

LIFE AT WEST POINT.

Cadets Learn to Obey Before They Command.

Hard Work in Abundance for the Student of West Point—Infantry Drill, Artillery Practice.

Every one who travels for the first time along the beautiful Hudson between New York and Albany asks for West Point and is disappointed to find how little interest can be seen from the boat to the train. The United States Military Academy is on a broad plateau several hundred feet above the river and the railroads. It is well worth one's while, however, to stop off at West Point and proceed up the gradually ascending road to "the plain," says the Washington Star, which on a large scale corresponds on the usual college campus. Here the visitor finds a little world peculiar to itself. Nature and man have cooperated to make one of earth's most beautiful spots one of the most useful as well. Shut in by the Highlands of the Hudson, which rise in the rear of the grounds like small mountains, the military cadet learns the rudiments of the art of war amid the most peaceful surroundings. So quiet is the place that the casual visitor fancies the cadet must float as lazily through the academy as does the flag in the breeze.

Could the visitor follow the cadet from these military tasks he would conclude that the latter has a great deal to do besides wearing fine clothes and dancing the serenade. The writer has labored sixteen hours a day on the farm, but never in the busiest agricultural season did he work as he did while a cadet at West Point. To understand fully how this is true one must follow out in detail the comprehensive system requiring the great amount of work that the cadet is called upon to perform.

West Point, in view of its unique position in the educational world, has a system peculiarly its own. The line at which it divides from other great institutions is that it pays its students a small salary to cover all their expenses, while in the usual case it is the student who does the paying. This fact enables West Point to do about as it pleases in the matter of the individual cadet that much coveted privilege. The result is an iron discipline, which, with salutary restrictions, is wisely imposed on the student of the best interests of all concerned. It must be remembered that this is a national school, maintained by the people, and that the object in view is the education of an officer and soldier to represent those people in the army, all the more important on account of its small size, which forms the nucleus of their defenders.

By this time the visitor is inquiring about the trim cadet, whom he has seen disappearing around the corner of the barracks in response to the solemn call of a bugle. First of all, how did he become a cadet? He was appointed by the war department on the recommendation of his congressman. Each member of the lower House is entitled to have one cadet at the academy all the time. If each candidate that he nominated were admitted and graduated the congressman would have a selection every four years. Many candidates fall on the entrance examinations, and only about 50 per cent of those who are admitted are successful in graduating, so that every year or two the congressman is apt to find himself with a cadet appointment to bestow on some boy residing in his district, and between the ages of 17 and 22.

The president has the appointment of one cadet from the District of Columbia and ten from the United States at large. The "at large" appointments are usually given to the sons of army and navy officers, who, from the nature of their positions, do not, as a rule, remain long enough in one place to acquire the necessary legal residence. There are usually 400 or 500 applications for each of these appointments at the president's disposal. Those candidates who pass the entrance examinations are admitted in June, and immediately upon reporting at West Point, are put under military discipline, which, as long as they remain at the academy, never relaxes. These new arrivals are in the cadet barracks, and the separate part of cadet barracks to which the so-called animals are assigned rejoices in the name of "beast" barracks. Here for a few weeks the new cadet lives under supervision of an army officer, and in the immediate charge of cadet officers detailed for their instruction. Drills, marching and formations keep them busy from morning until night. The old cadets go into camp on a corner of the grounds about the middle of June, and the new cadets follow, and camp is maintained until the end of August. Meanwhile the new cadets have become full-fledged fourth-class men, and are now known as "plebes," a name which clings to them until the following June, or a whole year. A sharp line separates the plebe from his colleagues in the other three classes. Among his own classmates he is called by his last name, or, if popular, by his first, but to an upper classmate he is always "Mister" So-and-so. When addressing an older cadet he must always prefix a "Mister" and end up with a sir, and in return he receives the same courtesies with scrupulous exactness. The following dialogue between an old cadet and a plebe after his arrival in camp is of hourly occurrence:

"What is your name, sir?" "Mr. Smith, sir." "Where are you from, Mr. Smith?" "From California, sir." "Who was your 'pred,' (predecessor) sir?" "Mr. Jones, sir." "What was your previous condition of servitude, Mr. Smith?" "I was a student, sir."

Camp drags wearily by for the poor plebe, and it is a source of wonder to him that he has ever seen any attraction in the procession of arms. He sees to roll call, to squad drill, to company drill, to artillery drill. He marches to all of his meals at the mess hall a quarter of a mile away, with a cadet officer at his heels directing him to keep back his shoulders, to draw in his chin, to straighten out his knees, to hold up his head or to correct any or all of the thousand and one tendencies of the frail mortal in walking. In addition to the above duties he has to be in immaculate condition for dress parade, both morning and evening. He marches to instruction in swimming and in his dancing lesson. All cadets are taught to play the piano, and are not being recognized as having much more than a right to exist, do not attend the hops that are given in camp. Our democratic government insists that all shall have a fair show and an even chance by making them wait a year to start in so that the green, awkward boys shall not be so badly handicapped by those of their classmates who have had better early opportunities.

Having established the plebe in camp we may now turn our attention to those parts of the system which apply to all cadets alike. Unless failure in examination causes a cadet to be discharged from the service course, he does not, in general, leave West Point for two years from the time he enters. He then receives a furlough for two months and a half, and goes to enjoy the comforts and freedom of home, all the more appreciated by reason of long absence. The furlough summer is all too short, so pleasantly do the days fly. The released cadet enjoys every moment of his liberty. What other people regard as a matter of course he would regard as the greatest luxury. To be able to sit in rock-

AN OPEN POLAR SEA.

A Steamship Captain Who Said He Could Have Crossed It.

The Voyage of Captain Collinson and Sir John Franklin Revisited—Experiences of Whalers.

That steamers can pass through the Arctic ocean in certain years is the opinion of Captain A. H. McGregor, based upon his experience in the polar region. Captain McGregor has seen twenty-three years' service in the Arctic, and commands the steamer Orca, owned by the Pacific Whaling company, of San Francisco. He was at the hotel Perkins and talked of his experience. "Last year," he said, "nine of the Pacific Whaling company's steamers ships reached Cape Bathurst, the furthest point north and east ever reached by a vessel of any kind. We had been whaling in Behring sea, and having finished what is termed the outside catch, we started for the Arctic to finish the season. "We passed along the east shore, rounded Point Barrow, and then made the journey the cape, which is near the McKenzie river. We cast anchor and whaled there the rest of the season. The natives were somewhat surprised at our appearance, but as they had seen white men before they soon overcame what fear they might have felt and became very friendly. They did not differ in the least from other Eskimos. We sounded the ocean near the McKenzie and found that a boat drawing more than four feet of water could not approach within fifty miles of the river. The land on both sides was mountainous and covered with snow. The oldest native told us that it was many winters since white men came by the river, and he said that no boat had reached the cape since Captain Collinson was there in 1855. Captain Collinson and his party visited the most widely and favorably they were making a survey of the British possessions, but they were compelled to remain there three years before they returned.

"Sir John Franklin passed the cape in small boats on his famous expedition and came as far west as Franklin, in the return reef. There he evidently became disoriented, and he and his party started on their return trip. Had he known that he had a clear sea before him he doubtless would have continued on his way to the north. It is a question whether a vessel could reach Alaska from Greenland through the Arctic. He saw nothing but a motionless stretch of land and sea, and it appeared to be a closed sea ahead of him. He had kept in sight of shore during his entire expedition, and seeing nothing ahead but the coast he thought it was endless. When the return reef was reached, he turned back and that is the last known of him. "We could have made the trip from the Pacific to the Atlantic last year if we had so desired, but our business was whaling, not exploring. Natives at the cape, when questioned, told me that the ocean was fairly open three years out of four, and that there was a 'great big sea' one year in five. Last year was what they termed 'great big sea' and they said that the same conditions prevailed in 1855. A large vessel could not pass through a fairly open sea, so the chances of reaching Greenland through the Arctic sea are one in five. From this I am inclined to believe that both Franklin and Collinson entered the ocean when it was 'open.' "When Captain McGregor was asked about his experience as a whaler, he said: "Once in awhile we encounter some dangers, such as being caught in the ice, but such accidents are not frequent. A vessel will sometimes be 'stuck' for three or four weeks before it can be freed. The ice, and especially if it is damaged by collision with gigantic floes or by being caught between them. Planks are sometimes stove in, but there is no danger of sinking on account of the vessel's being thoroughly saturated with oil, very little attention is paid to such accidents. "After working through the ice, which is generally about June 1, the vessels try to get into Behring strait ahead of the whales. The strait is the narrowest point, and the object of the whalers is to get there first and take the whales as they come through on their way to the Arctic. The vessels cruise until July 1, when the whaling arrives from San Francisco with coal, potatoes and other supplies and takes the oil and whalebone. This is termed the outside catch. The whalers strike for the Arctic and finish the season there. They have communication with the natives all the time and exchange goods for their supplies for reindeer meat, fish, ducks and ptarmigan. When the season is ended some of the vessels put in at Port Clarence, the rendezvous for the fleet. "Captain McGregor said the Eskimos have made no advances to civilization. "An Eskimo told me that there is a tradition handed down from father to son that the boats and weapons of the hunt and chase are the same today as they were 500 years ago. The firearms and traps, tobacco and coffee were all introduced by white men. The Eskimo is satisfied with everything as he finds it and makes no effort to effect any improvements. The native population is rapidly diminishing. They cannot withstand the march of civilization, unused as they are to its luxuries and vices. "Four schools have been established for them in Alaska, and they are being taught to read and write, but it would be better for them if they were left alone. In their minds, the Eskimo is along well, but education is their moral ruin. When he learns to read and write, the native thinks he is the superior of his fellows and the conqueror of the white man, and he affects the white man's habits, whether moral or immoral. He goes to school simply for amusement. He wants to learn to read, write and talk that he may trade with the whites and be regarded as one of them. It cannot be said that the money expended on the schools has been well advised, for the Eskimo, only that the Eskimo is unlike the Indian, and the same method of training cannot be applied to both. "The Arctic is a cruel region, but the frigidly of the atmosphere cannot be felt through the furs that serve us as clothes. The mean temperature is 44 degrees below zero, but during the fifty-seven days that the sun is in sight the mercury rises to 30 degrees or 90 degrees."—Portland Oregonian.

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