

# Dick Prescott's First Year at West Point

H. Irving Hancock

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AT WEST POINT\*\*\*

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Dick Prescott's First Year at West Point  
Or Two Chums in the Cadet Gray

By H. Irving Hancock

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DICK PRESCOTT'S FIRST YEAR AT WEST POINT

CHAPTER I

"TWO TINY SPECKS OF NOTHING"

"How do you feel, Dick! As spruce as you did an hour ago!"

Candidate Greg Holmes put the question with a half-nervous laugh. He spoke in a whisper, too, as if to keep his agitation from reaching the notice of any of the score or more of other young men in the room of Mr. Ward, the aged notary at West Point.

"I'll be glad when I see some daylight through the proceedings," Dick Prescott whispered in answer.

"I'm glad they allow us to talk here in undertones," pursued Greg.

"If we weren't allowed to do so, some of us would go suddenly crazy, utter a whoop and spring through one of the windows," grinned Dick.

For the tenth time he thrust his hands into his pockets--then as quickly drew them out again.

All of the young men now gathered in the room were candidates for cadetships at West Point; candidates who had been appointed by the Congressmen or Senators of their home districts or states, and who must now pass satisfactory physical and mental examinations, after which they would be enrolled as cadets in the United States Military Academy. Those of the cadets who thus passed the preliminary examinations, and who maintained good health and good standing in their classes during the following four years and three months would then be graduated from the Military Academy and forthwith be appointed second lieutenants in the Regular Army of the United States.

Hived in this room, awaiting their turn, a spirit of awe had gripped all these nervous young men.

Some of them dreaded a failure in the coming bodily tests before

the keen-eyed, impartial surgeons of the United States Army.

Probably half of the boys in the room feared that they would fail in the academic examinations.

Boys? Some of the candidates didn't look the part. They had the physiques and general appearance, many of them, of men; for a candidate may be anywhere between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two years of age.

From all over the country they came. When the new, or plebe class should finally be assembled and put to work, that class would represent practically every state in the Union.

Readers of a former series of books, "THE HIGH SCHOOL BOYS SERIES," will not need to again be introduced to Dick Prescott and Greg Holmes. Such readers will well remember these two manly young Americans as members of that famous sextette, "Dick & Co.," famous in the annals of the good old Gridley High School.

Nor will such readers need to be told how Dick won, over the heads of forty competitors, the nomination of Congressman Spokes, the boy carrying all before him in a rigid competitive examination at the Gridley High School. The same readers will remember how Greg Holmes secured his own nomination from Senator Frayne. This was all related in the closing volume of the High School Series, "THE HIGH SCHOOL CAPTAIN OF THE TEAM."

Our former readers will also recall that Dave Darrin and Dan Daizell "ran away" with the nominations for cadetships at Annapolis, while Tom Reade and Harry Hazelton, the last of famous Dick & Co., went West seeking their careers as young engineers.

To be a cadet at West Point, and then to blossom out as an officer in the Regular Army--this had long been Dick's fondest hope. Greg, too, had caught the Army fever, and now suffered from it as severely as Dick Prescott himself.

And now, at what seemed like the critical moment, this tedious waiting was almost maddening.

Before Mr. Ward's desk stood a lonely looking young man, red faced and fidgeting as though he were going through a fearful ordeal.

"What on earth can they be doing to that fellow?" wondered Greg, in a barely audible undertone. "That fine-looking old gentleman can't be hazing a cadet?"

"No; but I wonder what the ordeal is," Dick whispered back. "I haven't seen a fellow look comfortable through it yet."

"Mr. Prescott!"

Dick started to his feet so suddenly that his right almost tripped over his left.

One of the other candidates near by tittered. That caused Dick's face to turn redder than ever.

Mr. Ward, however, looked up at the boy with a kindly smile.

"State your full name, Mr. Prescott."

Dick did so.

"When and where born? Give date and place."

By this time Dick was beginning to find his voice. The excess of color began to recede from his face. He had already, almost unconsciously, passed over the sealed envelope which he had received from the adjutant in a room on the same floor at headquarters.

Prescott was quickly breathing at his ease. He discovered that the entire ordeal consisted of giving his family history, with dates.

Then he stepped back. Another name was called.

"Don't let that rattle you a bit, Greg," whispered Dick, when he had dropped back into his seat beside his chum. "Mr. Ward doesn't do anything but take your pedigree."

"Mr. Holmes!"

Greg got up with nearly all of his self-possession about him. He was just returning to sit by his chum when the nattiest, sprucest-looking soldier imaginable, wearing the olive-drab fatigue uniform of the Army and overcoat to match, stepped into the room.

"The surgeons have directed me to bring down all the candidates who are through here," the orderly announced. "Follow me to the sidewalk, where you will fall in loosely, by twos, and follow me to the cadet hospital."

Among those of the candidates who had finished giving their pedigrees there was a rush that would put a spectator in mind almost of a football scrimmage. It represented merely the feverish anxiety of these young men to get through with the next stage in their awe-filled day.

"There are some marching down with us who won't be marching with us to the next place, I am afraid," whispered Holmes.

"I imagine so," whispered Dick, with a nod.

"Say," murmured Greg, his cheek suddenly blanching, "just how much chest expansion do the surgeons demand in the case of a fellow standing five-seven in his stocking feet?"

There was a note almost of panic in Greg's voice.

"Cheer up, Greg!" urged Dick, whose own lace was again flushing. "You've got chest expansion enough for a heavy-weight prize fighter."

"You must have the same, then. Is that so?" demanded Holmes.  
"What makes your face so red?"

"Just wondering," admitted Prescott, in a low voice, "whether I ever contracted any symptoms of football-player's heart."

"Bosh!" muttered Greg. "I never heard of any such disease."

"I never did either," Dick fidgeted. "But in the hour I've been at West Point I've concluded that people here know a heap of things that aren't even guessed at in the outside world."

"O-o-o-h! Say! Look!" murmured Greg in deep awe and admiring wonder. "They must be cadets!"

Eight young men in gray, marshaled by a section marcher, went swinging up the road with a marching rhythm so perfect that it was like music.

Each of these young men was clad in flawless gray, with black stripes and facings. Each young man wore his cadet fatigue cap at an exact angle. The long, caped gray overcoats looked as though they had been melted to the forms of their wearers.

No wonder Greg Holmes gave that involuntary gasp. He was having his first view of a small squad of real cadets.

Some of the candidates on the other sidewalk so far forgot themselves as to halt and all but stare at the natty young marching men opposite.

Then, all in an instant, the section marcher and his section had gone by.

"Don't anyone halt, please," cautioned the soldier orderly. "Keep your places in the line, young gentlemen, and keep moving right along."

So they reached the cadet hospital. The orderly marched them into a spacious, almost bare room on the ground floor and announced:

"I will report to the surgeon. Young gentlemen, wait until you are called."

"I wish I could carry myself and step the way that fellow does," whispered Dick, his admiring gaze following the retreating orderly.

"Well, that's what we've come here to learn," replied Greg. "That is, if we get by the doctors--and then the beastly academic grind."

Now, to keep his mind occupied, Dick Prescott fell to observing, covertly, the other candidates.

These were of all sorts and sizes. They represented all parts of the United States and every walk in social life. Out of the group were two or three who, judging by their clothing, might have been sons of washerwomen. There were other youngsters whose general appearance and bearing seemed to proclaim that they came from

homes of wealth. But the majority of the young men appeared to have come from the same walk in life as did Dick and Greg.

Our two young friends were by no means the most smartly nor the most correctly attired young men there. On their way to New York Prescott and Holmes had discovered, by taking mental notes of the other male passengers on the train, that these two Gridley boys had missed something from the most correct styles then prevailing in the larger cities.

Dick and Greg were both solidly and substantially attired, yet there was an indefinable something about them which proclaimed them to be young men from one of the smaller cities of the United States.

"I can see those medical big-wigs pawing me over now," shivered Greg. "I suppose, at a place as wonderful and as learned as West Point, the doctors are all fussy old men, with their gold-rimmed spectacles and shiny frock coats."

"Wait and see," advised Dick, trying to get a grip on himself to control his nervousness.

Another door opened, to admit a dandified and very smart-looking young officer, apparently about twenty-five years of age.

"You're all ready, young gentlemen?" he asked smilingly.

"We're waiting for the doctor," replied Greg, who was close to the door by which the officer had entered.

"I am one of the surgeons," replied the young officer pleasantly.

"Gee whiz!" remarked one raw-boned youth, in what was meant to be a confidential whisper, but which rose to a pitch that carried it around the room. "Say, he doesn't look much like our old saw-bones doc down home way!"

The surgeon was followed by a smart-looking soldier of the hospital corps, who started to close the shades of the room.

"You have all been to the treasurer's office and deposited your funds?" asked the young surgeon, turning again. This time his question appeared to be addressed to Dick more particularly than to anyone else.

"Why, no, sir," Prescott replied. "I have all my money in my pocket yet."

"Orderly!" spoke the surgeon to his own man of the hospital corps, who wheeled, brought his heels together and stood at attention. "Bring in that orderly who conducted the young gentlemen here."

"Yes, sir," replied the hospital orderly, wheeling about and vanishing from the room. He was back again in a moment with the soldier who had brought in this batch of candidates without interviewing the treasurer.

"Orderly," spoke the surgeon, "you have overlooked one part of

your instructions. You did not take these candidates to the treasurer's office."

"No, sir."

"Do so now. Then conduct the candidates back here."

"Very good, sir."

Signing to the candidates to rise and follow him outside, the orderly himself led the way.

"Say, that was neatly done. No calling the man down; no bluster," whispered Greg as the candidates again walked along the sidewalk.

"It's the Army way, I take it," murmured Dick.

This time the orderly marched his awkward squad straight to the cadet store and into the treasurer's office.

"O-o-o-h!" groaned Greg in an undertone.

"What's the matter?" demanded Dick in a cautious whisper.

"This delay and killing suspense before we get before the doctors. I'll bet my fever has gone up above one hundred and three degrees!"

"Form in line, and each one of you turn in all his money," directed the treasurer crisply.

Each candidate was required to deposit with the treasurer the sum of one hundred dollars. In the event that the candidate "passed" successfully to enrollment in the cadet corps, then this money was to be applied to the purchase of things necessary for the new cadet to have. In case the candidate did not pass he would receive his hundred dollars back again--enough, in almost any case, to take the young man safely back to his home.

The first three men to step before the treasurer each turned in a few dollars in excess of the hundred.

Each was handed the treasurer's receipt for the exact amount that he deposited.

Then came a rather dazzlingly attired young man of at least twenty-one. He had watched the others and now, with an air of some importance, drew out a roll of considerable size. He detached two fifty-dollar bills and handed them to the treasurer, with the query:

"A century covers the deposit, doesn't it?"

Though the treasurer frowned slightly at the slang use of "century," he replied briskly:

"You must deposit all the money you have, Mr. Geroldstone."



"But that doesn't seem like a square deal," protested young Geroldstone. "I'll need some money for personal expenses, some for little dinners, something to spend on the young [Transcriber's note: word missing]"

"You'll need no money here, Mr. Geroldstone. Cadets are allowed no spending money outside of the so-called confectionery allowance, and that is charged to you from your pay."

"But I'm a big candy eater," urged Geroldstone, with a grin.

"No argument, if you please, sir!" rapped the treasurer rather sharply. "Turn over all your money and remember that you are on honor in the matter."

Mr. Geroldstone received a receipt for nine hundred and sixty-two dollars, plus a few small coins. As he turned away he muttered to one of his predecessors:

"Say, ain't that a good deal like a hold up?"

"Remember, young gentlemen, all the money you have," admonished the treasurer, as the line started to move again.

Thus commanded, the candidates went through all their pockets while standing awaiting their own turns.

Dick and Greg had so well calculated their traveling expenses that each turned in about twenty dollars above the required one hundred dollars.

This little transaction completed, the orderly turned and marched them back at once to the hospital.

By this time some of the candidates had sufficiently overcome their nervousness to realize how raw and chilly this first day of March was. All of the candidates wore overcoats, though the outer garments worn by some of the young men, especially those who had journeyed hither from Southern States, were not of a weight to meet the March demands at hilly West Point, which lies exposed to the icy northern blasts down the Hudson River.

It looked as though it might snow at any moment. There was "ice in the air," as Greg Holmes expressed it.

So it was a welcome relief to all of the young candidates to find themselves once more inside the hospital building.

They were taken into the same room. During their absence the hospital corps orderly had distributed blankets, one on each chair.

"Each of you will please strip now," announced the same young medical officer, coming briskly into the room. "Strip as quickly as you can. Each man take a blanket and wrap it around himself while waiting."

Some of the young men looked startled, but all obeyed. In this stripping, and in the varied degrees of orderliness with which the

different stacks of discarded clothing were piled it was rather easy to pick out the young men who had previously undressed in the dressing quarters of schools or colleges where athletics are a big feature.

"If we had a few tom-tom players we'd be ready with a fine imitation of an Indian war dance," muttered one of the candidates, gazing about him at his blanketed companions. There was a laugh, of course. These highly nervous youngsters were ready to laugh at anything just now.

"Is Mr. Geroldstone ready?" asked the hospital orderly, marching into the room.

"I will be, in five minutes or so," replied Geroldstone, slowly pulling his shirt off over his head.

"Mr. Danvers, then," called the orderly, consulting a slip of paper in his right hand.

Candidate Frank Danvers, a good-looking young man, self-contained, slight of build, not very tall, but very black as to hair, stepped forward.

"In here, sir," requested the hospital orderly, holding open the door. After Danvers had gone the other young men held their breath for a few moments--all except Geroldstone, who was still leisurely disrobing.

Back came Danvers after a few moments. Every candidate in the room looked at him inquiringly.

"Yes, gentlemen; I'm very happy to say that I passed," nodded Danvers, as he sprang across the room and began to don his clothes once more.

"Mr. Geroldstone!" called the orderly, and the big candidate went in.

An anxious twenty minutes passed--anxious alike for Geroldstone and for those who still dangled on tenterhooks in the outer room.

At last the candidate under fire came out, a sickly grin on his face. Though the others looked at him curiously, not a word did Geroldstone offer.

"The big fellow has failed; I'll bet," muttered Greg Holmes. "I'm sorry for him, poor fellow."

Still another candidate was now undergoing the ordeal inside. When he came out, nodding contentedly, the summons sounded:

"Mr. Prescott!"

"Brace up, Dick! You're all right," whispered Greg, with an affectionate pat on the shoulder as young Prescott rose, and, wrapping the blanket nervously around him, went through the doorway.

The same young medical officer, Lieutenant Herman, was in the other room. With him was an older medical officer, Captain Goodwin.

"Drop your blanket on that chair," nodded Lieutenant Herman. "Now, step over to the scales."

Dick's weight, stripped, was taken, as well as his height. These points Lieutenant Herman jotted down as Captain Goodwin called them off.

"Now, let me listen to your heart," directed the senior medical officer, picking up a stethoscope from his desk. The heart beat and sounds were examined from several points.

"Come here, Mr. Prescott," directed Captain Goodwin, opening another door and revealing a flight of stairs. "Run up these stairs and back, as fast as you can."

As Dick halted, after that feat, his heart action was again examined, this time by both surgeons. After that his lungs were examined. Then he was directed to lie on a table, while the areas over his other organs were thumped and listened to. Then the candidate was examined for deformities. He was ordered to march around the room, to run, to jump over a low stool, and perform other antics.

Then the two surgeons conferred briefly at the desk.

"You'll do, Mr. Prescott," announced Captain Goodwin.

"Thank you, sir," stammered Dick, the flush of happiness coming to his cheeks.

"You've taken part in school athletics, haven't you?" asked Lieutenant Herman.

"Yes, sir; captain of our football team last fall."

"You look it," nodded Lieutenant Herman pleasantly. "Take your blanket, Mr. Prescott. Orderly, call the next man."

As Dick strode back where he had left the others he heard the orderly call:

"Mr. Holmes."

"Go to it, old man. There's nothing to be afraid of," whispered Dick Prescott.

"They got through with you in mighty quick time," smiled one of the other candidates.

"Did they?" laughed Prescott. "It seemed to me as though the surgeons started yesterday and finished to-morrow."

Mr. Geroldstone had finished dressing and sat by, a sulky look on his face. He wanted to go back to cadet store, get his money and leave West Point instantly. But the orderly had told him he would

have to wait until a report had been made out to the adjutant.

To Dick the minutes dragged until Greg Holmes appeared again. Truth to tell, Greg was much afraid that he had a slight trouble with his heart, and that this difficulty would hinder his passing. Dick, who was aware of his chum's dread, was anxious for Holmes. As soon as he had finished dressing he found himself pacing the floor.

It was quite a while ere Greg came out, but his quiet, happy smile told the story.

"Did they ask you questions about your heart?" asked Prescott in an undertone.

"Yes," admitted Greg, while he dropped his blanket and began hastily pulling on his clothes.

"You told the truth, didn't you?"

"Of course, I did," flushed Greg. "If I hadn't told the truth I wouldn't be fit to be an Army officer. But Captain Goodwin laughed at me."

"Then he didn't find anything much wrong with your heart!"

"He said he guessed I had had some discomfort at times, but that, if I would eat more slowly, and chew my food better, my stomach would get a rest and stop shoving my heart."

"Oh! Is that all that has been ailing you?" smiled Dick.

"According to Captain Goodwin it's enough. He says my trouble started only recently, and that I can be over the last sign of it in three days if I'll take up with decent eating habits. But he has known boys he has had to reject because they had been at bad eating tricks for a longer time. You can bet I'm going to follow the surgeon's advice after this."

Four out of this squad of candidates were rejected by the examining surgeons. Geroldstone remained sulky, with an air of bravado; the other three young men were so downcast that all their companions were heartily sorry for them. The hospital orderly marched back to the adjutant's office those who had been rejected, while another orderly appeared and led those who had passed the surgeons to the cadet barracks.

"This begins to look like the real thing," murmured Dick as they neared the barracks.

Now this group were taken to the room of the cadet officer of the day, Lieutenant Edwards. Beside the cadet lieutenant's desk stood Cadet Corporal Brayton.

To the cadet officer of the day each of the candidates gave his name and home address, which were entered in a book.

"Brayton, take Prescott and Holmes to room number --, will you?" asked Mr. Edwards without looking up.

Dick and Greg followed their conductor outside and into another subdivision of barracks. Mr. Brayton kept on until he had reached the top flight, where he threw open a door.

"Step in here, Mr. Prescott and Mr. Holmes," ordered the cadet corporal stiffly. To the two new arrivals the corporal spoke as though he had conceived an intense dislike for these two boys. Later, Dick and Greg discovered that it was merely the way in which all candidates were treated by the cadet officers.

"You'll draw your bedding and other things presently," said Brayton coldly. "In the meantime you will remain here until you are ordered out. When you hear the order for candidates to turn out, obey without an instant's delay."

With that the corporal was gone, leaving the chums to gaze wonderingly about their new quarters.

Luxury? Not a bit of it. The room was severely plain. At one end was a double alcove, separated by a wall. In each alcove stood a bare-looking iron bedstead. There were two washbowls, two chairs and two desks that looked as though they had served the needs of generations of cadets. There was a window that looked out on the quadrangular area of barracks.

"Well, we're actually here, anyway," breathed Dick, his eyes sparkling. "We're living in cadet barracks, and we're halfway through the ordeal of becoming new cadets at the wonderful old United States Military Academy!"

## CHAPTER II

### THE TYRANNY OF THE CADET CORPORAL

Dick hung up his coat and hat, and Greg did the same, for the heat was turned on and the room wholly comfortable as to temperature.

"I've heard," murmured Greg, "that fellows usually get most woefully homesick at West Point."

"Then they've no business to come here," retorted Prescott, with spirit. "Such tender ones won't make soldiers anyway."

"I suppose we shall be awfully looked down on at first," mused Greg aloud.

"Well, we can stand it," laughed Dick. "If we can't, we can't endure lots more of things that are ahead of us."

"Just now I could endure a good, filling meal," sighed Holmes comically.

"Yes?" laughed Prescott. "Then just press the button and the waiter

will bring us the bill of fare. I understand that candidates are allowed to have their meals served in rooms. Although I believe it's forbidden for any candidate, or cadet, either, to eat his breakfast in bed."

"Quit your 'kidding,'" begged Greg.

"I don't know that the authorities will bother to feed us, anyway, until we've passed and it's known that we are going to stay and be cadets," laughed young Prescott, feeling around his belt-line, for he, too, was hungry.

"Candidates turn out promptly!" rang, from below, a voice full of military command.

Greg was in the middle of a comforting yawn and stretch. He dallied to finish it, but Dick, snatching down his overcoat and hat, was already out on the landing and racing below, while behind him floated the advice:

"Come on, Greg! Get a boost on!"

"Get along there, beasts," commanded a cadet corporal in the lower hallway sternly. "This is no sleeping match!"

Out in the yard several candidates had already run. Some of these young men at home, had been accustomed to being waited on by mothers and sisters. Yet here, in the seemingly freezing and hostile air of the Military Academy, these same young men were fast learning that everything has to be done by one's self, and at steam-engine speed.

"Mr. Danvers, come with me, and I'll place you as right guide," called Cadet Brayton with the air and tone of a budding military martinet.

Candidate Danvers followed meekly. Brayton looked at the lad's stooping shoulders with frigid, utter disapproval.

"Mr. Danvers, take your hands out of your pockets, sir."

"All right," laughed Mr. Danvers, obeying, and trying to laugh nonchalantly. "Anything to please."

"Don't address a superior officer, sir, unless he addresses you in a way to make a reply necessary. And when you do address a Superior officer, or any other cadet or candidate on official business always add 'sir.'"

Danvers nodded, but the nod Cadet Corporal Brayton ignored by turning on his heel and stepping, with a magnificently military air and carriage, over to another luckless candidate.

When ordered, the candidate fell in next to Mr. Danvers. Then the other anxious youngsters fell into line.

"Candidates turn out promptly!" sounded snappily in another part of barracks.

Another lot of newcomers began to tumble downstairs and out of doors with feverish haste, to be confronted by another cadet corporal who awaited them.

"Never mind that other squad!" admonished Cadet Corporal Brayton sharply. "Favor me with your whole attention. Now, then, listen, and do each thing as I tell you. Button your jackets and overcoats all the way down! Stand erect, with your heels together, and your toes pointing out at an angle of sixty degrees. Stand erect. Throw your shoulders back, your chests out and hold your heads up. This is called 'the position of the soldier.' Stand as I do."

Corporal Brayton favored his awkward squad with a profile view of himself, as he took the exact position of a soldier. How the anxious candidates wished they really could stand as this handsome young son of Mars did! To them it seemed impossible ever to acquire such truly military carriage. They did not realize that, between drills, gymnasium work and the setting-up drills, they would, in a few weeks, be hard to distinguish in elegance and perfection from their present instructor.

"Not quite so much like an ostrich, Mr. Prescott!" rasped out Corporal Brayton severely.

Dick flushed painfully, all the more so because he heard one of the other candidates snicker.

"Stop that laughing, Mr. Danvers!" commanded Corporal Brayton.

Greg, in trying to get the right position, had so exaggerated it that now he found himself trembling from the strain of trying to maintain that position.

"What ails you, Mr. Holmes!" demanded Brayton, with withering scorn.

"I--I was trying to get the right position, sir," stammered Greg, reddening.

"That isn't the position of even a respectable dromedary, Mr. Holmes," rejoined the cadet corporal crisply.

Then he poured a storm of refined abuse upon Greg. It wasn't intended entirely for Greg, but for the benefit of all the awkwardly standing green candidates. Not a word in Brayton's remarks went beyond the limits of strict military propriety, yet every word cut.

"My, but I'd like to fall out and give this fellow a licking!" muttered Greg to himself.

"Mr. Holmes," observed Cadet Corporal Brayton dryly, "clenched fists do not go with the position of the soldier. Let your hands fall naturally at your sides, each little finger resting against the seam of the trousers, or where you judge the seam to be."

Again the blood shot up to the roots of Greg's hair, suffusing his face. But Mr. Brayton had already turned to another candidate whom he found in a ludicrously bad position. After some minutes of this attempt to instruct the candidates in the seemingly simple

matter of standing correctly, Brayton gave the welcome order to rest.

By this time four other awkward squads were at the same work.

"I wish we had our uniforms," whispered Greg. "I'd feel better."

"I am glad I haven't a uniform yet," returned Dick in an equally low voice. "I realize how like a fool I'd look in it when I don't even know how to stand, let alone attempting to walk in a uniform. Just look at the magnificent carriage of the man that's drilling us!"

"I'd like to hammer him until he needed a carriage to get anywhere in," muttered Greg vengefully. "That corporal is a brute, without a vestige of good breeding."

"Then, for a fellow without breeding, he certainly carries himself like a king," retorted Dick. "At least, I don't believe any European prince has half as fine a carriage as Mr. Brayton."

"I wonder if they're all as bad as this corporal," demanded Greg. "Brayton is a tyrant in gray."

"Greg! Greg! Get a brace on yourself, old fellow," whispered Dick warningly. "This is only the morning of the first day, and we have before us months--years--of taking our medicine. Don't lose the gait even before you've got it. We came here to take our medicine and learn to be soldiers, didn't we?"

"Squad, attention!" rasped out Corporal Brayton, wheeling and once more favoring his own green lot with his whole regard.

Repeatedly he showed these new men how to stand, how to hold themselves and how to do it without appearing ridiculous. So crisp, so rapping and even decorously abusive was Mr. Brayton that the boys under his command at this moment would have gasped had they been told that Brayton was considered one of the easiest and best-natured of the cadet corporals. Brayton had his work to do--that was all. It was part of his own training to learn how to whip an awkward squad into time in the shortest possible order.

By-and-by all these anxious, even trembling, candidates were instructed in the mystery of marching a few steps at command, how to keep their alignment on the right guide, how to halt, the facings and all that.

"Now, we'll pass on to learning to count fours, and how to march off in column of fours," announced Brayton. "Squad halt!" he commanded hoarsely, in disgust, ere the young men had taken four steps. "Listen to me more attentively, and try more closely to follow orders!" glared the young corporal.

After that it seemed as though Cadet Corporal Brayton could have no other aim in life than to drive his squad of candidates away from West Point. At almost every move through the drill he berated them caustically, though in such faultless military language of reproof as to keep him from censure.



"Dismissed," glared Brayton at last. "The candidates will go to their rooms until summoned again."

Dick and Greg both felt stiff in the legs. Their backs ached from the long-continued drilling in what was yet, to them, the rigor of near-military carriage. Both chums toiled up the stairs to their bare room.

"Oh, you brute!" muttered Greg, standing in the middle of the room and shaking his fist in the direction of the area.

"Meaning--whom?" queried Prescott, with a wan smile.

"Whom could I mean but Brayton?" almost hissed young Holmes. "Why does that fellow hate us all so?"

"I'll tell you a secret, if you want to hear it," proposed Dick mysteriously.

"Please!" begged Candidate Holmes.

"Then I don't believe he does hate us."

"What?" gasped Greg incredulously.

"I don't believe he'd remember half our faces if he passed the members of his squad in the area right now," declared Dick.

"Then why does he persecute us so?" demanded Greg indignantly.

"I don't believe it is persecution," Dick continued.

"Then why, in the name of all that's kindly, does that fellow put us under the heel of hateful usage? Why must we submit to the tyranny of that cadet corporal?"

"It's the West Point way--that's all, I guess."

"Do you propose to submit to it?" challenged Greg.

"Yes," retorted Dick soberly. "I don't want to have to leave the Academy and go home stamped a failure."

"Neither do I," admitted Candidate Holmes in a more moderate tone. "But I wonder whether we have to stand so much nonsense from a petty young official like a mere corporal?"

"I'm afraid we do," nodded Dick. "Now, see here, Greg, can't you make a good guess as to why we're put through such a grilling?"

"I'll confess I can't see any human reason in it," declared Candidate Holmes.

"Why, what did we come here to learn to be?"

"Soldiers."

"Are we soldiers yet!"

"Of course not," Greg admitted.

"Do you think these people at West Point have time to coax and pamper us along!"

"Probably not. But can't they--or can't that fellow Brayton--be decent with us?"

"Now, look right here," counseled Candidate Prescott wisely. "We want to be soldiers, but as yet we're only ignorant, unregenerate, untaught young cubs. To the older cadets we must seem like pitiful beasts."

"No, we don't," sneered Candidate Holmes. "We don't seem anything at all. No cadet here, unless he's obliged to notice us, even looks at us. We're less than nothing."

"That's true," nodded Dick thoughtfully. "And I'll wager it will be pretty nearly as bad all the time we're plebes. Now brace up, Greg. Remember what a small fraction of nothing you are, and be thankful for the severe handling by Brayton, which may eventually transform us into at least pretty fair imitations of soldiers."

Outside a drum was sounding. It was mess call, but neither candidate knew it. Almost immediately, however, Brayton's rousing voice rang up through the subdivision:

"Candidates turn out promptly!"

"There's our slave-driver once more," frowned Candidate Holmes.

Dick, as he raced down the stairs, remembered to button his coat down its entire length. Greg forgot. As he darted through the doorway to the porch overlooking the area he found Corporal Brayton's gaze fastened upon him in severe displeasure.

"Mr. Holmes, button your coat, sir!"

Reddening and frowning, too, it must be admitted, Greg obeyed.

"All candidates will pass quickly through the north sally port and make formation," continued the cadet corporal.

Here the entire uniformed cadet corps was forming, facing the plain. At the extreme left of the line a cadet lieutenant, two sergeants and four cadet corporals busied themselves with forming the candidates and alternates in line. When the word was given the cadet corps wheeled to the right and marched off in column of fours, quite a splendid model of military precision.

Somehow the un-uniformed greenhorns managed to turn into column of fours, though some of the bewildered boys forgot to which four they belonged and there was some confusion.

Behind the superb cadet corps, toiled along these all but hopeless candidates and alternates, scores and scores of them--every fellow of them feeling more awkward than his nearest neighbors in the line. Badly out of step was this green material. Some of the boys slouched as they walked along; others shuffled. Their appearance

was enough to dishearten a trained soldier.

But at last all these green ones were marshaled to seats in the great dining hall at cadet mess. There, in a fine dinner, they forgot, momentarily, many of the discouragements of the forenoon.

In the afternoon came a lot more of drilling of awkward squads by other cadet corporals. Greg soon found, under the tender mercies of another corporal, why Brayton was considered "easy."

These cadet corporals are all members of the yearling class, the class directly above the plebes. As corporals these members of the yearling class get their first direct experience in military command.

Later in the afternoon all candidates were notified that academic examinations would begin at eight o'clock the next morning in the Academic Building.

And now the candidates began to shiver! "Bad" as the start had been, they hoped, to a man, that they would pass these academic examinations. To fail meant to return home, the dream of being a cadet shattered!

"Ugh!" muttered Greg, rubbing his hands in quarters. "Br-r-r! Dick, I'm afraid I'm scared cold!"

Prescott smiled, but he, too, was worried over the coming mysteries of the academic examinations, which he had heard were uncommonly [Transcriber's note: word missing].

## CHAPTER III

### THE "LUCKY" ONES TAKE UP THE NEW LIFE

Candidate Prescott did not take the best examination by any means, but he got through without discredit in any branch.

A number of these candidates had spent the last year or so at some "prep." school that made a specialty of preparing young men for West Point and Annapolis.

Greg did fairly in English, quite well in history, geography and arithmetic; in algebra, through sheer nervousness, young Holmes barely escaped going short.

Nearly twoscore of the candidates failed utterly. These went sorrowing home, giving their alternates a chance to enter the corps in their places.

Soon after the results had been declared, the young men who had passed went over to headquarters. There they signed a statement to the effect that they entered the Military Academy with the consent of their parents or guardians, and bound themselves to serve in the Army at least eight years, unless sooner discharged. These new

young men were then formally and impressively sworn into the service of their country. They were now cadets, even if only new plebes.

Why "new" plebes! Because, under the new system, with candidates admitted in March, there is still a "plebe" class above them who remain plebes until commencement in June. Hence the distinction between old and new "plebes."

In the presence of all plebes the yearlings and other upper class men keep themselves loftily apart, except when compelled to drill the plebes or perform other military or other official duties with plebes.

The plebe, old or new, is still but a "beast"--a being unfitted for intimate contact with upper class men. The plebe is not an outcast. He is merely fifteen months on probation with his upper class comrades. Unhappy as the lot of the freshman is at some of our colleges, the plebe at West Point is of far less importance in the eyes of the upper classes.

Early every morning cadet corporals marched squads of new plebes out into the open and put them through the mysteries of the Army "setting-up" drills. These drills are effective in giving the new man, in an almost marvelously short time, the correct military carriage and physical deportment. Between these and the squad, platoon and company drills, it is truly wonderful how rapidly the new cadet begins to drop his former awkwardness.

The new plebes had now drawn their uniforms and rapidly learned the care of these parts of the soldier's wardrobe. They were also taught the proper occasions for wearing each article of uniform.

Academic studies had now begun in earnest too. The idea in requiring cadets to begin in March instead of in June, as formerly, is that they may have three months in which to become accustomed to the fearfully exacting requirements of study and recitation in force at West Point.

It was a proud day for all these new plebes when they "drew" their rifles and bayonets and began the laborious study of the manual of arms.

One after another, as fast as they were sufficiently proficient, the new plebes were sent into one of the companies into which the Corps of Cadets is divided.

Cadet Prescott entered D Company four days before Greg Holmes was assigned to the same company. Dick's success indeed spurred Greg on to new efforts, although poor young Holmes had felt that he was working as hard already as human flesh could endure.

Early in April nearly all of the new plebes had joined their companies. It was a wholly new, revolutionized life.

Many of the new plebes had come from homes of luxury, where servants had abounded.

But here at West Point former social lines had no significance, unless it was to invite trouble down upon the head of any new

cadet who felt inclined to be priggish.

No cadet had a servant, nor could he engage anyone to perform any of his own duties for him.

Each cadet in the entire corps rose at the tap of a drum--"reveille"--at 5.45 A.M.

At the first sound of reveille every young man sprang from his bed. Then followed hasty but orderly dressing and the making of the toilet. The cadet must be spick and span.

Incidentally, but promptly, he fell to policing. The room must be in order, and the bed made up exactly in accordance with the regulations on the subject. All clothing must be hung as prescribed in the regulations. A match end or a scrap of paper on the floor brought reprimand and demerits.

"Policing" is the orderly care of quarters. At 6.20 police call sounded on the drum outside in the area. Then came a swift but all-seeing inspection of every occupied room in barracks.

Swiftly, indeed, was this done, for at 6.30 the tap of the drum sounded mess call for breakfast. The cadet corps formed outside the north sally port and marched to breakfast.

About seven o'clock breakfast ended. The corps marched back to barracks and was dismissed.

By 7.15 every young man was hard at work, "boning" hard over the studies in which he must recite during the forenoon. He "boned" until 7.55. Then, in his own appropriate section, he marched off to the Academic Building, remaining in the section room, under the instruction or quizzing of some officer of the Army until 9.20.

Now the new plebe, like the cadets of all classes, marched back to his room. At his desk he studied until summoned at 10.55 for the second recitation of the day, in some other subject.

At 12.10 he was dismissed from this second period of recitation, but 12.20 found the young man in dinner formation. From this mid-day meal the cadet reached barracks at 1.10. Now he had some time with which to do as he pleased; to be exact, he had fifteen minutes. At 1.25 the freshman marched off to recitation in English, history or French. At 2.30 the cadet found himself back in his room, forced to study, as few young men ever study in civil life, until 3.30.

From 3.30 to 6.25 P.M. the plebe was allowed to do as he pleased with his time, provided that in so doing he broke none of the regulations. He might amuse himself in various ways. He was at liberty to go over to the library, to read, for instance; he might call at officers' houses on the post on Saturday or Sunday afternoon if invited; he was at liberty to take a walk--within cadet limits. Or, if he felt the need of something really "wild" in the way of diversion, the lucky plebe was permitted to go over to the Academic Building and examine the mineralogical or geological collection!

As a matter of fact, the plebe who in most instances was doing badly with the great amount of study and recitation required of him, was likely to spend most of his afternoon leisure in "boning" the studies in which he was deficient or which he found difficult to master.

At 6.25 came the call for supper formation. That meal was through at about seven in the evening. Then came study time, lasting until 9.30 in the evening. At 9.30 the plebe was at liberty to turn down his mattress and go to bed, if he felt tired enough; if not, he was at liberty to study a little longer.

At 10.30, however, taps sounded on a drum just inside the north sally port. Now Mr. Plebe was obliged to turn out his light, instanter, and be in bed against the visit of the subdivision inspector, an upper class cadet, immediately afterward. If Mr. Plebe failed to be in bed he was reported--"skinned"--and punished accordingly.

In between there were always the drills, the gymnasium work, inspections, guard mount for each plebe about once a week after he had been admitted to the ranks of the battalion.

To the boy fresh from home it is a fearfully hard lot at first. That it can be lived through and endured, however, is proved by the fact that about six out of ten of the cadets who enter at West Point manage to graduate, and go forth into the Army, splendid specimens of physical and mental manhood. Very few of the cadets who fail at West Point and are dropped go away from the Military Academy without a mist before their eyes.

The plebes at West Point are not ostracized by the upper class men. These new men are merely "kept in their places" with great severity, and without any encouragement whatever. If the plebe can't stand it, then he is plainly not of the stuff to make a soldier. If he does stand it, he goes on into the upper classes, one after another, graduates and is commissioned by the President as a second lieutenant in the United States Army.

It is a hard ordeal, that fellowship of "nothingness" during the first portion of the West Point course.

Homesickness is the worst ailment of the new cadet. Day by day he grows more homesick until it seems to him that he simply cannot endure the Military Academy for another twenty-four hours.

One afternoon, while taking a walk as a relief from too hard application to his mathematics, Cadet Dick Prescott stumbled upon some news that made him open his eyes very wide.

"Well, of all things!" he growled to himself.

Then he walked faster.

"Greg must hear of this," muttered the new plebe.

Going down the street at military stride, Cadet Prescott turned in at the north sally port, stepped briskly along one of the walks,

bounded up the steps and in at the outer door of the subdivision in which he dwelt.

Up the stairs with considerable speed went Cadet Prescott, still revolving in his mind the news upon which he had stumbled.

"What on earth will Greg think?" throbbed the new plebe.

In a very short time Prescott's hurrying feet carried him to the door of his room on the top floor. The door yielded as Dick put his hand to the knob.

"Greg, what do you think?" whispered Dick breathlessly, as he went quickly into the room and toward his roommate, who sat bent over his study table.

The very attitude was unmilitary--a fact that struck Prescott suddenly.

Then Greg, hearing his roommate's voice, raised his head somewhat and wheeled about in his chair.

What a woebegone face Cadet Gregory Holmes presented!

"Greg, what on earth is the matter?" demanded Dick, halting short and staring hard.

"I can't help it," replied Greg miserably, shaking his head.

"Can't help what?" demanded Dick thunder-struck.

"I can't help what I've gone and done. I had to do it!" cried Greg, with sudden fierceness in his tone.

"What you've done?" echoed Dick. "Well, what have you gone and done, anyway, old fellow? Does it stop anywhere short of murder--or lying?"

For in the West Point code of honor lying ranks very nearly as bad as murder.

"I guess perhaps it isn't quite as bad as either," smiled Greg wanly. "However, I couldn't help doing it."

He rose to his feet, a bit unsteadily, leaning one hand on his study desk.

Greg's hair was a bit awry, as though he had run his hands many times through it in some mood of desperation. This, in itself, was in defiance of West Point traditions for the personal neatness of the cadet.

"You still have me altogether in the dark, Greg," murmured Dick wonderingly.

"You'll lose all respect for me, Dick," went on Greg miserably.

"Then it must be something awfully bad that you've done," retorted Dick, opening his eyes wider than ever.

Without another word Greg reached to his desk, picked up a sheet of paper and in silence passed it over to his comrade.

Dick read with a gathering of his eyebrows. Then gradually a look of anger shot into his clear eyes.

"Greg Holmes," uttered the other cadet indignantly, "you're a disgrace to your native town of Gridley!"

"Well, what are you going to do about it!" demanded Greg almost defiantly.

"Do?" retorted Cadet Prescott. "I believe I'll thrash you--just for being a disgrace to our native place!"

Not intending anything of the sort, but merely as a dramatic expression of his rage, Dick doubled one fist, advancing upon Holmes.

At that instant the door was flung open. Cadet Lieutenant Edwards, of the first class, strode into the room.

Instantly both cadets straightened, where they were, standing at "attention," as required to do when a superior officer entered their quarters.

"What is this?" demanded Cadet Lieutenant Edwards, though betraying no more than official curiosity in his tone. "Have I entered just in time to prevent a fight!"

"No, sir," replied Cadet Prescott.

"Then what!"

"Sir," responded Cadet Prescott, "I wish to report my roommate, Mr. Holmes, for writing this letter!"

Dick held out the sheet of paper, which the cadet lieutenant scanned earnestly.

## CHAPTER IV

### GREG'S CASE OF "BLUES"

Only a moment did Mr. Edwards need for the reading of Greg's note. Then the cadet lieutenant frowned at Dick.

"Mr. Prescott, what do you mean by perpetrating a poor-spirited joke under the guise of making an official communication?"

In an instant Dick saw clearly that he had made a military mistake.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said meekly.



"This may all be a joke to you, Mr. Prescott," went on the cadet officer dryly, "but I presume it is none whatever to Mr. Holmes."

As he hadn't been addressed, Greg did not venture to answer. He stood rigidly at attention, though both he and Dick were flushing.

The paper that Mr. Edwards now held in his hand read as follows:

"To THE SUPERINTENDENT,"

"THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY."

"Sir: I have the honor herewith to tender my resignation as a cadet in the United States Military Academy, the same to take effect immediately. I have the honor to be, sir,"

"Very respectfully,"

"GREGORY HOLMES."

"So that's the way you feel about it, is it, Mr. Holmes?" questioned the cadet lieutenant, after a second glance at the paper.

"Yes, sir," replied Greg.

"This is the fourth letter of the kind that I've seen this week," continued Mr. Edwards stiffly, though a curious smile played about the corners of his mouth. "I presume that two or three dozen, at least, of the same sort have been written by the new plebes. Mr. Holmes, do you know what was done with the other letters of resignation that I saw?"

"No, sir."

"Their writers tore them up," went on the cadet lieutenant stiffly. "Now, Mr. Holmes, if you persist in believing that you want to send this letter in to the superintendent, then I think it will be the best thing you can do; for if you still persist in wanting to resign, then you haven't manhood enough, anyway, to make a fit brother-in-arms for the comrades in your class."

This was severely said. Greg paled under the verbal thrashing.

"If you really wish to send in this letter," continued Mr. Edwards, "you have a perfect right to do it, Mr. Holmes."

"May I speak, sir?" asked Greg when the cadet lieutenant ceased talking, but remained looking fixedly at the new plebe.

"Proceed," replied Mr. Edwards.

"May I have that letter, sir?"

The cadet lieutenant handed it back without a word.

"May I--may I--"

"Out with it, Mr. Holmes."

"May I handle this letter at once in the way that I now wish, sir?"

"You may."

Greg, his face again flushing painfully, tore the sheet into small bits, turning and tossing them into his waste basket. Then he again wheeled, standing at attention.

"Stand at ease, mister," ordered Mr. Edwards, dropping out of his official tone and manner. "Now, mister, will it do you any good if I explain a few little things about life here at West Point?"

"I shall be very glad, indeed, sir, if you will be good enough," replied Greg rather shamefacedly.

"In the first place, mister," went on the cadet lieutenant, sitting, now, with one leg thrown over the corner of Greg's desk, "the homesickness that has hit you touches every other man who comes here. It's a mighty hard-working life here, and I'll admit, mister, that it's very cheerless during the plebe year.

"You think you are looked down upon, and regarded as being beneath contempt, mister. That sort of treatment for a plebe is believed to be necessary here. Grant got it; so did Sherman; so did Sheridan. George Washington would have been treated in just the same manner had there been a West Point for him to go to.

"It isn't because of what we upper class men think of you. It's because of what we're waiting to find out. I don't know anything about your connections in your home town. You may have been a great fellow there. You may, for all I know, have had a home of wealth, luxury and refinement. Your father may be a man of great importance in the nation. I don't know anything about that, and I don't care about it, either, mister. From the moment you start in at West Point, you start your life all over again, and you stand on nothing but your own merits. We don't know how much merit you have, and we shan't know until you've gone through with your plebe year and have proved whether you're a man or not. If we find, a year from this coming summer, that you're a man, we'll welcome you into the heartiest comradeship of all the corps. Mister, I've said a lot more to you than most upper class men would waste the time to say. Choose your own course, and prove where you stand."

Then Cadet Lieutenant Edwards turned around to Cadet Prescott with a look that made that Gridley boy feel rather uncomfortable.

"As for you, mister, never again, while you're a plebe, be so b.j. (fresh) as to try a joke with an upper class man. If there's one thing, mister, that gets a plebe into three times as much trouble as any other thing, then it's b.j.-ety!" (freshness).

Of a sudden the cadet lieutenant returned to his feet, resuming all the dignified demeanor of the cadet officer on duty.

Instantly Dick and Greg stood once more at "attention" until Mr. Edwards had turned on his heel and left the room.

"Hm!" murmured Dick, as they heard the lieutenant's retreating footsteps. "We've both had a jolly good lesson."

"You didn't do much," muttered Greg shamefacedly. "I wouldn't feel so bad about a call down over a bit of ordinary b.j.-ety. I was scorched and withered for being a cold-foot and a quitter--and I deserve it all, and more!"

"I'm glad you see that, old Gridley!" murmured Cadet Dick heartily. "Now, Greg, you won't write another letter of resignation, will you?"

"Not if I die of homesickness and melancholy!" muttered Greg, clenching his hands.

"Now, after letting you in for an awful verbal flogging," smiled Dick curiously, "I'll let you into a secret. I wrote a letter of resignation, too."

"When?" gasped Cadet Holmes amazed.

"Two days ago," confessed Dick. "I read it through six times before sending it to the superintendent."

"You didn't--send it to the superintendent?" gasped Greg.

"No; because I also tore it to fine bits before sending it to headquarters--and so the letter never reached the one to whom it was addressed," laughed Cadet Prescott. "Now, look here, Greg. Admit that you were a prize simpleton, just as I was. Let's start anew--with a bang-up motto. This is it: 'A Gridley boy may die, but resign--never!'"

Dick struck such a dramatic attitude that both poor young plebes began to laugh heartily.

"Oh, and now for the news that brought me back here hotfoot," ran on Prescott glibly. "Greg, you never could guess who's here at West Point."

"The President, or the Chief of the General Staff?" asked Holmes slowly.

"Oh, pshaw, no! They don't either one amount to as much as the fellow I'm talking about thinks he amounts to."

"Whom did our Senators appoint to the Academy?" asked Prescott after a pause.

"Me," admitted Greg, again turning red.

"Well, whom did the other Senator appoint!"

"A fellow named Spooner, who came here and 'fessed out' cold (failed badly) on the academic exam," Greg responded.

"Who was Spooner's alternate!" persisted Dick.

"I don't believe I remember," Greg replied slowly.

"No; and that was because neither you nor I ever knew. Spooner's alternate was--Bert Dodge!"

"What? Bert Dodge, of Gridley?" demanded Cadet Holmes astonished.

"That very chap," Prescott admitted. "When Spooner went home, after 'fessing out' here, Bert Dodge, who hadn't appeared, was ordered by wire to report at once, or have his name stricken out. Bert's physician wired the War Department that the young fellow was ill, though the illness would not delay him more than a few days. So Bert was given a brief grace. Well, sir, I've just learned that Dodge reported at the adjutant's office this morning. He got by the surgeons bounding, and to-morrow he sits down at his 'writs.' (written examinations) in the Academic Building."

"I wonder if that fellow will pass," cried Greg wonderingly.

"Oh, I rather think he'll make it easily," replied Dick, seating himself at his own desk. "Bert wasn't a fool at his studies. He spent more than three years at Gridley High School, and since then has had a school year and a half at one of the finest prep. schools in the country. Oh, I guess he'll get through all right."

"So we've got to have him here for a comrade!" sighed Greg disgustedly, as he picked up his text-book on English.

## CHAPTER V

### CANDIDATE DODGE IS CRITICAL

Both cadets had studied for ten minutes perhaps, when a knock sounded at their door.

The very unusualness of this caused both youngsters to look around, then at each other.

Had it been any cadet officer making an inspection--as was likely to happen at any minute of the waking day--he would have come straight into the room. And any other cadet, after knocking, would have followed this by opening the door and stepping inside.

Rap-rap! sounded again.

"Oh, come in," called Dick.

The door opened. Bert Dodge, dressed in the height of the prevailing fashion, looked inside.

"May I come in?" he called, in what was meant for a cordial, friend-from-home voice.

"Oh, yes, come in," sighed Dick wearily.

"That's not quite the welcome I might have expected from you two," muttered Bert, as he opened the door and stepped into the room. "Fellows, you're at West Point now," proceeded Bert Dodge pompously, "and this is a place where social points count tremendously, as I guess you've found out by this time. Now, you two may be all right, and I guess you are," admitted Bert condescendingly, "but you're just the sons of commoners, while my father is a wealthy man, a banker and a leader in society. So I guess you can quickly understand that I'm going to cut a good deal wider swath here than you two fellows put together."

Greg Holmes, who had been following Dodge with a gradually widening grin of amazement, now burst into a hearty laugh.

"Well, what's so awfully funny!" demanded Bert.

"You--you--social swell!" exploded Greg hilariously. "Oh--wow!"

"Oh, enjoy yourself in your own way," retorted Bert in decided anger, "but you'll soon find out."

Then looking about the room, he remarked, going on a new tack:

"I must say, you fellows are rather badly provided for showing the social courtesies here. You haven't even a chair for a guest."

"Plebes are allowed only two chairs to a room," remarked Dick, rising and pulling forward his own chair. "Take mine. I'll sit on the corner of my table."

"There's just one chair in my room," continued Bert, as he seated himself. "That's one reason I want to see the janitor, or steward, or whoever the fellow is. I'm going to tell him to put in a decent allowance of chairs."

Greg Holmes went off into another fit of laughter.

"Janitor? Steward?" sputtered Holmes. "Whew! That's great!"

"There are no such servants here, Dodge," Dick explained. "In fact, every cadet has to learn to wait on himself in nearly everything. A plebe, too, has to learn to be content with whatever he has given him. If he even makes any talk about it he is called b.j. A cadet who is found guilty of b.j.-ety has to put in all his spare time learning to walk on one ear."

"Do you mean to say you've been made to swallow stuff like that?" demanded Dodge, looking at Prescott in tall disdain. "Oh, well, you may be inclined to submit to such treatment, but I know who I am, and I'm not going to stand for any nonsense here. What's the matter with you, Holmes? Are you ill?"

For Greg's face, in his efforts to stifle his mirth, had become violently purple.

"I don't suppose you'll take advice, Dodge," continued Dick. "If I thought you only could do it I'd advise you to walk mighty slowly here, keep your lips together and not say a word until you've learned a lot."

Dick had risen and was standing, unconsciously, in an attitude that showed off, in his natty cadet uniform, all the strength and grace of his fine and now well set-up young figure. But Bert, with a desire to put this other fellow "back where he belonged," remarked casually:

"Prescott, I don't just like the fit of your coat. Who's your tailor? I want to get a different one. I'm going in for some of the swellest-fitting uniforms that any tailor around here can turn out."

Greg, who had managed to breathe naturally for the last minute, now struggled with another of his purple-faced paroxysms.

"I didn't think to ask who my tailor was," Prescott replied quickly. "In fact, I don't think I would have been told if I had asked. You see, every cadet here has to take just what clothes are issued to him at the cadet store. That's the rule for all cadets here."

"Do you mean to tell me that I've got to wear 'hand-me-downs'?" demanded Bert Dodge angrily. "Save that sort of stuff for fellows who'll believe it."

It was plain that, if Bert Dodge had dropped in with any intention of being neighborly and from-home, he had rapidly forgotten his plan.

Neither Dick nor Greg had any reason for being fond of the fellow, even if he had once been a schoolmate at Gridley High School. Bert, son of Theodore Dodge, a Gridley banker, was an unpardonable snob. Readers of the High School Boys Series will recall how Bert had been one of the leaders in the "sorehead" secession from the football ranks at Gridley High School. That movement failing in its purpose, Bert had afterwards provoked Dick Prescott into striking him, and had then had Dick arrested for assault. The suit had failed, and Bert was rebuked by the court. Much more of the feud that young Dodge had attempted to wage upon Prescott and his High School chums was fully narrated in "THE HIGH SCHOOL LEFT END."

It was nearly a year since Bert had seen either of these chums. That he had entered their room in cadet barracks full of the purpose of impressing them with his new importance was at once plain.

Dick was just beginning to find the atmosphere oppressive when the door was pushed quickly open after the faintest suggestion of a knock.

The newcomers were Cadets Pratt and Judson of the yearling class, known already among the plebes as two of the worst hazers.

"Attention!" hissed Pratt, as he strode into the room.

Neither of the visitors being a cadet officer, Dick and Greg were not obliged to stand at attention.

However, neither new plebe was foolish enough to argue the matter. Dick and Greg took the pose ordered and at once.

"Mister," demanded Pratt, turning upon Dick, "what is this cit.

(citizen) doing in barracks?"

"Mr. Dodge is a candidate, sir, quartered in this building, and he took it into his head to visit us."

"What are you doing on that chair, Candy?" demanded Judson, flashing an angry look at Bert.

"None of your business!" retorted Dodge.

"You'll stand at attention!" retorted Cadet Judson, gripping Bert by the collar and pulling him to his feet.

"That'll be about enough, Jud," warned Cadet Pratt in a low voice. "Remember, the fellow is nothing but a candidate."

"You fellows seem to think you're mighty important," sputtered Bert. "I'm not in the habit of associating with hoodlums!"

"Now, if that isn't the b.j.-est sunflower that ever grew in a farmyard," remarked Cadet Pratt, with a wink at Cadet Judson.

"If you're referring to me be a bit more careful in your witticisms," warned Dodge stiffly, "or I shall demand satisfaction."

"Oh, you're rather certain to get all the sat. you want, I imagine when you're a cadet," retorted Cadet Pratt dryly. "But, Jud, our time is fairly running away from us, and we have yet other social calls to make. Our respectful farewells, misters."

Turning, straight and stiff as ramrods, Cadets Pratt and Judson marched from the room.

When their step was heard on the stairway Greg stepped over and closed the door.

"Well, you fellows are the meekest green apples that I ever saw," laughed Dodge scornfully. "You simply lay down and allowed those two military bullies to walk over you just as they chose. Do you expect to get through West Point like men, if you have no more self-pride than that?"

"I'm heartily glad you've joined us here, Dodge," murmured Greg artlessly. "You'll show us, by your own example, just how to stand up for our rights."

"Humph! I hope you'll be able to learn," grunted Bert, rising as he glanced at his watch.

Then he went on, a trace more amiably:

"I find I've got to go back to my room and prepare for supper. Now, fellows, we haven't always gotten along in the best shape at home. But here at West Point I suppose we all start life on somewhat of a new footing. I'm willing to let by-gones be by-gones if you don't presume altogether too much on coming from the same home town. Keep your places with me, and we'll try to go along on a somewhat pleasanter basis than in the past. Let us try to forget the past. Ta-ta, fellows. See you at the supper table."

Bert stalked out loftily, with a considerable appreciation of his condescension toward two fellows whom he had been wont, in past years, to call muckers.

"Hold me!" begged Greg hoarsely. "I'm going to have a fit. Oh, wow! Dick, just think of that poor b.j. lamb falling into the hands of the yearlings! What'll they ever do with him?"

"Greg, it has been hard enough on us to get used to the new ways at West Point. But we'll never mind anything during the rest of our plebedom. No matter what happens to us we'll just remember how much more is bound to happen to pompous old Dodge."

Dick returned to his table, picking up his text-book on French. Greg honestly tried to study, but every other minute he simply had to stop to laugh at the thought of Bert and his pompous ways.

Finally, when he could restrain himself no longer, Greg broke forth:

"Dick, old ramrod, no matter what happens to me, now I can stand it by thinking of Bert Dodge being here!"

"I hope he doesn't start his old tactics of making trouble," muttered Cadet Prescott.

"If he does, he'll have most of the trouble in his own possession," grinned Greg. "West Point is a place where manliness has the only real show."

"Yes, but a sneak can make an awful lot of trouble," sighed Dick. "Not that I mean to call Dodge a sneak, though. I am in hopes that he'll prove anything but that. From the minute that a fellow enters the Military Academy he starts in life all over again. So, remember, Greg, we won't be prepared to hate or distrust Dodge, and we'll lose a hand before we'll utter a word against him, based on anything that happened in the past."

"That's the square deal, and the West Point ideal," nodded Greg, who was rapidly forgetting the letter, the fragments of which were now in his waste basket. "Who knows but that, in this new atmosphere, Bert Dodge may turn out to be a man? West Point will do that very thing for him, if any new surroundings can."

As the battalion marched to supper that night Bert Dodge felt in his heart that hazing must already have started for him; for, being the only candidate left at West Point, and having no uniform as yet, Dodge was compelled to march, in his rather gay "cit." attire, at the extreme end of the battalion line.

Bert did not march quite alone, however.

Just behind him, majestic, unbending, lynx-eyed and exacting, marched Cadet Corporal Spurlock, who was known as the "worst" (strictest) of the Yearling cadet officers.

"Chest out, Mr. Dodge! Don't wobble so at the knees, sir! Can't you carry yourself straight? Take your chin away from your



chest, Mr. Dodge. Try to keep step, sir. Follow my count--hep! hep! hep! hep! Mr. Dodge, you're out of step! When I call 'hep' put your left foot down, sir! But don't keep it down, sir!" added the exasperated cadet corporal in a furious undertone, as Bert came to a dead halt. "Mr. Dodge, try to exhibit something close to intelligence. Now, again, sir! Hep! hep! hep! hep!"

An Army officer stationed at the post drove by on a springboard. Three young women were with him. They saw and partly understood. The peal of laughter that floated back from them brought a flush to the face of the green, pestered candidate.

## CHAPTER VI

### IN THE HANDS OF THE YEARLING HAZERS

Under the hard grilling of cadet corporal Spurlock, Bert Dodge actually made a lot of progress within the next few days.

Dodge learned that, whenever addressing an officer, whether that officer were a cadet officer, or one of the Regular Army officers stationed at the Academy as instructors, he must add "sir" to every communication. He also learned that he must not address any superior officer unless first addressed by him.

Bert also picked up rapidly the knowledge that he was no better than anyone else, and of not a thousandth part of the importance of any upper class man.

Much of this the young man picked up from his new roommate, Tom Anstey, a soft-eyed, soft-voiced, helpful and sunny young man from Virginia. Anstey was one of the best-liked men in his class, but the new plebes at first held almost aloof from Dodge.

"Whatever you do," urged Anstey, "don't make the mistake of trying to cultivate the acquaintance of any of the upper class men."

"I've encountered two already," muttered Bert.

"Oh!" and Anstey smiled wonderingly.

"Pratt and Judson, of the yearlings," Dodge continued, then related what had happened in the room of Cadets Prescott and Holmes.

"I guess you're going to be in for it, presently, Dodge," nodded Cadet Anstey. "Mr. Pratt and Mr. Judson are known as two terrors."

"They don't want to try to pass any of their terror on to me," growled Bert.

Whereupon Mr. Anstey took his roommate in hand, gently and genially, and tried to make that new cadet--for Bert had passed his academic exams. without even a hint of trouble--understand how worse than foolish it would be to attempt to antagonize the upper

class men.

"You come from the same place that Prescott and Holmes do, don't you?" asked Anstey, one afternoon, as the roommates rested from study.

"I'm glad to say I don't," replied Bert, almost brusquely.

"Oh!" nodded Anstey.

"I suppose we've got to be comrades, now, but I don't like that pair an over-lot," Bert explained.

"Odd! Most of the new plebes like Prescott and Holmes all the way up, and then all the way down again," murmured Anstey seriously. "For myself, I don't know any two fellows in the new lot that I like better."

"Oh, I guess they're all right in a good many ways," admitted Bert slowly. "Only we never managed to hitch--that's all. You asked me if I came from the same place. I used to live in Gridley, but I--er--well, I went away to Fordham to another school. My father had a summer place in Fordham, and he took up his voting residence in Fordham, though spending a good part of his winters in Gridley. That's how I'm credited to Fordham, not Gridley."

"Thank you for telling me," nodded Anstey. "I had just been wondering if it were not crowding things a bit to send three young men all from Gridley."

"I'm not only not from Gridley, but I came in as an alternate, anyway."

"How are you getting on with Corporal Spurlock?" asked Anstey.

"That fellow? Oh, hang him! Spurlock drives me wild. I came within a hair's breadth of applying to the commandant of cadets for a new instructor in drill. Only you told me that no heed would be paid to such a request from a new plebe."

"I should rather say not," grinned Anstey. "However, you'll be through the prelim. grind soon, and then you'll be admitted to a company in the battalion."

"I'm fitted for it now," growled Bert.

"You won't get into a company, though, until Corporal Spurlock reports you as fitted."

"That fellow is the most rascally tyrant I ever saw anywhere," growled Bert, picking up a text-book on mathematics.

By this time the season of outdoor drills and daily dress parade had arrived. This particular afternoon, however, in the latter part of March, a heavy, blinding snowstorm had come along. Cadets were nearly all in barracks, therefore, and those who had the most need were studying hard.

"I've boned math., boned French, boned English," muttered Anstey,

at last. "Now, I think I'll go over and bone Prescott and Holmes. Feel like going along with me!"

Bert frowned somewhat. He didn't care to "approve" of the two Gridley boys too much. But it was so deadly dull in this room that Dodge didn't care to be left alone, either.

"Oh, I'll go," nodded Dodge, closing a book with a snap and rising. "But I'd like it even better if you had some one else in mind to visit."

"You see," almost apologized Anstey, "I want to see Prescott and Holmes particularly because I've been talking over football with them, and they've been telling me a lot about their high school eleven that was right smart and interesting."

Bert said no more. If his ancient foes were going to tell Anstey about the old football days back in Gridley, then Bert feared they might be tempted to tell a lot that would bring up his unpopular share in those spirited old days.

"But Prescott and his shadow won't dare to say anything against me if I'm sitting right there in the room," muttered Bert to himself.

So he and Anstey presented themselves at Dick and Greg's door. Bert was almost amazed to find himself pleasantly greeted, but Dick and Greg were true to their decision to bury the hatchet of the past if possible.

It was nearly time to light the gas. In the fading light Anstey walked over to a window, watching the snow swirl down into the area outside. At West Point the snowstorms are famous for their severity.

"Hang it!" growled Anstey. "I don't suppose you can ever make a Virginian like myself grow to like this beastly winter weather. And I miss the drills and dress parade. Don't you?"

"Yes," nodded Dick. "I miss everything of an outdoor nature, when it is withheld from me."

"Oh, if you're missing outdoors just now, you might go out and keep on, within cadet limits, until you've tramped five miles," grinned the cadet from Virginia.

"If some of the upper class men found that we liked to be out in a snowstorm, I'm afraid they'd make us stand on our heads in a drift," laughed Cadet Holmes.

"Speaking of that," continued Anstey, wheeling about, "have any of you fellows run into real hazing as yet?"

"Not I," replied Prescott, with a shake of his head.

"Nor I," added Greg.

"It's a shame that we should be expected to put up with any such nonsense," growled Cadet Dodge belligerently. "Who are the yearlings that they should feel at liberty to rub our noses in the

mud! We plebes ought to combine to put a stop to this outrage. Now, I'd like to see any smart year--"

"Eh!" called a voice, cheerily, as the door was thrust open. Yearling cadets Pratt and Judson stepped into the room.

Instantly three of the plebes present rose and stood at attention. Bert Dodge didn't.

"What has got into your sense of military manners, mister!" demanded Cadet Pratt, transfixing Bert with a haughty stare.

"What's wrong with my manners!" demanded Cadet Dodge.

"What's that!" cried Pratt.

"What's wrong with my manners!" repeated Dodge, though a bit more tractably.

"What?"

"What is wrong with my manners, sir!" Bert amended.

"That's just a shade better, mister," admitted Yearling Pratt. "But you are too sparing of your 'sirs,' mister. Now, answer me again, and use 'sir' after each word."

Plebe Dodge gulped hard, but Pratt and Judson were glaring at him. So he began:

"What, sir, is, sir, wrong, sir, with, sir, my, sir, manners, sir!"

"Mister, why didn't you stand at attention when we entered the room!"

"Because you're not--"

"What!" exploded Yearling Judson.

"Because, sir, you're, sir, not, sir, my, sir, superior, sir, officers, sir."

"Are we yearlings!"

"Yes, sir."

"And what are you!" demanded Cadet Judson, with infinite contempt.

"Only, sir, a, sir, plebe, sir."

"Mangy, unkempt, uncouth and offensive, are you not!"

Bert flared and swallowed hard, but he responded, very meekly:

"Yes, Sir."

"You're--what?"

"A, sir, mangy, sir, unkempt, sir, uncouth, sir, and, sir, offensive, sir, plebe, sir."

"Very true," nodded Mr. Pratt. "But, at least, mister, you have learned how to answer a yearling or any other superior, haven't you!"

"Yes, sir," Bert meekly assented.

"But there's one thing the poor beast doesn't know how to do yet," observed Mr. Judson, turning to his classmate. "He doesn't understand how to stand at attention when he is honored by a yearling's visit."

"Teach him--if you find that he's intelligent enough," advised Yearling Pratt.

"Turn down that mattress, mister," commanded Mr. Judson, pointing to Dick Prescott's iron cot.

Bert made the mistake of looking first at Cadet Prescott for permission.

"Now, mister, what makes you hesitate!" fumed Mr. Judson.

"It isn't my cot, sir," replied Dodge.

"What?"

"It, sir, is, sir, not, sir, my, sir, cot, sir."

"That has nothing to do with your orders. Turn down that mattress!"

Bert obeyed with great alacrity.

"Now, then, mister," ordered Yearling Judson, "get up on that mattress, and stand at attention upside down!"

It took Bert Dodge a few precious seconds to understand the full nature of the ignominious thing he had to do.

This was neither more nor less than to stand on his head on the mattress. He could rest his hands beside his head, at the outset, bracing his feet against the wall. So far it was not difficult. But--

"Don't you know the position of attention, mister!" demanded Cadet Pratt, with feigned anger. "Your hands should hang naturally at your sides, the little finger touching the seam of the trousers."

Now, in this inverted position the hands "hung" anything but "naturally" at the sides. In fact, Bert had to hold his hands up in the air in order to have the little fingers touch the seams of the trousers.

Standing on his head, in this fashion, without support, was something that taxed all of Mr. Dodge's athletic powers. He had to try over again, more than a half a dozen times, ere he achieved a decent performance of this gymnastic feat.

"Now, let us see how good a soldier you are, mister," commanded Yearling Pratt, turning around upon Plebe Anstey.

Anstey's cheeks were just a bit pale, from suppressed anger, but he speedily mastered this novel way of standing at attention, and did it to the satisfaction of the hazers.

Then Dick and Greg did it, and rather better than either of their predecessors. The old gym. and field work of training for the Gridley High School teams had hardened their muscles in a way that stood them in good stead now.

"Brace, mister!" commanded Yearling Judson, focusing his gaze on smarting Bert Dodge.

Bert knew what that meant, from hearsay, and didn't pretend that he didn't. This time he took the position of attention on his feet, and then exaggerated the position by throwing his head and shoulders as far back as he could, standing rigidly in this latter position.

It isn't much of a thing to do, as far as taking the attitude goes. It is the length of time a plebe is kept at a "brace" that makes it count as an effective form of hazing. "Bracing" is generations old at West Point. The theory of upper class men has always been that bracing, long continued, fastens the principles of erect carriage upon a plebe, and teaches him, more quickly than anything else could, how to hold himself and to walk.

Dick, Greg and Anstey were likewise soon straining themselves in the "brace" attitude. And mighty funny these four hapless plebes looked as they stood thus, wondering when the hazers would let up on them. But Yearlings Pratt and Judson looked on grimly, warning any plebe as often as the offender showed a disposition to lessen the severity of his "brace."

How everyone of the four ached can be determined by the reader if he will take the full position of the brace, and hold it steadily for ten or fifteen minutes by a friend's watch.

Dodge began to wobble at last. Anstey was sticking it out pluckily, but knew his endurance must soon give out. Dick and Greg felt their back muscles and nerves throbbing. Yet neither Judson nor Pratt showed any intention of giving the command to stop.

Suddenly a quick step was heard in the hallway outside.

Anyone who has been at the Military Academy as long as had Pratt and Judson knew the meaning of that particular, swift step.

One of the "tacs.," as the tactical officers are called, was making an unscheduled tour of inspection. For an upper class man to be caught hazing, or for a plebe to be caught submitting, was equally dangerous to either yearling or plebe! It might mean dismissal.

## CHAPTER VII

### A SUDDEN GRIND AT MATH.

Had Dick's been the first door opened six cadets would have been instantly in serious trouble.

Fortunately the door across the corridor was the first to be opened, and the six on this side of the hallway heard another cadet's voice call quietly:

"Attention!"

It was, therefore, a tactical officer making an inspection.

At the United States Military Academy the superintendent, who has the local rank of colonel, is at the head of this government institution in all its departments.

Discipline, however, and training in tactics, comes within the especial province of another officer, known as the commandant of cadets, who ranks locally as a lieutenant-colonel, and who gets in closer touch with the cadet corps.

Under the commandant of cadets are several other Army officers, captains and lieutenants, who take upon themselves the numerous duties of which the commandant has oversight. These subordinate officers in the tactical department are known as tactical officers. The cadets call them "tac.s."

Each day one of these "tac.s" is in charge at the office of the commandant, which is in cadet headquarter's building, on the south side of the area of cadet barracks.

This officer, who is in charge for a full period of twenty-four hours, when his turn comes, is officially designated as the "officer in charge." Among the cadets he is privately referred to as the "O.C." In a similar way, in cadet parlance, the commandant himself is known as the "K.C."

Now, one of the numerous duties of the O.C., who is an Army officer and himself a graduate of West Point, is to make sudden, unexpected tours of inspection whenever the fancy--or the suspicion--seizes him.

Such an inspection need by no means extend through the whole of cadet barracks. It may, for that matter, be only to one subdivision, or even to a single floor or room of one subdivision. Yet record must be kept of such inspections, and of any offenses against discipline that may be discovered by such a flying visit.

A scrap of paper on the floor, a match end on a study table, any article of furniture or clothing out of its proper place, or any undress or untidiness on the part of a cadet, constitutes a breach of discipline, and must be reported and atoned for. Naturally, a case of hazing would be a most serious "delinquency," as breaches of discipline are termed.

Just what Captain Vesey, O.C., on this day, expected to discover through the present flying inspection will never be known. If he had tried Dick's door first. [Transcriber's note: missing text?]

But he didn't.

However, there was no chance whatever for Yearlings Pratt and Judson to retreat unseen. The door across the hall had been left open, and the tac. would be sure to detect their sudden departure.

Dick Prescott's first movement was to pounce upon his disordered bedding, swiftly folding over the mattress, and laying the bed clothing in the prescribed manner.

Then he tiptoed up to the dismayed Judson, whispering in that yearling's ear as he knowingly winked at Pratt:

"If I'm not too abominably b.j., sir, won't you please come to my table and help me bone math?"

It looked like a saving inspiration. As Dick slipped into his chair he signed to Bert Dodge to stand at one end of the table. Judson snatched up one of Dick's mathematical textbooks, opening to one of the first pages at random. Dick turned sideways in his chair, glancing up at the yearling with a rapt expression.

Yearling Pratt slipped into Greg's chair. Holmes and Anstey stood on either side of him. Pratt began rapidly to sketch out a problem that he chanced to remember from plebe year math.

Almost instantly the door swung open. Not one of the cadets happened to be looking in that direction. As Captain Vesey, the tac., white-gloved, stepped into the room he was just in time to hear Cadet Judson say:

"Perhaps if you were to work out a formula in algebra, mister, you would find the idea even more clear. But I think you understand it now."

"Yes, sir, thank you," replied Cadet Prescott.

"This is the way I would explain the problem," murmured Mr. Pratt, to Greg and Anstey. Just at that instant the yearling looked as though butter couldn't melt in his mouth.

Turning a bit, Pratt caught sight of the tac., who stood looking on as though transformed with wonder.

"Attention!" called Pratt at once.

All the others wheeled, Dick rising in order to do so. Six young men who looked intensely earnest over study, faced the O.C. respectfully.

Doubtless a bit taken back, certainly so if he had expected to find anything wrong, Captain Vesey took two steps into the room, glanced about him, then wheeled and walked out.

"I must be going now," uttered Yearling Judson a moment later.



"Call on me again, once in a while, if you need any help in math."

"Thank you very much, sir," murmured Cadet Prescott respectfully.

"Coming along now, Pratt?" called Judson.

"Yes; I must be getting back to my own bone," replied Yearling Pratt.

It would have been out of the question for yearlings to thank plebes for a service such as had just been rendered. So the late hazers merely stepped from the room.

"Odd! Mighty queer!" muttered Captain Vesey to himself, as he unhooked his sword and stood it in a corner over in the O.C.'s office. "Mr. Judson and Mr. Pratt have a pretty bad reputation for hazing. And yet, when I come upon them, it is to find them helping the poor young greenhorns through the mazes of math. I wonder if that was a put-up job on me."

"Well you are a silly ninny, Prescott!" uttered Cadet Dodge disgustedly.

"Meaning--what?" asked Dick coolly.

"Those yearlings were just about caught redhanded."

"Yes."

"And you had to go to work and arrange amateur dramatics like a flash. So when the tac. pops in here, he finds those most estimable young ruffians conducting an innocent day school here!"

"Well?" demanded Prescott.

"Why didn't you leave it for that yearling couple to pull their own chestnuts out of the fire?"

"Because," replied Dick quietly, "I'm not going to be the means, if I can help it of having any man kicked out of this corps when he's as anxious to be a soldier as I am!"

"You're a ninny, just the same!" Bert decided.

"And you're a hopeless minority here, Dodge, so come along back to our room," broke in Anstey. "We've some boning of our own to do before the call sounds for supper formation."

Before the battalion of cadets marched to supper, through the heavy storm that night, the news of Dick Prescott's inspiration had traveled pretty firmly through the yearling class.

It is against all West Point traditions to make a hero of a plebe. Not a word of congratulation came to Cadet Prescott. It wouldn't even save the young man from being the victim of a lot of hazing pranks, for these inflictions were deemed necessary to the plebe's training. None the less, the incident, as it became known, caused the impression to spread that Cadet Prescott was a good fellow and that he was likely to prove a credit to the grand old United States

Military Academy.

Hazing a thing of the past at West Point! The War Department and the authorities at the Military Academy have done all they could, and will continue to do all in their power to stamp out hazing.

Since the Congressional investigation in the early years of the present century, much has been done to cut down the rigor of hazing at West Point. General Mills stamped out much of it with iron vigor. Colonel Scott dealt many hard blows to the system. Other officers have bent their energies to the same problems. The way of the hazer is perilous nowadays. In a word, of late years hazing has been at a very low level at the United States Military Academy.

It is, however, a practical impossibility to stamp out hazing wholly in an institution where hazing has been one of the most cherished traditions through many generations of cadets.

The hazing of today is milder; there is less of it, and, with rare exceptions, it is less brutal. Yet hazing, in one form or another, will doubtless continue at West Point through the twentieth century as it did through the nineteenth.

The form of hazing has changed, if not the spirit. Sorely pressed by tactics, and by other officers stationed at West Point, the yearlings, or second-year men, who do most of the hazing, have developed new forms of the ancient sport, and some of these forms may be carried on in actual sight of an Army officer without exciting his suspicions.

Where possible, some of the old-style forms of more innocent and purely mischievous hazing are retained. Where "necessary" new hazes are employed that are bound to tax the best efforts of disciplinary or other officers to detect.

Hazing is one of the diversions of men of mature age on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Even in the United States Senate there are recognized ways of hazing a new Senator who displays too little reverence for the traditions of that august body.

Then why hope to abolish hazing utterly at West Point?

## CHAPTER VIII

### DICK BONES TROUBLE

As May drew on towards June there was, among the yearlings, a noticeable falling off of interest in hazing. Every second-year man in the corps found himself much more interested in his standing in his studies than formerly.

Several of the yearlings had reason to feel acutely concerned over their standing in academic work. That some of them would be "found" and dropped from the corps on account of their deficiencies was almost

a foregone conclusion.

So the warm nights of May found anxious young men in all the classes boning up to within a few minutes of the sound of taps.

Least anxious of all the cadets were the scores of new plebes. They had been required to report in March mainly that they might acquire the proper West Point habits of study and recitation before going into the summer encampment. Hence these new plebes were not

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