown breasts lovingly to it; the more distant mountains rejoiced in the purple with which it so regally dressed them. By the city the temples, palaces, towers, pinnacles, and all points of beauty and prominence seemed to lift themselves into the unrivaled brilliance, as if they knew the pride they were giving the many who from time to time turned to look at them. Suddenly a dimness began to fill the sky and cover the earth—at first no more than a scarce perceptible fading of the day, a twilight out of time; an evening gliding in upon the splendors of noon. But it deepened, and directly drew attention; whereat the noise of the shouting and laughter fell off, and men, doubting their senses, gazed at each other curiously; then they looked to the sun again; then at the mountains, getting farther away; at the sky and the near landscape, sinking in shadow; at the hill upon which the tragedy was enacting; and from all these they gazed at each other again, and turned pale and held their peace."

"It is only a mist or passing cloud," Simonides said soothingly to Esther, who was alarmed. "It will brighten presently."

"Ben-Hur did not think so. "It is not a mist or a cloud," he said. "The spirits who live in the air—the prophets and saints—are at work in mercy to themselves and nature. I say to you, oh, Simonides, truly as God lives, he who hangs yonder is the Son of God!"

"And leaving Simonides lost in wonder at such a speech from him went where Balthazar was kneeling nearby, and laid his hand upon the good man's shoulder.

"Oh, wise Egyptian, hearken! Thou alone wert right—the Nazarene is indeed the Son of God."

"Balthazar drew him down to him and replied, freely, 'I saw him a child in the manger where he was first laid; it is not strange that I knew him sooner than thou; but oh that I should live to see this day! Would that I had died with my brethren! Happy Messiah! Happy Gaspar!"

"Comfort thee!" said Ben-Hur. "Doubtless they too are here." Within the frame of the story of Christ is told the tale of Ben-Hur, beginning with the appearance of the three wise men, Balthazar, Melchior and Gaspar, and ending with the sublime tragedy on Golgotha. From the days of the scenes at the manger

until the culmination of the great story, the figure of Christ appears but once, and then for a moment, but over all that happens in the intervening years hovers the gentle spirit; thrilling as the episodes are in themselves, strongly as the characters are portrayed, they are but a preparation for what is to follow, a mere worldly setting for him who was too great for all save a few to understand at that time.

Some twenty-one years after the scenes at the manger, a young Jew, Ben-Hur, a prince of Jerusalem, rich, happy, ambitious, was standing by a parapet of his palace, watching the progress of Valerius Gratus, imperial governor of Judea. As the Roman passed beneath the wall amid the jeers and insults of the Jews the young prince leaned far out to see the new governor; a file was displaced and, as bitter fate would have it, fell full upon the governor. The accident was not fatal; but it was an opportunity for exemplary justice, especially as the estates of the Jew were very desirable to the governor and his friend Messala, hitherto almost brother to Ben-Hur though the latter had been. The unhappy Jew was sent as a rower to the galleys, where the limit of life was at most but a year. His mother and sister were doomed to the fate of the lepers. The only act of kindness Ben-Hur could remember during the years that followed was on the day he was dragged to the galleys. "The hand laid kindly upon his shoulder awoke the unfortunate man, and looking up, he saw a face he never forgot—the face of a boy about his own age, shaded by locks of yellowish bright chestnut hair; a face lighted by dark blue eyes, at the time so soft, so appealing, so full of love and holy purpose, that they had all the power of command and will." That was in Nazareth.

How Ben-Hur in time became a rower on the flagship of Atrius, dunt-vir and admiral, how the flagship was destroyed in a great sea fight, how Ben-Hur rescued the admiral, became his adopted son and heir, learned at Rome the manner of Roman war and Roman sports, returned to the East a Roman officer in the train of a consul setting forth on a great campaign against the Parthians; how he discovered that his father's old steward Simonides had succeeded in saving from confiscation the vast intangible wealth of the Hurs and had multiplied it many times; till the young Roman-Jew was the richest private citizen in the world; the discovery that Messala was entered for the highest stake in the great sporting event of the orient; how Ben-Hur won the affection of Ilderim, the Arab sheik, who had entered his steeds of the desert for the great event—all this leads up to the dramatic encounter of the famous chariot race. The author drew his description of the race from one written over twenty-three hundred years ago by the tragic poet Sophocles. It is one of the curiosities of literature that the great scene, through the pages of Lew Wallace's novel, has become as famous on our stage as it was so long ago on that of Greece.

By his victory in the arena Ben-Hur exacted ancient Jewish justice on his hated adversary, who was crushed in body and impoverished in fortune, he had wagered on his success all the wealth he had stolen from his former friend. The victor almost fell prey, however, to the vampire daughter of Egypt who was rival for his love with the gentle Jewish Esther. But henceforth his thoughts were concentrated on him who was attracting all eyes. Was he Messiah or king? Ben-Hur, in his hatred of Rome, in his pride of race, dreamed only of a king of this world, who should right ancient wrongs and exalt his chosen people. And so he threw himself with all his force, with all his wealth, with all the knowledge gained at Rome, into making secure and strong the way of the king whom he would follow. But it was for one supreme in things spiritual rather than material that the way was being made ready, and Ben-Hur's mother, rescued with her daughter from her long imprisonment by a chance change of jailers, but hopeless lepers both, saw the truth sooner than her son.

"Oh Master, Master!" she cried as he passed upon the road, "Thou seest our need; thou must make us clean. Have mercy upon us—mercy!"

"Belovest thou I am able to do this?" he asked.

"Thou art he of whom the prophets spoke—thou art the Messiah!" she replied. His eyes grew radiant, his manner confident.

"Woman," he said, "great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

And so, in the end, Ben-Hur recognized what Balthazar had known from the beginning. "Oh wise Egyptian, hearken! Thou alone wert right—the Nazarene is indeed the son of God!"

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An Adventure. Miss Yellowleaf—A man I never saw before spoke to me today on the street car. Miss Punchbowl—You don't tell me? What did he say? Miss Yellowleaf—He told me to step lively, please.

Naturally. "I hear the young woman designer in Madame Paree's dressmaking establishment is a very estimable person."

"She has to be. It is her business to lead a pattern life."

COUNTY AGENTS AID "COOP" CONCERNS

Cooperative farmers' associations in the Northern and Western States, whose organization was promoted by county agents, last year effected a saving to the members of \$5,434,000, according to reports made to the States Relations Service, United States Department of Agriculture. The governing principle in all activities on the part of county agents sharing in cooperative movements has been not to act as the direct business agent of the farmer or an organized group, but to assist farmers in determining what form of local

organization is desirable and to secure expert assistance, when available, in organization methods. The county agent also helps guard the community against over-organization and wherever practicable advocates the use of existing agencies. The cooperative associations which the county agents have helped form have had to do both with production and distribution and include cooperative grain elevators, creameries, and livestock selling associations.

Few people ever reach the goal of their ambition. There is always some thing higher that they want.

TRY FEEDING HER



20,000 Acres. SAGEBRUSH LANDS with water rights for sale on Blitzen River in tracts of 80-Acres or more. Reasonable prices--one-fifth cash balance easy terms, six per cent interest. Eastern Oregon Live Stock CRANE Company OREGON

RANGE HORSE MARKET. Campbell & Reid & Western Sales Stables Co. St. Louis National Stock Yards, Ill. 25,128 Head Sold in 1919. To Ranchmen who have Range Horses and Mules to ship, we wish to say that our market will offer the best outlet this season of any market in the country. Our facilities for handling Range Horses are the best and most extensive to be found anywhere. The very large number sold by us last year is conclusive evidence that we have the buyers. Ship us any kind, but be careful and not ship anything but ones that are fat. MR. I. C. GALLUP, of Omaha, Nebraska, is now connected with this company, he having realized that our market offers the best opportunities in the United States for range business and that it was to his interest and that of his shippers to transfer his business here. Below are the dates of our Special Sales for the coming season. Consign your horses and mules to Campbell & Reid & Western Sales Stables Co. Arrange your shipment to start 12 days before advertised auction. 4th Sale, Tuesday, Aug. 10 7th Sale, Tuesday, Sept. 21 5th Sale, Tuesday, Aug. 24 8th Sale, Tuesday, Oct. 5 6th Sale, Tuesday, Sept. 7 9th Sale, Tuesday, Oct. 19 Write or wire for any special information. I. C. Gallup, Nampa, Idaho. Western Representative for Campbell & Reid