

# CADET LIFE AT WEST POINT

By EDWARD B. CLARK  
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WASHINGTON.—Congress almost every year has before it the case of some West Point cadet who allowed his animal spirits to get the better of him, and who under the impulse of the moment committed some act of hazing or of another kind of a discipline breach, and therefore suffered dismissal. The life at West Point is a hard one, and each successive board of visitors is likely to make some suggestion to make the cadet's condition just a little more irksome. Just now there is speculation on the subject of what the official visitors of the year of grace, 1909, will recommend as an addition to the academy's code of discipline.

Sometime ago a clergyman of the Church of England visited West Point. He wished to get full knowledge of the drill, the system of study and the disciplinary methods of the institution, and so he rose at reveille and made the cadet day his own, until taps had sent the strapping soldiers to their blankets. The clergyman, after seeing lights out, went to the off-



well, that any cadet who asks another to perform any menial work for him shall be dismissed from the service. The first classman knew too much to ask his visitor outright to do anything of the kind, but here is the way which veracious academy history says that he went at it:

"I presume, Mr. Grant, that you have lived on a farm, and such being the case you undoubtedly have had rare opportunities to note the effect of the sun's rays on certain objects. Now, if you had left in the sun a water bucket that was innocent of the retention of a single drop of the fluid, what do you think, sir, would have been the particular effect of the sun upon that particular water bucket?"

"I think," said Cadet Grant, "that it would get warped and leaky."

"Very well, Mr. Grant; you show erudition beyond your years. Now if you will look at my water bucket you will see that it is as dry as a chip. By the further exercise of your knowledge and observation, Mr. Grant, can you tell me by what means I may prevent the warping and leaking of my bucket?"

"Have it filled," said Grant.

"Very good, again, Mr. Grant; but pray note what you said: 'have it filled,' not 'fill it.' That necessarily means, Mr. Grant, that some one must fill it for me. You have shown so much acumen that I fear to violate the terms of your prescription either in letter or in spirit, which I should do if I presumed to carry the bucket to the water tank myself."

Grant filled the bucket.

A member of the West Point class of 1870, now an officer of high rank in active service, tells this story about the first day in plebe camp of Frederick Dent Grant, son of Ulysses.

An upper classman, bent on nothing else than having some fun with the son of the famous general, asked him on his advent into camp while he was



PHYSICAL DRILL UNDER ARMS

cers' mess and there in response to a question from the superintendent of the academy, he summarized his opinion of the day's duties of the cadets by paraphrasing the remark of the Frenchman on one of the Crimean battlefields: "It's magnificent, but it's a beastly grind."

Lord Roberts not long ago declared that the United States school on the Hudson is the greatest military institution in the world. The hero of Kandahar doubtless had made some study of the records and of averages, for history shows that in the number of soldiers entitled to be called great, West Point has turned out more than all the military schools of the continent combined.

Obedience and discipline are the foundation stones of the success of a soldier, according to all the authorities who judge solely by results obtained. Disobedience of orders means dismissal from the military academy. Disobedience of direct orders is a thing practically unknown at the school. Infractions of regulations may in a sense be termed disobedience, but they are never so regarded in any of the world's schools. Boy nature would needs be remade if any institution were to be kept to the letter of the law.

Discipline at West Point is rigid to severity. As far as disciplinary methods are concerned the school never changes. It is the same to-day as it was in the days of Grant and Lee.

Take a day at the academy and compare its duties with those of any other institution, no matter of what country, and it will be seen that in comparison to the cadets' labor the work of students at other schools is but play. During certain months of the year there is little play at West Point. Drill in the open air gives the requisite exercise to keep the physique right, and for recreation apparently there is no need.

The routine has changed a little with the passing years, but in a general way the day's program at the academy is like this:

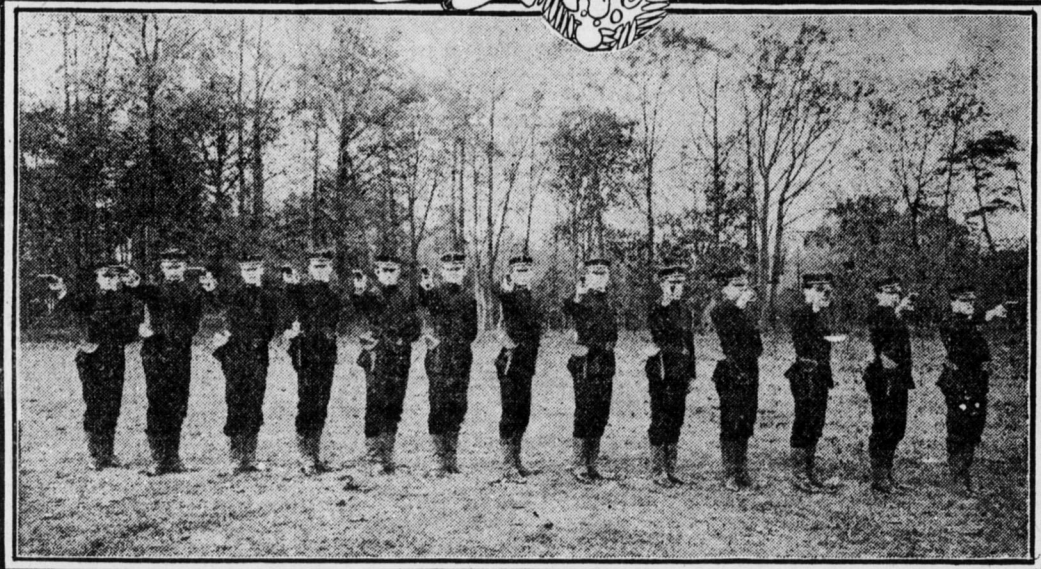
Reveille at 6 o'clock; roll call at 6:20; breakfast at 6:25; guard mount at 7:15; recitations and study hours from 8 until 1; dinner, 1 until 1:40; recitations and study from 2 until 4; drill from 4 until 5:20; parade at 5:30; supper at 6; study from 7 until 9:30; tattoo, then taps and sleep.

There are no recitations at the United States military academy on Saturday afternoons, and the cadets are given what is called "release from quarters," with permission to visit one another in barracks or to roam about the reservation, taking good care, under pain of dismissal, to keep from going off limits.

Release from quarters never comes for some cadets. The breaking of some small rule means confinement to quarters or the walking of extra guard tours. The boy who unwittingly puts on a pair of white trousers having an iron rust stain on them, and wears them at drill or at dress parade, will know no release from quarters for days.

Should a speck of rust be found on his rifle at Sunday morning inspection, he will shoulder that rifle and walk two or more hours up and down the area of barracks as a "sentinel without charge," while his more fortunate comrades are experiencing the ecstasy which comes from permission to ramble about the parade ground and to view the hotel and other delights of civilization from a distance.

Upon occasion the cadets are given permission to call upon friends at the little hotel on the reservation. If, however, a boy commits the enormous offense of leaving the main parlor of the hotel to visit his father or mother in another room, and the act should be discovered, he will never see the inside of that hotel again until many weeks have rolled by and he has expiated his crime by many extra tours of guard duty in the broiling sun or zero weather or a highland winter.



PISTOL DRILL BY CADETS

In an elder day at the academy, and it may be so to-day, the mail bag into which the cadets dropped their letters was hung with wide distended mouth just inside the door of the guardhouse. Until the first call for breakfast, the guardhouse was "off limits." The instant the drums rolled the cadets could enter the building and drop their letters. One morning a cadet stood without the door, holding his letter in his hands. The drummer's sticks were poised tremblingly, waiting to fall for the pounding out of the first call for breakfast.

The cadet saw the poised sticks, entered the guardhouse and dropped his letter just as the first note of the call sounded. He had passed through the doorway just one-sixteenth of a second too soon. An officer saw him mail his letter and a report of "off limits" went in which caused the unfortunate letter mailer to perform extra guard duty for 16 long hours—not consecutive hours, however.

On the first hook on the wall of his alcove the cadet must hang one specific article of clothing; on the second hook another article, and so on. If, perchance, the youth hangs his dresscoat on the nail sacred to the overcoat, he can bid farewell to release from quarters for two Saturdays at least, and if, perchance, the shell jacket hangs on the hook given over to trousers, he may add three more days of confinement to those which have accrued from the crime of the misplaced overcoat.

The methodical cadet runs a yardstick along the toes of the extra shoes which under regulation, must be placed in regular order beneath the foot of his bed. If the toe of one shoe protrudes half an inch beyond the toe of its mate, the cadet gets one demerit mark. If more than one pair of shoes shows symptoms of irregularity in the matter of toeing the scratch, the cadet will receive a sufficient number of demerit marks to enable him to realize thoroughly the beauties of a right line as applied to something besides geometry.

It is "a beastly grind," as the English clergyman said, but it is a grind that has its uses, and the proof of it is written in all the records of the service.

Hazing is in a sense an hereditary habit. The army officers who have been asked in the years that are past, and who are being asked to-day to root out the practice of "devil" the plebe at West Point, did not, and have not all of them their hearts in the work, for were they not hazed themselves, and were they not in turn hazers? Nine out of ten of the hazed will tell you to-day that they profited by the experience.

When Gen. Ulysses Simpson Grant entered plebe camp, a first classman who noticed the boy's strong build intimated to him that it would be a pleasure to have him call immediately at the senior's tent. Grant went. There is a rule at West Point, which was a rule in Grant's day as

still wearing the clothes of civil life: "Which do you think is the greatest man, Gen. George Washington or Gen. Ulysses S. Grant?"

Fred's answer, blunt and quick, was: "Washington may have been the greater man, but my father was the greater soldier."

"Mr. Grant," said the upper classman, "to compare your father to George Washington in any sense, is like unto the comparing of a plucked hen to the American eagle."

Then there followed a fight, but it was stopped almost instantly by some first classmen because the place was too public.

Gen. John M. Schofield was an artillery officer. The army has it that Schofield had a distaste for the infantry branch because of an experience which he underwent during his first week as a plebe at the military academy.

Some yearlings chased Schofield up a ladder from the cock loft of barracks to the roof. The future hero of Franklin was clad only in a night shirt. When the roof was reached the cadets gave Schofield a rifle, marked out a sentinel's beat on the tin roof and started the future artilleryman on his walk back and forth with the musket on his shoulder. They kept him at it with few intermissions, from taps to reveille.

Edgar Allan Poe was a cadet at West Point only for a short time. Army tradition holds nothing concerning the hazing of Poe. The academy, however, is the custodian of one of Poe's first poems, which is nothing short of a striking example of the boy's wit.

While Poe was at the academy Lieut. Joseph Lock was stationed there as a tactical officer. Lock was the strictest kind of a disciplinarian, and he was constantly reporting Poe for offenses, reports which brought as their natural consequence some heavy punishments. Poe had his revenge in a poem which the curious may find in a volume called "Tic Tacs," which was published years ago by the cadets:

John Locke was a great name,  
Joe Lock is a greater. In short,  
The former is well known to fame,  
The latter well known to report.

There is, or was, one form of hazing at West Point which has in it the essence of cruelty. This consists in making a plebe read with appropriate gestures and the proper inflections, all the nice things which the newspapers of his home town printed about him when the announcement of his appointment to a cadetship was made. Imagine, if you will, the feelings of a green youngster, as he stands upon a barrel, reading to an assemblage of possibly 50 yearlings, the editorial statement of the local papers, that Henry Smith "doubtless will be made a corporal as soon as the eyes of the superintendent of the military academy fall upon his tall and manly figure. Henry has in him the making of a great soldier. We shall hear of his deeds on the field of battle as a leader of his country's hosts in case dread war shall come."

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