

CHARLES KING

CADET DAYS,
A STORY OF
WEST POINT

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CHAPTER I

"Pops, there's no use talking; we've simply got to send you to the Point."

"I'm sure I wish you could, Colonel. Father's tried every way he could think of, but cadetships don't go a-begging – out here, at least. The President has only one or two 'at large' appointments this year, and there were over a thousand applications for them."

"Well, have you tried Mr. Pierce, the Congressman for this district?"

"Oh, yes, sir, tried him long ago. He was very polite – Congressmen always are. He asked me to go round and get all the signatures to my application I possibly could, and kept me running for six weeks or so. Then he gave it to Mr. Breifogle's son."

Colonel Belknap smiled. "Yes, I remember hearing," said he, reflectively, tapping his spurred boot-heel with his riding-switch and critically eying the sturdy young fellow who stood respectfully before him. George Graham, the post surgeon's eldest son, was just seventeen, of medium height, wiry and athletic in build, with deep chest and broad shoulders, with close-curling brown hair, with big, frank, steady blue eyes, and a complexion that was probably fair enough in his baby days, but now was so tanned by sun and wind that the down just sprouting on his cheeks and upper lip seemed almost white by contrast. A picture of boyish health, strength, and activity was "Geordie," as his mother ever called him in vain protest against the familiar "Pops" by which he was generally hailed – a pet name given him by the officers when he was but a "four-year-old," far out in Arizona – a boy who had been reared in the West, whose first playmate was a wild little Apache, whose earliest friends were the rough troopers at an isolated station; a boy who had been taught to hunt and trail and shoot the Indian arrow before he was nine; who had ridden "pony-back" across the continent from Arizona to Kansas with a cavalry column before he was ten; who had stalked an antelope along the Smoky Hill before he was twelve; who had shot a black bear in the Yellowstone Mountains when he was only fifteen; and raced a buffalo bull into the fords of Milk River within sight of the British possessions across latitude 49 within the following year. He had met and mingled with Indians of many a tribe. He had picked up something of the Apache tongue from his playmate Dick; had visited the Navajo Reservation, near old Fort Defiance, in New Mexico, and brought away as his very own one of their wonderful woven blankets. He had learned not a little of the sign-language, and so was able to communicate and make himself understood among even the Cheyenne urchins around Fort Supply. After that his father had been stationed just long enough at Niobrara to enable Geordie to feel quite at home among the Ogallala and Brulé Sioux, whose reservations were just across the Dakota line, and whose visits to the post were frequent. Then the doctor was ordered far up to Fort Assiniboine, where Pops expected to freeze, but found the summer days as hot as they were in Arizona, and the mosquitoes worse than they were at Supply. There he studied the Northern Indians, and came to the conclusion that the Blackfeet and Gros-Ventres could not be compared favorably with the lithe and sinewy and marvellously active Indians of Arizona. Geordie swore by the Apaches. There were no trailers like the Tontos; no bowmen or ball-players like the Hualpais. The Sioux and Cheyennes could ride, perhaps, but all the Sioux in Dakota could not whip Eskeldetsee's band "if you put 'em in the mountains" – which was probably true. And so by the time he was seventeen Geordie had ridden, marched, or travelled by ambulance, stage, or rail through most of the great Western States and Territories; but from the time he was four years old he had never been east of Omaha, or set foot in the streets of a bigger town than Cheyenne.

Nor had he ever regularly attended any school. There were no schools to speak of near any of the garrisons at which his father was stationed; but Dr. Graham was a man of scholarly tastes, a graduate

of a famous university in Scotland, and one who by faithful study kept abreast of the leading minds in his profession. People generally led a very healthful open-air life on the broad Western frontier, and Dr. Graham had few patients to claim his time. He planned, therefore, all the studies for his two boys, he himself hearing them recite in history, geography, and arithmetic, while their devoted mother, at whose knee they had successively learned their A B C's, and whose fragile white hand had guided their chubby fists in the tracing of their first pot-hooks, was their instructor in the other rudiments.

Regularly, five mornings a week, the little fellows were set at their books right after guard-mounting, and, with brief intermission, worked until the bugles sounded "orderly call," or the drums and fifes merrily played "Roast Beef of Old England" at noon. No wonder they learned to welcome that call. Then they had their frugal luncheon. The doctor was a stanch Scotchman, who believed that boyish brawn and brain thrive better on "parritch" and milk than on any other pabulum. Think of boys who never knew the taste of candy until after they were twelve – to whom hot biscuit was forbidden, and tea and coffee tabooed! They grew up ruddy-cheeked, freckle-faced, clear-eyed, sturdy-limbed, burly young "Hielanders," with marvellous capacity for solid food, sound sleep, and active sports. They were better taught than most of the other children around the garrisons, for what they knew they knew well. The three years' difference in their ages gave "Pops," of course, too much advantage in their boyish tiffs and scuffles; for boys will romp and wrestle, just as puppies play and kittens frolic, and these, starting in fun, close sometimes in fury; but they forget the feud as quickly as it was begun. Pops learned at an early age the lesson of self-restraint, the law of forbearance towards the younger and weaker brother. It was not learned intuitively, perhaps, but rather the reverse. The doctor was of a famous old Scotch Presbyterian clan, with a wholesome faith in Calvin and the doctrine of original sin. His gentle wife had thought to convert her eldest hope by appeals to his finer nature, but the doctor held that there was just so much of the "thrawn deevil" in every boy that had to be trounced out of him. It was all very well for Pops to tussle with his Apache playmate, and come home covered with dirt and bumps and glory, and explosive with tremendous tales of his personal valor – Pops would brag when he was young, and many another boy would have done the same under like conditions – but he was too big and strong for "Buddie;" and so when Bud came roaring in one day to tell how "Pops fwowed me down and hit me," Pops owned up that it was true. Bud *would* meddle with what he and Dick were trying to make, and he "just pushed him away." Mamma gravely admonished; but papa gave warning. It happened again before very long, and this time the doctor took Pops into his den, and presently poor Mrs. Graham ran to the dining-room and covered her ears, and Buddie howled in sudden revulsion of feeling. The doctor seldom punished, but what his right hand found to do he did with all his might.

"I want you to remember this, George," said he, half an hour later, "a manly boy must be merciful. It isn't enough that you should make allowances for Buddie's blunders, you must be lenient to his faults. When he is older he will be wiser. Meantime, the blows you strike must be for, not against him."

He needn't have said that. Pops was far readier to fight for his younger brother than he was to worry him in the least, and he took his flogging sorely to heart. He was only ten at the time. Bud had tried him severely. He had begged the little fellow to desist, and finally, losing all patience, had violated orders and thumped him – not very hard, perhaps, but still hard enough to warrant half at least of the pitiful tale the smaller boy ran to tell at once and at home. Geordie felt very much aggrieved at Bud when sent forth finally to go to his room and meditate on his sins and nurse his many sore spots; but when he saw the misery in the little fellow's face, when Bud, with fresh outburst of tears, threw himself into his brother's arms, clung to him sobbing, and could not say for the very violence of his grief how he hated himself for telling, the reconciliation was complete, and the three – mother and boys – stole away up-stairs and had a hug and cry together all by themselves, and came down again an hour later much happier after all, and quite ready to make it up with papa. But the doctor wasn't there. He had slipped out, despite the fact of its being his study hour, and was found at tea-time

miserably promenading the bank of the stream half a mile from the post, and quite unconscious that the evening gun had fired. He never whipped Pops again; indeed, the boy gave him no cause to; and he never thrashed Buddie, even when that unrepentant little sinner well deserved it. He even declined to reprimand Pops at the excited appeal of Mrs. Captain Vaughan, whose twelve-year-old son came home from the swimming-pool, five days after, with a battered countenance, and a complaint that he had been beaten without cause by Pops Graham. Investigation of the case resulted in the fact that young Vaughan was trying to duck Buddie, when the latter's big brother happened upon the scene. Between the doctor and his boys there grew up a sort of tacit understanding, a firmly grounded trust and affection, that seldom found vent in caress of any kind, and was rarely apparent in word. George shot up from sturdy boyhood into athletic youth with thorough faith in his father, who, he believed, was the best friend he had or could expect to have. With all his heart he honored him, and with all his soul he loved his mother.

And now they were stationed at Fort Reynolds, with a thriving Western mining metropolis just six miles away to the east, with hunting and fishing in the lofty mountains to the west, and a great tumbling sea of grassy prairie stretching away to the east and south. Geordie's pony had been turned over to Bud long months ago, for the bigger boy could back and ride and control the liveliest buckner among all the bronchos in the cavalry stables. Officers and troopers alike declared that Pops was cut out for the cavalry. He loved a horse. He had broken and trained his last possession, a "cayuse" colt from the herd of old Two Moons, chief of the northern Cheyennes. He had ridden and hunted by himself, or with a single trooper for a companion, all through the mountains that frowned across the western sky, rarely coming home without an abundant supply of venison or bear meat, and still faithfully kept up his studies, hoping that by some good-fortune he might succeed in getting an appointment to the great Military Academy of the nation – hoping almost against hope, yet never desponding. At last it came, and this was the way of it.

Just as the wintry winds began to blow, and the soldiers, turning out for roll-call at the break of day, began to note how the mountains seemed to be wearing their fleecy nightcaps farther down about their ears until the bald peaks were covered with a glistening, spotless helmet, and the dark fringes of pine and fir down among the gorges and foot-hills looked all the blacker by contrast, there came a fresh battalion of cavalry marching into the post to relieve the – th just ordered away, and Pops had sadly bidden adieu to the departing troops, little dreaming what warm friends he was destined to find among the new. First to arrive, with a single orderly in attendance, was the regimental quartermaster, Lieutenant Ralph McCrea, and to him said the quartermaster whom McCrea was to relieve:

"Mac, this young gentleman is Dr. Graham's son George, our candidate for West Point. He knows plainscraft, woodcraft, and mountain scouting as well as you do mathematics. He can ride as well as any man in my troop. Give him a lift in algebra and 'math.,' and he'll teach you all there is worth knowing about this part of the country."

The kindly young West-Pointer seemed to take at once to the surgeon's blushing boy. In the wintry weather that speedily set in there was little opportunity for hunting or exploration in the mountains; but in the long evenings McCrea became a frequent visitor at Dr. Graham's fireside, and finding that Pops had a sound analytical sort of brain in his curly pate, the quartermaster took delight in giving him stiff problems to work out, and taught him the West Point system of deducing rules instead of blindly following without knowing why or wherefore; and the friendship between them waxed and multiplied, and McCrea became warmly enlisted in the effort to secure a vacant cadetship for his boy friend. But knowing there was no chance "at large," as the President had already named his two candidates, the boy had done his best with the local Congressman, who, as Pops had said, had been most gracious and encouraging, but had bestowed the plum upon the son of his rich and influential constituent, Mr. Breifogle, whose brewery gave employment to over fifty voters. As alternate he had named the son of Counsellor Murphy, a lively local politician, and Pop's hopes were dashed.

Not so McCrea's. As quartermaster his duties called him frequently into town, where the First National Bank was the depository, and where he kept the large fund appropriated for rebuilding stables and quarters that had been destroyed by fire the previous year. "Neither of those young fellows," said he to Dr. Graham, "can pass the preliminary examination. It is by long odds too stiff for Breifogle mentally and for Murphy physically. Keep this to ourselves, and get Mr. Pierce to promise that George shall have the next vacancy. If we can get the Colonel to ask it, Pierce will say yes, perhaps; first because they served together in Virginia during the war, and second because he won't think he's promising anything at all. It's his first term, and he doesn't dream how hard that examination is, or how certain Breifogle is to fail. Now, if there were only some way we could 'get a pull' on him."

The way came sooner than was looked or hoped for. One December afternoon, just as the lights were peeping out here and there in the bustling shops of the busy Western town, and a thick, heavy cloud of snow was settling noiselessly upon roof and roadway, and all the foot-hills to the west were robed in white, and all the mountain passes deep in drifts, and the managers of the First National were congratulating themselves that their collections in the swarming mining settlements across the range were complete, and the thousands in coin and greenbacks safely hoarded in their vaults, and brewer Breifogle and two other opulent directors were seated with the president in the bank parlor, rubbing their hands over the neat balance exhibited, and discussing the propriety of a congratulatory despatch to Congressman Pierce, now at his post of duty at Washington, and the paying-teller had just completed the summing up of his cash account, and the bookkeeper was stowing away his huge volumes, and a clerk was lugging sacks of coin and stacks of Treasury notes into the open door of the vault, under the vigilant eye of the cashier, and the janitor had pulled down the shades and barred the iron shutters, and everything spoke eloquently of business security and prosperity – in stepped a squad of velvet-footed, soft-voiced, slouch-hatted strangers, and in the twinkling of an eye cashier and clerk, tellers, book-keeper, and janitor were as completely covered by six-shooters as the newcomers were with snow. It was a clear case of "hands up, everybody." Two of the party sidled into the parlor and stood guard over the magnates, three or four held the outer officials in statuesque discomfort, while two deft-handed individuals loaded up with bills and bags of gold, and vanished softly as they came. Their comrades gave them a start of sixty seconds, and then slowly and calmly backed out into the street, revolvers levelled to the last, and in less than four minutes from the moment of their entrance not one of the gang was in sight. Timing their arrival exactly, they had ridden into town from the northwest just at dusk, left their strong, spirited horses, held by accomplices in a side street not fifty yards away; were in and out, up and away again, in less time than it takes to tell it, and with them ninety thousand dollars in cash.

Vain the rush of clerks and tellers and directors into the snow-covered street. Vain the yells of "Murder!" "Robbers!" "Road-agents!" A crowd collected in a few minutes, but all were afoot and powerless to follow. It would be an hour before the sheriff could muster a mounted party strong enough to pursue; but he had his wits about him.

"It's the old Hatton gang, sure!" he cried. "They dare not go to the mines. They'll make for Marcy's Pass, and scatter when they get to the cove beyond. There's only one hope." And like a deer the active frontiersman ran to the telegraph office.

"Rush this out to the fort!" he cried, as he pencilled a despatch.

"First National just robbed by Hatton gang. Ten men. Ninety thousand gone. Government funds mostly. ["That'll make him act," he muttered.] They're making for Marcy's Pass. You can head 'em off by Squaw Cañon if you send cavalry at once. We follow trail. Answer.

"Brent, Sheriff."

Colonel Belknap, with a knot of officers, was in the club-room just after stables when the despatch was handed to him by the breathless operator. He was an old campaigner, who had served almost a lifetime in the West.

"Mount your troop instantly, Lane!" he called to one of his most trusted captains. "Never mind their supper; they can have that later. Listen to this." And he read the despatch aloud.

The entrance to Marcy's Pass lay about nine miles nearly due west from town. Hatch's Cove was a lovely nook in the summer-time, but almost inaccessible in winter, lying across the range, and approached from the east by the old road through the Pass. Lance Creek, a clear and beautiful stream, rose in the cove and made its way through the range by means of a tortuous and wellnigh impassable gorge known as Squaw Cañon, which opened into the foot-hills not more than two miles and a half away to the westward of Fort Reynolds. All this was promptly discussed even as the sergeants' voices could be heard ringing out the order in the barrack corridors across the parade.

"Turn out, 'E' troop, lively; carbines and revolvers, fur coats and gloves. Jump now, men!"

Down went knife and fork, cup and spoon. Up sprang the laughing, chaffing, boisterous crowd of the moment before. Away they tore to their bunk-room, and grabbed their great-coats and furs; away to the arm-racks for carbine and six-shooter. Quickly they buckled the broad woven cartridge-belts, and then went bounding down the barrack stairs, forming ranks in the softly falling snow. Double time they trotted down to the long, dimly lighted stables, and in among their astonished and snorting horses. In ten minutes they were trotting away to the westward through wellnigh impenetrable darkness, through a muffling snowfall, over an unseen and unknown trail, yet hesitating not a minute; trotting buoyantly, confidently ahead, following a guide who knew every inch of the way to and through the cañon and miles and miles beyond.

"Who can lead them? What scouts have you on your roll who know the hills?" was the Colonel's anxious query of his quartermaster, while the troop was saddling.

"No scouts left, sir, now; but we don't need them. Here's Geordie Graham."

Yes, Pops, and the doctor too, both in saddle and ready; so was McCrea, and so it happened that less than an hour later Luke and Jim Hatton, leaders of the band, bearers of most of the spoil, a hundred yards ahead of their fellows as they issued from the westward end of Marcy's Pass, deeming themselves perfectly secure from any capture except from the rear, ten safe miles away from town, rode slap in among a whole troop of cavalry, and were knocked on the head, disarmed, dismounted, and relieved of their plunder before they could fire a shot or utter a cry of warning.

"We never could have got them in all the world, sir," said both Lane and McCrea, "but for Pops here. He knew the way, even in the dark, and we headed them off in the nick of time."

It was this service that called forth Colonel Belknap's remarks at the head of this chapter. It was this that prompted him to say to the officers of the First National next day that the least they could do was to telegraph the Honorable Mr. Pierce, M.C., urging him to promise that the next vacancy at West Point should be filled by George Montrose Graham. It was the despatch signed by these officials and a dozen leading citizens – for McCrea struck while the iron was hot, and took the paper around himself – that caused Mr. Pierce to wire his pledge in reply. And one day in February there came a note to Dr. Graham's, saying that Counsellor Murphy had been convinced by the leading medical practitioner in town that his boy could never pass the physical examination at the Point, and would better be turning his talents to some other channel, and then Colonel Belknap reminded Mr. Pierce of his promise, and Pierce was caught. On Valentine's Day in 188 – , to Geordie Graham's speechless joy and Buddie's enthusiastic delight, a big official envelope of the War Department was placed in the former's hand. He knew what it meant. He went over and threw his arms around his mother's neck and bent and kissed her, for her loving eyes were swimming in tears.

CHAPTER II

Among the formal official documents in the envelope which brought such delight to the Graham family was one giving in detail the qualifications necessary to secure the admission of a candidate to West Point. He was subjected soon after his arrival, so said the papers, to a rigid physical examination by a board of experienced surgeons. Glancing over the array of causes of disqualification, it was apparent to the doctor that an absolutely perfect physique was necessary, but on all these points he felt well assured. As to other qualifications, the age for admission of cadets to the Academy was stated to be between seventeen and twenty-two years. Candidates must be unmarried, at least five feet in height, free from any infectious or immoral disorder, and generally from any deformity, disease, or infirmity which might in the faintest degree render them unfit for military service. They must be well versed in reading, in writing, including orthography, in arithmetic, and have a knowledge of the elements of English grammar, of descriptive geography, particularly of our own country, and of the history of the United States. That seemed simple enough. On all these points Geordie, as well as his father, had no doubt whatever. "Sound as a dollar" was the universal verdict, and the wisdom of his father's rigid system of training was all the more apparent. But when they came to look over the formidable list of specimens of the problems and questions which the candidates were required to solve and answer, the boy's heart failed him a little. Even McCrea shook his head over some of them.

"It is ten years since I went up for my examination, just as you are to go, Pops – an army boy who had had precious little schooling; but I don't remember any problems as hard as this one." And the Quartermaster wrinkled his brows over a complicated example, while Captain Lane, poring over a big atlas, was hunting for a chain of mountains he could not remember ever before having heard of.

"It seems a queer confession," said the latter, "but I don't believe I could begin to pass the entrance examination to the Academy, from which I was graduated so many years ago. I certainly couldn't without months of preparation."

The Colonel suggested that perhaps these hard nuts were ladled out in order to stimulate the candidate to closer study. The questions really propounded would not be so difficult. But the doctor and McCrea were determined to take no chances.

"There are only three months left for preparation," said Graham; "the question is how to employ the time to best advantage. George is willing to study hard, and you and I to teach, but what I'm thinking is that we may be wasting time on immaterial points and neglecting some that are essential. Would it not be best to send him on and have him study under some one who knows just exactly what is needed?"

And McCrea said, "Yes," and wrote forthwith to an old friend, an officer whom severe wounds had incapacitated for active service, and who had opened a school of preparation at the Point adapted to the needs of candidates for admission. And so it resulted that early in April, for the first time in his life, Geordie Graham was to leave father, mother, and Bud, and, for the first time since he was a mere baby-boy, to set foot across the Missouri.

Over that farewell we need not linger. How many big, salty tears were dropped into the depths of the trunk no one on earth but the loving mother who packed it could ever tell. Yet even now, face to face with the inevitable separation, not one word would she say that might cast a shadow over the hopes of her big boy, as she spoke of Geordie as a means of distinguishing him from Bud, her "little Benjamin." Fondly had she hoped that as he grew older Geordie's tastes would turn to some other profession, but she hoped in vain. First, last, and all the time, ever since the troopers at Verde decorated him with his Corporal's chevrons when he was a mite of a four-year-old, the longing of his heart was to be a soldier. For boys with that ambition there is no school like West Point; for boys without it, any other school would be better.

"There isn't a man in all 'E' troop that isn't sorry to have you leave the fort, Geordie," said old Sergeant Nolan, as the boy went the rounds at afternoon stables, bidding his friends good-bye, and taking a farewell look at his favorite horses; "but what's more, sir," he added, with a respectful touch of the cap visor as Captain Lane appeared, "there isn't a man but that's glad he's going to West Point, and that wouldn't like to see him with us again as our Lieutenant."

"But I'm not in yet, Sergeant," laughed Geordie. "There is Mr. Breifogle to be considered. If he passes, there'll be no room for me; and if he fails, why, I may too. In that event, I'll have to come back and 'list just as soon as I'm eighteen."

And yet Geordie felt no such misgiving as he sat silently in the dark corner of the ambulance, choking down some troublesome lumps that had risen in his throat, and made his eyes blind as his mother's arms were unclasped about his neck. The principal of the school which young Breifogle had been attending for two years had told Mr. McCrea that the boy was neither apt nor studious, that he had twice failed in his examinations for promotion to higher grade, and that only after infinite pains and much help had he been able to answer the sample questions enclosed with his letter of appointment. When asked why old Mr. Breifogle did not withdraw his son from a race in which he had no chance, the master laughed.

"Breifogle is like a great many of our people who have become suddenly rich," said he. "He thinks money and a political pull will do anything. He refuses to believe that West Point is governed by rules that even the President cannot violate. He is confident that all that is necessary is for him to go on with Fritz in June, and the examiners will not dare reject him, especially if Congressman Pierce is there, too."

Now this was no exaggeration. Mr. Breifogle really thought it a very unjustifiable thing in an army officer, supporting a family on so small a salary, to undergo the expense of sending George all the way to West Point and back, for back he felt sure he would have to come. It was still worse to send him ahead of time and pay board and school bills. He and Fritz would not go until June.

"I'm really sorry for the old fellow," said McCrea; "he's so thoroughly earnest and honest in his convictions. It isn't his fault, either. It is part of the stock in trade of many politicians to make their constituents believe that for the benefit of their special friends they have it in their power to set aside laws, rules, or regulations. I haven't a doubt that Pierce has made the old man believe he 'stands' in with the Secretary of War and the Superintendent of the Academy, and that Fritz will go through West Point with flying colors. It will cost Breifogle nearly a thousand dollars to find out his mistake."

This was several years ago, it must be remembered, in the days when all candidates were required to present themselves for examination at the Point instead of appearing before boards of army officers at convenient garrisons throughout the country, as is the case to-day.

"No, Geordie, my boy," said McCrea, in conclusion, "I don't like to take comfort in another man's misfortunes, but there is no chance whatever for young Breifogle and every chance for you. All you have to do is study and you'll win. I have said as much to the old man, for he stopped me at the bank the other day and asked what I thought of the case, and I told him frankly. For a moment he looked downcast; then he brightened up all of a sudden, laid his finger alongside his nose, and winked at me profoundly. 'Vell, you yust vait a leetle,' he said, and turned away. I've no doubt he thinks I'm only trying to bluff him out in your interest."

Two days more, and George, standing on the rear platform of the Pullman, looking down with no little awe upon the swollen, turbid, ice-whirling waters of the Missouri, far beneath the splendid spans of the great railway bridge. Another day, and his train seemed to be rolling through miles of city streets and squares before it was finally brought to a stand under the grimy roof of the station at Chicago. Here from the windows of the rattling omnibus that bore him across the town to the depot of the Michigan Central he gazed in wonderment at the height of the buildings on every side. Early the next morning he was up and dressed, and just before sunrise stepped out on the wooden staging at Falls View, listening to the voice and seeing for the first time the beauty and grandeur of

Niagara. A few minutes later, looking from the car window, he seemed to be sailing in mid-air over some tremendous gorge, in whose depths a broad torrent of deep green water, flecked with foam and tossing huge crunching masses of ice, went roaring away beneath him. *Such* a letter as he wrote to mother that morning, as hour after hour he sped along eastward over bands of glistening steel, flying like the wind, yet so smoothly that his pen hardly shook. Think what a revelation it must have been to that frontier-bred boy, whose whole life had been spent among the mountains or prairies of the Far West, to ride all the morning long through one great city after another, through the heart of Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, and Albany. The Mohawk Valley seemed one long village to him, so unaccustomed were his eyes to country thickly settled. The Hudson, still fettered with ice above the railway bridge and just opening below, set his heart to beating, for now West Point lay but a hundred miles away. How the train seemed to whiz along those bold, beautiful shores, undulating at first, but soon becoming precipitous and rocky! Many people gazed from the westward windows at the snow-covered Catskills as the afternoon began to wane; but Geordie had seen mountains beside which these were but hillocks. The clustering towns, the frequent rush of engines and cars, the ever-increasing bustle, however, impressed him greatly. Every now and then his train fairly shot past stations where crowds of people stood waiting.

"Didn't they want to get on?" he asked the Pullman porter.

"Oh yes, sir, wanted to bad 'nough; but, Lord bless you, dis train don't stop for them: they has to wait for the locals. We runs a hundred trains a day along here. Dis train don't even stop where you gets off, sir; that's why you have to change at Poughkeepsie, the only place we stop between Albany and New York."

Surely enough, they rolled in presently under lofty bluffs under a bridge so high in the air that its trusses looked like a spider-web, and then stopped at a station thronged with people; and Pops, feeling not a little bewildered, found himself standing with his hand luggage, looking blankly after the car that had borne him so comfortably all the way from Chicago, and now disappeared in the black depths of the stone-faced tunnel to the south, seeming to contract like a leaking balloon as it sped away. Hardly was it out of sight when another train slid in to replace it, and everybody began tumbling aboard.

"This for Garrisons?" he asked a bearded official in blue and brass buttons.

A nod was the answer. Railway men are too busy to speak; and Pops followed the crowd, and took a seat on the river-side. The sun was well down to the westward now; the Hudson grew broader, blacker, and deeper at every turn; the opposite shores cast longer shadows; the electric lights were beginning to twinkle across the wide reach at Newburg; then a rocky islet stood sentinel half-way across to a huge rounded rock-ribbed height. The train rushed madly into another black tunnel, and came tearing forth at the southern end, and Pops's heart fairly bounded in his breast. Lo! there across the deep narrow channel towered Crow's Nest and Storm King. This was the heart of the Highlands. Never before had he seen them, yet knew them at a glance. What hours had he not spent over the photograph albums of the young graduates? Another rush through rocky cuts, and then a smooth, swift spin around a long, gradual curve, lapped by the waters of the Hudson, and there, right before his eyes, still streaked with snow, was West Point, the flag just fluttering from its lofty staff at the summons of the sunset gun.

Ten minutes later and the ferry-boat was paddling him across the river, almost the only passenger. The hush of twilight had fallen. The Highlands looked bare and brown and cheerless in their wintry guise. Far away to the south the crags of Dunderberg were reverberating with the roar of the train as it shot through Anthony's Nose. The stars were just beginning to peep out here and there in the eastern sky, and a pallid crescent moon hung over against them in the west. All else was dark and bleak. The spell of the saddest hour of the day seemed to chill the boy's brave heart, and for the first time a homesick longing crept over him. This was the cheery hour at the army fireside, far out among the Rockies – the hour when they gathered about the open hearth and heaped on the

logs, and mother played soft, sweet melodies at the piano, often the songs of Scotland, so dear to them all. Pops couldn't help it; he was beginning to feel a little blue and cold and hungry. One or two passengers scurried ashore and clambered into the yellow omnibus, waiting there at the dock as the boat was made fast in her slip.

"Where do you go?" asked the driver of the boy.

"Send my trunk up to the hotel," said Geordie, briefly. "I'm going to walk."

They had figured it all out together before he started from home, he and Mr. McCrea. "The battalion will be coming in from parade as you reach the Point, Geordie, if your train's on time." And the boy had determined to test his knowledge of topography as learned from the maps he had so faithfully studied. Slinging his bag into the 'bus, he strode briskly away, crossed the tracks of the West Shore Road, turned abruptly to his right, and breasted the long ascent, the stage toiling behind him. A few minutes' uphill walk, and the road turned to the left near the top of the bluff. Before him, on the north, was the long gray massive façade of the riding-hall; before him, westward, another climb, where, quitting the road, he followed a foot-path up the steep and smoothly rounded terrace, and found himself suddenly within stone's-throw of the very buildings he sought. At the crest of the gentle slope to the north, the library with its triple towers; to its left, the solid little chapel; close at hand to his right front, the fine headquarters' building; beyond that, dim and indistinct, the huge bulk of the old academic building; and directly ahead of him, its great windows brilliantly lighted, a handsome gray stone edifice, with its arched doorway and broad flight of steps in the centre – the cadet mess-hall, as it used to be termed, the Grant Hall of to-day. His pulses throbbed as he stepped across the road and stood on the flag-stones beneath the trees. A sentry sauntering along the walk glanced at him keenly, but passed him by without a word.

Suddenly there rose on the still evening air the tramp of coming soldiery, quick and alert, louder and louder, swifter than the bounding of his heart and far more regular. Suddenly through the broad space between the academic and the north end of the mess-hall, straight as a ruler, came the foremost subdivision, the first platoon of Company A, and instantly in response to the ringing order, "Column right," from some deep manly voice farther towards the rear, the young cadet officer in front whirled about and ordered "Right wheel." Another second and around swept the perfect line in the heavy gray overcoats, the little blue forage-caps pulled well down over the smooth-shaved, grave, yet youthful faces dimly seen under the gaslight. Then on they swept, platoon after platoon, in strong double rank, each in succession wheeling again steadily to the right as it reached the broad flight of steps, then breaking and bounding lightly to the top, every man for himself, until, one after the other, each of the eight subdivisions was swallowed up in the great hall, echoing for a moment with chat and laughter, the rattle of chairs, the clatter of knife and fork and spoon, and then the big doors swung to, and Pops, for the first time in his life, had seen the famous battalion which it was his most ardent wish to join. For a moment he stood there silent, his heart still beating high, then with one long sigh of mingled envy and gratification he turned away.

That same evening, wasting no time after he had eaten a hearty supper at Craney's, Geordie sought and found Lieutenant B – . Everything had been arranged by letter; his coming was expected, and in a few moments the boy and his instructor were seated in a quiet room, and Pops's preliminary examination was really begun. In less than an hour Mr. B – had decided pretty thoroughly where his instruction was already satisfactory and where it was incomplete.

"There's no question as to your physique, Mr. Graham," said the Lieutenant, smiling to see the blush of shy delight with which the boy welcomed the first use of the "handle" to his name. Hitherto he had been Geordie or Pops to everybody. "I fancy it won't take long to make you more at home in mathematics. To-morrow we'll move you into your temporary quarters down at the Falls, and next day begin studies. There are several candidates on the ground already."

And so within the week our young plainsman was practically in harness, and with a dozen other aspirants trudging twice a day over the mile of road connecting the Point and the village below;

studying hard, writing home regularly, hearing a great deal of information as to the antecedents and expectations of most of his new associates, but partly from native reticence and partly from due regard of McCrea's cautions, saying little as to his past experiences, and nothing at all as to his hopes for the future. "No matter what you do know of actual service, Pops – and you have had more experience of army life than ninety-nine per cent. of the corps – it is best not to 'let on' that you know anything until you are an old cadet, even among your class-mates."

Some of his new associates Pops found congenial, some antagonistic; but the one thing he kept in mind was that all were merely conditional. Not until after the June examination would they really know who were and who were not to be of "the elect." "Those who are most volubly confident today," wrote McCrea, "are the ones who will be most apt to fail. Keep your own counsel, 'give every man thine ear and few thy voice' – and that's all."

George had some novel experiences in those days of preparation, and met some odd characters among the boys, but as few of these had any bearing on his subsequent history they need not be dwelt upon. With only one did he strike up anything approximating an intimacy, and that was after the first of May and was unavoidable, because the young fellow became his room-mate, for one thing, and was so jolly, cheery, confident, and enthusiastic, for another, that Graham simply couldn't help it.

Along in May his letters had a good deal to say about Mr. Frazier, and by June the Falls began to fill up with young fellows from all over the country. By this time the daily sight of the battalion at its drills and parades was perfectly familiar to those on the ground, and yet the gulf between cadets and candidates seemed utterly unbridgable. Dr. Graham had thought it a good thing for Geordie to go with letters of introduction from Colonel Fellows, of Fort Union, to his son, a Second Class man, or from Major Freeland, of Bridger, whose boy was in the Third, but McCrea said: "No; there is just one way to win the respect and good-will of the corps of cadets," he declared, "and all the letters and all the fathers and uncles and even pretty sisters combined can't win it any other way. The boy must earn it himself, and it isn't to be earned in a month, either. Every tub stands on its own bottom there, doctor. The higher a fellow's connections, the more he has to be taken down. Leastwise, it was so in my time, and West Point is deteriorating if it is any different now."

Strange, therefore, as it may seem, though he knew many a cadet by sight and name, not one had George Graham become acquainted with until the momentous 15th of June, when, with a number of other young civilians, he reported himself in a room in the eighth division of barracks to Cadet Lieutenant Merrick; was turned over to Cadet Corporal Stone to be taken to the hospital for physical examination, and in one of the surgeons recognized an old friend of his father's whom he knew in Arizona, but who apparently didn't know Geordie from Adam. One hundred and forty-seven young fellows entered the hospital hopefully that day, and among these over twenty-five were rejected. Among those who passed was Breifogle. The old gentleman himself was on hand in front of the mess-hall, when next morning those who had passed the scrutiny of the surgeons were marshalled thither to undergo the written examination in arithmetic.

Promptly, under the eye of the Professor of Mathematics, a number of young officers assigned the candidates to seats and set them at their tasks. Geordie felt that his face was very white, but he strove to think of nothing but the work in hand. Slowly he read over the twelve problems on the printed page, then, carefully and methodically, began their solution. Long, long before he was through he saw Frazier rise and, with confident, almost careless mien, hand his complete work to the secretary, and saunter out into the sunshine. Long before he had finished he saw many another go, less jauntily, perhaps, but with quiet confidence.

One by one most of Mr. B – 's pupils finished inside the allotted two hours and a half; but Geordie, with the thoroughness of his race, again and again went over his work before he was satisfied he, at least, could not improve it. Then he arose, and trembling a bit despite himself, handed his paper to the silent officer. A number, fully twenty, were still seated, some of them helplessly biting their pencils and looking furtively and hopelessly about them. One of these was Fritz Breifogle, for whom

the old gentleman was still waiting on the walk outside. Some officers, noticing the father's anxiety, had kindly invited him into the mess-parlor, and had striven to comfort him with cooling drink and a cigar. He was grateful, but unhappy. Already it had begun to dawn upon him that what he had been told of West Point was actually true: neither money nor influence could avail, and Fritz was still at his fruitless task when "the hammer fell."

Another day and the suspense was over. A score more of the young fellows, who were still faintly hopeful at dinner-time, were missing at the next muster of the candidates at retreat. Breifogle was gone without a word to his alternate. The way was clear at last, and, more madly than ever, Pops's heart bounded in his breast as in stern official tone Cadet Corporal Loring read rapidly the alphabetical list of the successful candidates – George Montrose Graham among them.

CHAPTER III

And now, with examinations over, and no remaining doubts or fears, there was probably no happier boy in all the "menagerie" than Geordie Graham. As for the hundred young fellows in civilian dress, "herded" three and four in each room, and wrestling with their first experiences of cadet life, it is safe to say most of the number were either homesick or in some way forlorn. Nothing so utterly destroys the glamour that hovers over one's ideas of West Point as the realities of the first fortnight. Of his three room-mates *pro tempore*, Bennie Frazier had already announced time and again that if a beneficent Creator would forgive him the blunder of coming here at all, he'd square accounts by quitting as quick as he possibly could. Winn, a tall Kentuckian, wanted to resign, but was too plucky. Connell, a bulky young Badger, had written two terrific screeds to his uncle, the member from Pecatonica, denouncing the cadet officials as brutes, bullies, and tyrants, which documents were duly forwarded with appropriate complaint to the War Department, and formed the text for a furious leader in the *Pecatonica Pilot*, clamoring for the abolition of West Point. The letters were duly referred to the Superintendent United States Military Academy for remark, and by him to the commandant of cadets, by which time Mr. Connell was a duly accredited high private in the rear rank of Company B, and had almost forgotten the woes of early barrack days, and was not a little abashed and dismayed when summoned before the grave, dignified Colonel to make good his allegations. It took him just ten seconds to transfer any lingering resentment for the cadet corporals to the avuncular M. C., whom with boyish inconsistency he now berated for being such a fool as to make a fuss about a little thing like that. Among the new cadets were a very few who, as sons of army officers, knew perfectly well what they had to expect. These and a number of young fellows who, like Graham, had come on months or weeks beforehand and placed themselves under tuition, were well prepared for the ordeal of the entrance examinations as well as for other ordeals which followed.

Even among them, however, were many who looked upon life with eyes of gloom. The ceaseless routine of drill, drill, of sharp reprimand, of stern, unbending discipline, wofully preyed upon their spirits. Their hearts were as sore as their unaccustomed muscles. But with Pops all was different. He had reached at last the goal of his ambition. He had won his way through many a discouragement to the prize of a cadetship. Now he was ready, even eager, to be tried and tested in every way, to show his grit, and to prove his fitness for the four years' race for the highest prize of all, the diploma and commission. The drill that made his comrades' muscles ache was a bagatelle to him. From earliest boyhood he had watched the recruits at setting-up, and not only learned and practised all, but with Bud and Dick for his squad would often convulse the officers at Verde and Supply by his imitation of Sergeant Feeny's savage Hibernian manner. The cadet yearling who was drill-master of the four to which Pops was assigned saw at once that he had a "plebe corporal" – a young fellow who had been pretty well drilled – and all the more did he rasp him when anything went amiss. Many of the new-comers had been through squad-drill at military schools or in cadet companies, but never under such rigid, relentless discipline as this. Every cadet drill-master carried the steel rammer of his rifle as a drill-stick, and was just about as unbending as his rod of office. Poor Frazier was in hot-water all the time – as well as in the sulks.

"I belonged to the high-school cadets for two years, and everybody that ever saw us drill said we could lay over anything in the whole country," he protested, "and now here's this measly little stuck-up prig, that probably never knew anything about drill until he entered here last year, correcting and finding fault with everything I do. I ain't going to stand it, by thunder! I've written to my father to come on again, and just have this thing attended to right off." And Frazier's handsome boyish face was flushed with wrath, and clouded with a sense of wrong and indignity. "It seems to me if I were in your place I wouldn't stand being abused either, Graham. I heard Mr. Flint snapping at you again this morning."

Pops was busily engaged dusting for the tenth time the iron mantel-shelf and the little looking-glass. He half turned. "Wa-e-l," he said, while a grin of amusement hovered about the corners of his mouth, "Flint was all right, I guess. Your squad was just in front of us, and when I saw Connell stumble over your heels and try to climb up your back, I laughed out loud. He caught me chuckling."

"Yes, and abused you like a pick-pocket, by jingo! If my father were an officer in the regular army, as yours is, it wouldn't happen twice to me."

"No, nor to me either," chimed in Connell. "I'll bet you he'd sing a mighty different tune if he knew you were the son of a Major."

"Well, there's just where you're 'way off," answered Geordie, after the manner of the frontier. "Of all places in creation this is the one where one's dad cuts no figure whatever. I've often heard old officers say that the boys who got plagued and tormented most in their time were the fellows whose fathers were generals or cabinet ministers. Fred Grant wouldn't have had half as hard a time if his father hadn't been President. Frazier's whole trouble comes from letting on that he knew all about drill before he got here; that's the truth of it. I get along smoothly by pretending never to have known anything."

"Oh, a lot you have! If that snob Loring ever speaks to me as he spoke to you this morning about laughing in the ranks, I'll – I'll just let him have my fist between the eyes, and he'll see more stars than he ever saw before, if he is a color corporal. What'll your father say when he hears that he threatened to put you in a cell just for laughing when that Pike County fellow knocked his hat off trying to salute?"

"Well, he didn't say cell, in the first place, and father wouldn't hear it from me, at least, if he had. It's an understood thing at home that they're to ask no questions, and I'm to tell no tales until plebe camp is over and done with. Plebes don't begin to have the hard times now that they had thirty years ago, and if they could stand it then, I can now. All you've got to do is simply make up your mind to grin and bear it; do just as you're told, and say nothing about it. If this thing worries you now, when only our drill-masters and instructors get at us, what are you going to do, Frazier, when you're marched over there into camp next week and turned over to the tender mercies of the whole corps?"

"I'm going to fight the first man that offers me an indignity of any kind, by thunder!"

Geordie burst into one of his merry laughs, just as a light foot came bounding up the iron stairway. Bang! A single knock at the door. Up sprang the four boys, heels and knees together, heads up, eyes straight to the front, arms and hands braced against the sides, the palms of the latter turned outward as far as the youngsters could force them and thereby work their shoulders back, each young fellow facing the centre of the bare and cheerless room. Enter Cadet Corporal Loring, his jaunty gray coat fitting like wax, not a crease nor a wrinkle anywhere, every one of his three rows of bell buttons glistening, his gold chevrons gleaming, his white collar, cuffs, gloves, and trousers simply immaculate, everything so trig and military, all in such wondrous contrast to the sombre garb of the four plebes. His clear-cut face is stern and dignified.

"What is the meaning of all this noise?" he asks. "Who was laughing as I came in?"

"I was, sir," promptly answers Graham.

"You again, Mr. Graham? This is the third time since reveille I've had to reprimand you for chuckling like a school-boy – twice in ranks, and now again at inspection. What were you laughing at this time, sir?" inquired Mr. Loring, majestically.

"At something Frazier said, sir."

"*Mr.* Frazier, sir. Never omit the handle to a gentleman's name on duty or in official intercourse. Only among yourselves and off duty can you indulge in familiarity; *never*, sir, in conversation with superior officers." (Oh, the immensity of distance between the plebe and the yearling corporal!) "And you are room orderly, too, Mr. Graham, and responsible for the appearance of things. Where should the broom be, sir?"

"Behind the door, sir."

"Then where is it, sir?"

And for the first time poor Pops sees that in the heat of argument, Frazier, dusting off his shoes with that implement, had left it across the room in the alcove. Still, it was his own business to see that it was in place, so he had nothing to say beyond, "I didn't notice it until just now, sir."

"Exactly, Mr. Graham; if you had been attending to your duty instead of giggling over Mr. Frazier's witticisms you would have escaped punishment. Report at my office immediately after supper this evening, sir." And then, after finding perhaps a pin-head of dust behind the looking-glass, and further rebuking Mr. Graham for unmilitary carelessness, the young gentleman proceeds to carry dismay into the next room.

And that evening, after supper, as ordered, Pops tapped at the awful door, was bidden to enter and listen to his doom. Cadet Lieutenant Merrick sat in judgment. For levity in ranks, dust on mantel, broom out of place at inspection, new Cadet Graham was directed to walk post in the hall until drum-beat at tattoo.

Outside the door, standing meekly in the hallway, awaiting summons to enter, were half a dozen of his comrades, about to be sentenced to similar punishment for blunders of greater or less magnitude. Some looked woe-begone, some foolish, some were laughing, but all assumed the required expression of gravity as Mr. Loring came forth with his victim. In two minutes our Geordie found himself slowly pacing the hallway on the second floor, with strict orders to keep his little fingers on the seams of his trousers, the palms of his hands to the front, and to hold conversation with nobody except in the line of duty. For a moment he could not but feel a little wrathful and disheartened, but again McCrea's words came to his aid: "Remember that the first thing that will be sorely tested is your sense of subordination – your readiness to obey without question. No soldier is considered fit to command others until he can command himself. They purposely put a fellow through all manner of predicament just to test his grit. Don't let anything ruffle your temper, and they will soon find you need no lessons." And so, like a sentry, he patiently tramped his post, listening to the music of the band at an evening concert out on the Plain, and keeping watchful eye for the coming of cadet officials. Along towards nine o'clock up came Cadet Lieutenant Merrick, commanding the plebes; and "Pops," as he had been taught, halted, faced him, and stood attention.

"Why are you on punishment to-night, sir?" was the question.

Pops colored, but answered promptly, "Laughing in ranks, broom out of place, and some other things, sir."

"Yes, I remember. Go to your quarters now, and keep your face straight on duty hereafter."

Involuntarily Geordie raised his hand in salute, as for years he had seen the soldiers do after receiving orders from an officer, then turned to go.

"One moment, Mr. Graham. Whose squad are you in?"

"Mr. Flint's, sir."

"Did he teach you that salute?"

"No, sir," stammered Geordie.

"Where did you learn it?"

"Among the soldiers, sir, in the garrison."

"Ah, yes, I've heard of your case. That'll do, sir."

Back in his room Pops found his three comrades in excited discussion. Something tremendous had happened. While Geordie, obedient to his orders, had gone to report to the cadet officer, Frazier, exulting in his knowledge of the Point, had persuaded Connell to trust himself to his guidance and go out for a walk. For half an hour after returning from supper the new cadets were allowed release from quarters, and permitted to visit each other and stroll about the grounds as they might see fit, but were cautioned not to venture over towards camp. The Graduating Class had now been gone, with the happy furlough men, an entire week. The rest of the corps, the new First and Third Classes, had marched into their summer quarters over across the cavalry plain, among the beautiful trees south

of old Fort Clinton. The new cadets, still in the garb of civil life, were "herded together," as the old cadets expressed it, at the barracks, and thither the older cadets now were forbidden to go. Except in the mess-hall, three times a day, they were seen, therefore, only by their barrack instructors and their squad drill-masters. As a result of this plan the wholesale system of hazing, plaguing, and tormenting that prevailed at the Point some thirty years ago was wellnigh prevented. Not so, however, the impulse. Just so long as human nature remains as it is and has been since creation, "boys will be boys," and rare indeed are the boy-natures which know not the longing to play tricks upon new-comers, especially at school or college. Even among mature men the impulse lingers. Added, therefore, to the line of demarcation mentioned in the interest of discipline between the plebe and the upper-class man there ever exists the temptation to have sport at the expense of the new-comers, and only by most stringent measures has the spirit been controlled to the extent that it is.

So long as Geordie and his comrades kept to the neighborhood of the barracks, however, they were safe. A few of their number had been run up into the rooms of the yearlings the day before camp, where they were instantly surrounded by a frantic mob of young fellows mad with exultation at being at last released from plebehood, and eager to try on the new boys the experiments lavished on them a twelvemonth previous. The officer in charge caught sound of the affair, however, and made instant descent upon the division, only, of course, to find the suspected room deserted, and all the others crowded by old cadets, and the only faces that looked in the faintest degree conscious of guilt or wrong were those of the luckless plebes themselves, who, cautioned against entering the barracks of the elders, were nevertheless caught in the act, and could never explain any more than they could help their presence on dangerous and forbidden ground.

Benny Frazier was loud in his ridicule of Winn, who was one of the party entrapped. No yearling and no squad or party of yearlings could get him where he didn't mean or wish to go, he frequently said; and for no other reason than that he had been officially warned to keep away from camp had Benny become possessed with the longing to cruise thither. Old cadets couldn't cross sentry posts and nab them, he argued. "We'll just aggravate them by coming so near, and yet keeping aloof." Poor, crestfallen, indignant Benny! He and Connell had sallied forth, had gone strolling over the plain and along the south side of camp, between the field battery and the tents, had smilingly declined the eager invitation of the yearlings, who crowded down along the post of the sentry on Number Five, urging them to enter and make themselves at home. In the consciousness of his superior wisdom Benny had even ventured upon an expressive gesture with his thumb at the tip of his nose, his fingers wiggling in air. Poor boy! There were instant and stentorian shouts for the corporal of the guard. Down at a run from the guard-tent came a patrol. Eager hands pointed the way; eager voices clamored for their arrest. Benny and Connell were surrounded in an instant. Glistening bayonets were levelled at their throbbing hearts. "March!" was the order, and amid the jeers and rejoicing of a hundred young scamps in gray and white the two poor plebes were sternly marshalled to the guard-tents, and into the awful presence of the cadet officer of the day, charged with having disobeyed the sentinel's order not to pass between the guns, and, far worse, of having made insulting gestures to a sentry in the solemn discharge of his duty. It was an impressive moment. There stood the stern young cadet captain in his tall plume and crimson sash and gold-laced sleeves, astounded at the effrontery of these young yet hardened reprobates.

"Is this possible?" he demanded, slowly, impressively. "Who and what are you who have dared to insult the sacred office of the sentinel, the soldier to whose lightest word even the commander-in-chief must show respect? Who and what are you?"

"We didn't mean any harm," whimpered Benny. "We're only new cadets."

"*What!*"

And here every one in the surrounding group – officer of the day, officer of the guard, corporals and privates, awed spectators – all fell back into attitudes expressive of horror and dismay.

"*What!*" exclaimed the cadet captain. "Are you mad? Mad!" he continued. "Is it credible that you, chosen by the deluded Representatives of your States to represent a proud community in an honorable profession – you dared to signalize your admission here by one of the most flagrant offences known to military law? Send at once for the Superintendent, Officer of the Guard. This is beyond my powers. Into the guard-tent with them! Batten down the walls. Station sentries at each side, Mr. Green. Put two of your most reliable men at the door, with orders to shoot them dead if they stir a muscle. Orderly, go at once for the commandant, and warn the officers that mutiny has broken out among the new cadets."

And so in another instant the luckless boys were bundled into the guard-tent, with bristling bayonets at every opening, with sentries on every side discussing in awe-inspiring tones the probable fate of the mutineers. And here might they have been held in limbo for hours had not Cadet Corporal Loring found them absent at inspection, and learned from Mr. Winn, sole representative of the quartet, that Frazier had invited Connell to take a walk, and shrewdly suspecting that they had been trapped over at camp, had reported matters to Mr. Merrick, his immediate superior, and was sent over to the rescue. Of course, on hearing the nature of their crime, he too was properly shocked, and could find no words to express his consternation. All the same, he got them out of the guard-tent and over to barracks before the army officer on duty as commandant of new cadets happened in, and had barely time to get them to their room before that gentleman came to inquire if their charges were all safe for the night. Pops found Connell grievously alarmed, but Frazier was only loudly indignant.

"All I'm afraid of is that now I won't get in the first squad to have muskets," he said. "We were going to have 'em in the morning."

But when morning came it was Geordie, not Frazier, who was put in the first squad, and Benny couldn't understand it. He who had been the best soldier of the high-school cadets was left behind.

CHAPTER IV

Drill, drill, drill! Up with the dawn, rain or shine; hurrying through their soldier toilets; rushing down the iron stairways and springing into rigid attention in the forming ranks; sharply answering to the rapidly called roll; scattering to their rooms to "spruce up" for inspection; sure of reprimand if anything went amiss, sure of silence only if all were well. Sweeping and dusting; folding, arranging, and rearranging each item of their few belongings; stumbling over one another's heels at first, yet with each succeeding day marching to meals with less constraint and greater appetite; spending long hours of toil and brief minutes of respite; twisting, turning, wrenching, extending, developing every muscle, most of them hitherto unsuspected and unknown; bending double, springing erect, roosting on tiptoe, swaying forward, backward, sideways, every ways; aching in every bone and joint, sore in every limb, yet expected to stick to it through thick and thin, until as days wore on and pains wore off, and all that was sore, stiff, and awkward grew little by little to be supple, easy, and alert. Wondrous indeed is the transformation wrought in two weeks of such drill under such drill-masters. The 1st of July arrived; George Graham and his fivescore plebe comrades had now spent a fortnight under surveillance and discipline strict and unrelenting as that of the days of grim old Frederick the Great, except that it tolerated no touch of the corporal's cane, no act of abuse. Sharp, stern, fiercely critical were the young cadet instructors, but after the first few days of soreness the native elasticity returned to both body and soul, the boys began to take heart again, and a spirit of rivalry to develop between the drill squads.

To Geordie the hours of soreness of spirit had been few as those of physical suffering. His years of life among the soldiers had prepared him for much that he had to encounter, and pride and pluck sustained him when wearied by the drills or annoyed by the sharp language of his instructors. But with poor Benny Frazier all was different. A pet at home, and the brightest scholar of the high-school of his native city; moreover, the boy officer of the high-school battalion, of whom it was confidently predicted that "He would need no drilling at all at West Point"; "He'd show those cadet fellows a thing or two they never dreamed of" – it was gall and wormwood to his soul to find himself the object of no more consideration at the Point than the greenest "country jake" from Indiana or Dakota; and to Benny's metropolitan mind anything from either Western commonwealth could be nothing but green. What made matters worse for Frazier was the fact that his father and mother had accompanied him to the Point on his arrival, and with pardonable pride, but mistaken zeal, had sought to impress upon the minds of such officers, cadets, and relatives of other plebes as they chanced to meet the story of Benny's manifold excellences as soldier and scholar – oft-told tales of how General This or Professor That had declared him the most accomplished young captain they had ever seen. Then poor Mrs. Frazier, who had pictured for her beloved boy a reception at the hands of the authorities in which gratification, cordiality, and respect should be intermingled, was simply aghast to find that he must take his stand with his fellows at the bottom of the ladder. Luckily for Benny, his parents' stay was limited to three days. Unluckily for Benny, they remained long enough to see him at his first squad drill, side by side with two unmistakably awkward boys, and faring but little better. Such was her grief and indignation that the good lady declared to acquaintances at the hotel that her boy should be drilling that horrid little martinet instead of being drilled by him – and such speeches are sure of repetition. Before Benny was a week older he was known throughout the battalion as "the plebe who had come to drill the corps of cadets," and nothing could have started him worse. One can only conjecture what the fond but unwise mother would have said could she have seen, a fortnight later, that boys who had never drilled at all – had never handled a musket – were grouped in the first squad, and making rapid and soldierly progress, while Benny was still fretting and fuming in the lower one. Yet what was so inexplicable and inexcusable in her eyes was perfectly plain and simple to those acquainted with the facts.

All over the Union now are military schools and National Guard organizations in which the drill regulations of the regular army are well taught and understood; but, on the other hand, there are many schools and communities in which the strictly business system of instruction insisted upon among all progressive soldiers has been neglected in favor of something showy, catchy, pretty to look at, and utterly useless and unserviceable except for spectacular purposes; and as ill-luck would have it, Benny had been taught all manner of "fancy drill" movements utterly at variance with those he was now to learn; and so, poor boy, the nerves and muscles long schooled in one way of doing things were perpetually tripping him in his efforts to master another – he had to unlearn so much before he could learn even a little. The green boys, on whom he looked with such pity at the start, knowing no wrong methods, were speedily far ahead of him in acquiring the right.

And so the boy who had entered with the highest hopes and expectations was now low on the soldier list and lowest in his mind. But for his father's hard common-sense, Benny Frazier would have been only too glad to resign and get out of it all and go home, as other disappointed boys have done, and declare West Point a hotbed of narrow prejudice, of outrageous partiality, and unbridled injustice; and Benny's mother would have honestly believed every word of it. Connell, too, was ready to sympathize with Frazier, and confidentially to agree with him that Pops, the youngest of the four room-mates, owed his rise to the first squad entirely to the fact that his father was an officer; but when four more boys were added to the first squad, and Connell was one of them, he changed his views, and decided that only merit governed those matters, after all. He began to pluck up heart, too, for he and Graham were among the first to be marched over to the commissary's to try on the new gray fatigue uniforms, and Mr. Loring's squad all appeared in shell jackets and trousers before Winn and Frazier had cast off their civilian garb.

By July 1st, however, all were in fatigue dress, and consolidated in half a dozen squads for drill purposes. By this time, too, they could march to and from the mess-hall in stiff but soldierly fashion; and still, hour after hour, the relentless drills went on. Only on Saturday afternoons and on the long, beautiful, peaceful Sundays was there really time and opportunity for rest; and still the new cadets were kept carefully secluded from the old, seeing little or nothing of the battalion, except as, with its quick elastic step and its glistening white uniform, with the brave young faces looking browner every day under their snowy helmets, with drums and fifes playing their lively quicksteps, the little column came marching down the shaded road, and the plebes were drawn up in solid ranks until their future comrades should pass by, and, springing up the mess-hall steps, give room for them to follow.

Pops wrote his first long letter home the second Sunday after passing the entrance examination, and this is something of what he said:

"We have lived together now just fourteen days, Frazier and Connell, Winn and I, and are getting along pretty well. Of course we may be scattered as soon as we get in camp, for Winn is tall, and will be put in A or D company. Connell wants to live with his statesman, Mr. Foster, in B. If Frazier and I get into the same company we will tent together, most likely. He asked me to, and said he could fix it. We got our fatigue uniforms Thursday, Connell and I, and were almost the first, too, because of being in Mr. Loring's squad for drill. He is very sharp and severe, and some of our class don't like him a bit; but thus far we get along all right. I'm so pleased to be in the first squad to get rifles I don't mind his manner. Of course it helped a good deal knowing the manual of arms, but they're a heap stricter here. [Pops would drop into frontierisms at times.] If a thumb or finger is a bit out of place, the corporal makes more row about it than Sergeant Feeny would over a recruit's coming out for guard with a dirty kit.

"I guess Frazier wishes he hadn't been so fresh [more slang, Pops] at first. He was captain in the high-school cadets and head of his class, and rather held over our boys about the drill at first; said he knew it all, and showed his school medals for best-drilled soldier, etc.; but Mr. Loring gave him fits, and put him under Mr. Flint, who drilled me the first few days, and is as ugly and stern as he can be. Frazier tried to make us believe the cadets were drilling him wrong; but when he showed us how

they did it where he came from I knew it was he who was wrong; and he's had a lot of trouble, and wanted to resign and quit, but his father wouldn't let him. He's getting on a little better now, and says he'll be all right as soon as we are at our studies in the fall. I guess he will, for he's been clear through algebra and geometry and trigonometry, has been in France two years, and speaks French perfectly, and we all think he's sure to be head of the class, if he doesn't get disgusted; but he does that pretty easy. Connell is slower, but has been well taught in the public schools. Winn is a big, tall fellow from 'Kentuck,' as he calls it – good-natured and jolly. He's been to college, and is nearly twenty; so is Connell; and Frazier is eighteen, but a regular boy. He was awfully disgusted at a trick the old cadets played on him last week; and they got hold of some story about his thinking he ought to be drilling them instead of their drilling him, and I expect he'll have a tough lesson when we go into camp, where they can get at us and have fun. Don't expect any long letters like this, mother dear, when once we are there, for there won't be any undisturbed hours, as there are here in barracks this lovely Sunday afternoon. I've been thinking of all you said to-day, and tried to fix my thoughts on the service and the sermon in church; but they would go with my eyes along the row of cadet officers, who always sit in the centre aisle and at the end of the pews, and I found myself wondering what each one was like, and whether the time would really ever come when I, too, would wear the handsome chevrons and sash. I could see just where Mr. McCrea must have sat when he was cadet captain of Company C. It must have seemed such a 'come down' to go out into the world and be nothing but a Second Lieutenant, whom anybody could rank out of quarters and everybody order around. And yet that's what I hope to do after four years – four long, long years of hard work; and there isn't a happier, hopefulest boy in creation than this particular plebe. But you just ought to see how blue most of them are!

"You asked me not to use tobacco, and I won't. It is forbidden in the corps, but lots of them do it. Frazier has a hard time. He has been smoking cigarettes two years, he says, though his mother doesn't know it, and he had a lot in his trunk when he came, but had to turn them all over to the old cadets. Winn chews. He says they all did at his home. But Mr. Merrick made him surrender his tobacco – all he had; but it's easy enough to get more at the Falls. Frazier says all you've got to do is to pay some servant or drummer-boy. He has money in plenty, for his mother supplied him. They are rich, I believe, and Frazier says his father deposited two hundred dollars with the treasurer to start with, instead of the one hundred required. Some boys haven't that, and couldn't get it. Connell said he worked after hours for six months to raise enough to bring him here, and had fifty dollars to hand the treasurer. It hurts me to think how you and father must have pinched and denied yourselves to raise the money to send me all the way, and to pay all these expenses and the one hundred dollars deposit. I know now why father couldn't afford the new uniform he so much needed this year, and I don't know what you must have given up; but I love you, and don't mean to let myself think how I envy Buddie this minute, that he is there where he can hear your voice and see your face and touch and kiss you."

But here Pops's eyes began to fill, and the letter had to be put aside. He was glad of the loud, ringing summons on the ground-floor, "New cadets, turn out promptly!" and just dashing his hand across his eyes, went bounding down the stairs to take his station in the ranks.

And then came the momentous day of their move into camp. All were now in complete fatigue uniform, many thoroughly drilled, all passably so, and all eager to get into the battalion, and figure, in their own eyes at least, as old cadets. Right after reveille roll-call on the morning of the 2d of July they were bidden to stow the last of their civilian clothing in their trunks, carry the trunks to the store-rooms, roll their bedding into convenient bundles, and be ready to move the moment breakfast was over. By half-past six the cavalry plain, as the turfless eastern half of the broad open plateau is termed, was covered with a long straggling procession of plebes, bearing their burdens over to the lively and excited camp. They had been sized the night before, the taller half of the class being assigned, as was then the custom, to the flank companies of the battalion, while Pops and Connell were told off into Company B, the right centre or color company. Frazier, always luckless, as he said, was one of the plebes assigned to C Company, and for a time it looked as though Pops were to lose

his prospective tent-mate. But Mr. Merrick, in brief official tones, announced that exchanges would be permitted except from flank to centre companies, and Frazier presently found a meek little fellow named Willis who said it made no difference to him which company he went to, so he crossed over and took Frazier's place in the C squad, and thus it happened that when they trudged across the sentry post at Number Six, and were directed to deposit their bundles in Company B's bustling street, Pops and Frazier were once more together. Already Geordie was beginning to doubt the wisdom of the arrangement, but he had given his promise to tent with Benny, and would keep it. All along among the tents the yearlings could be seen indulging in pantomime, expressive of the liveliest delight at these accessions to the ranks. Pops could see them pointing out Frazier, and hear exclamations: "There's the plebe that ought to be drilling the corps," "Major-General Frazier," etc., and low laughter and chuckles. But all this was done covertly; for Lieutenant Allen, the army officer commanding the company, was standing close at hand with Cadet Captain Leonard, supervising the assignment of tents. Mr. Merrick had handed the cadet captain a list of names of those assigned to his company, twenty-eight in all, and that young soldier was now keenly looking over his new men. Pops, saying nothing to anybody, was standing quietly by his bundle of bedding waiting for orders; but Frazier, who had more "cheek," as Connell expressed it, and less discretion, did not hesitate to step up to Lieutenant Allen, and say, "Mr. Graham and I would like to tent together, sir."

The officer turned. "Which is Mr. Graham?" he asked. "Call him here."

And so in another moment Pops found himself standing attention to his company commander and instructor.

"I am told you wish to tent with Mr. Frazier. Is that the case?"

Geordie colored. The question was so pat and what soldiers call point-blank. He could not truthfully say that he really wished to share Frazier's fortunes as a tent-mate. In the pursuance of the policy he had mapped out for himself he would rather have lived with some one less likely to be the recipient of much attention from the old cadets – some one less apt to be perpetually saying or doing something to invite their especial efforts. Mr. Allen saw his hesitancy, and spoke kindly.

"If you think of any one else you would rather tent with, I presume that it can be arranged."

"No, sir," answered Geordie, finding voice at last. "I had thought of no one else. I promised Mr. Frazier."

"Very well, sir. Mr. Leonard, put this young gentleman and Mr. Frazier in the same tent – two more with them. Have you any choice, Mr. Graham?"

"No, sir."

And then again appeared Frazier, eager to speak. "Connell and Foster, sir, would like to tent with us."

The cadet officer looked interrogatively at his superior. Mr. Allen briefly nodded.

"Take that one, then," said Mr. Leonard, shortly, indicating a vacant tent on the south side of the company street, at about the middle of the row.

"Come on, boys," said Frazier, eagerly, assuming the leadership of his squad as though by vested right, and then was brought up standing by the voice of his young captain.

"Mr. Frazier," said he, "the first lesson you have to learn is that very new cadets should only be seen, not heard; and when you are heard, sir, don't again allude to members of the corps of cadets of the United States Army as *boys*. You are here to be men, if it's in you. If it isn't, you're apt to get out of it, sir."

And with this withering welcome to his company, poor Frazier was permitted to go.

"That's another young snob, that fellow Leonard!" he confided to his comrades, in low tone, as they were depositing their few goods and chattels in their eight-by-ten domain. "I'll pay him off for that yet, see if I don't." Whereat Pops and Connell exchanged glances and grins.

It took little time to arrange their canvas home in the prescribed military order. Pops was a veteran campaigner, and had slept in many a tent or bivouac in the Far West, so the quarters that

struck his comrades as crowded were almost palatial to him. When they placed their loads in front of it at six forty-five, all they saw was a trimly-pitched wall-tent, the walls themselves neatly looped up so as to allow the air to circulate freely, the tent and its "overcoat," or fly, both stretched taut and smooth, without crease or wrinkle, a square, smooth, six-inch-high platform or floor covering the ground from front tent pole almost to the one in rear. An elongated wooden box painted dark green, divided into four compartments, with lids opening at the top, extended almost from front to rear of the platform on the west side of the tent. This was to be their chest of drawers. A wooden rod hung about eighteen inches under the ridge-pole; this was to be their wardrobe, and of other furniture there was none. Under the brief instruction of a cadet corporal they began with the rudiments of their military house-keeping. First, their four big double blankets were folded in a square very nearly four feet across, and with the folded edges to the front and inside, accurately piled one upon the other. Then the four pillows in their white cases were evenly laid upon the blankets. Then the four comforters or quilts, folded like the blankets, were evenly laid on top, edges vertical, and that was the way in which the beds were made up every morning after reveille. The pile thus formed occupied the corner of the floor opposite the locker or chest of drawers at the back of the tent. The locker was the name given the dark green chest, and the "locker" had neither lock nor key. Under the supervision of the cadet corporal the plebe quartet contributed the items necessary to their summer house-keeping. A looking-glass, sixteen by twelve, in a plain wooden frame, was hung on the front tent pole, tilted a trifle forward at the top. A water-bucket was deposited at the front edge of the platform close to the locker. A washbowl, bottom outward, was leaned against the front edge of the platform close to the bucket. A soap-dish was on the platform behind the basin. Candlestick, candles, cleaning materials, etc., were deposited in a cylindrical tin box that stood at the foot of the rear tent pole behind the base of the arm-rack.

The four rifles, barrels to the front, were stood erect, the butt of each in its wooden socket at the back of the floor, the muzzle poked through a hole in the wooden shelf fastened about four feet from the ground on the rear tent pole. The white webbing belts, supporting the cartridge-box and bayonet-scabbard, were hung on pegs projecting from the wooden shelf. Shoes, "neatly blacked and dusted at all times," were aligned at the back of the floor, toes to the front. Such books as were allowed were piled on the floor at the back end of the locker. All woollen uniforms, overcoats, rubber coats, etc., were to be hung on the hanging-pole. All white trousers, sheets, underclothing, collars, cuffs, gloves, etc., to be stored, each man's in his own locker. Brushes, combs, shaving utensils were stuck in loops tacked on the inside of each lid. The black full-dress shakos were, when procured, to be neatly placed on the shelf of the rear pole, ornaments to the front, and forage-caps hung on the owners' pegs. There was a place, howsoever small, for everything, and everything was to be kept in its place.

By the time the first drum was beating for troop parade everything was in spick-span order. The officers had gone about their duties, and a group of yearlings, looking as though each and every one had just stepped from a bandbox, so far as his dress and equipments were concerned, quickly formed in the company ground in front of the newly occupied "plebe hotels," the very imp of mischief grinning in the sun-tanned faces of the younger and more boyish members, but one and all full of the liveliest interest in the appearance of the new-comers and their household affairs. Comment and criticism, advice and suggestions, more or less valuable, were showered on every plebe; but even while silently and good-humoredly submitting to his fire of remarks, Pops could plainly see that no tent was so surrounded as their own. It really seemed as though every Third Class man and many a senior in Company B, reinforced by strong detachments from other companies, had come to claim the acquaintance of Major-General Frazier, and furthermore that the luckless Benny, instead of maintaining good-humored reticence, and speaking only when he had to, was rapidly adding to the array of charges laid at his door by trying to be smart in reply. The sudden batter of the second drum transferred the laughing, chaffing crowd into two silent, statuesque ranks, and for the rest of that

momentous hour, while doing his best to give his whole thought to drill and duty, Georgie Graham found himself thinking, "Just won't we catch it to-night!"

CHAPTER V

The dusk of evening had fallen on the Point when the battalion broke ranks, returning from supper. A few minutes later, a hundred strong, came the column of plebes, marching by fours, looking even more than usually sombre now in their suits of gray, contrasting with the white trousers and natty bell-buttoned coatees of the corps, and feeling, doubtless, more than usually solemn in anticipation of the possible experiences ahead of them. First night of plebe camp is a thing not soon to be forgotten, even in these days when pitchy darkness no longer shrouds the pranks of the yearlings, and official vigilance and protection have replaced what really seemed tacit encouragement and consent of over thirty years ago. Then it was no uncommon thing for the new cadet to be dragged out ("yanked," was the expression in vogue) and slid around camp on his dust-covered blanket twenty times a night, dumped into Fort Clinton ditch, tossed in a tent-fly, half smothered in the folds of his canvas home, tumbled by his tormentors about his ears, ridden on a tent pole or in a rickety wheelbarrow, smoked out by some vile, slow-burning pyrotechnic compound, robbed of rest and sleep, at the very least, after he had been alternately drilled and worked all the livelong day. Verily, the hardening process of the early sixties was a thing that might well be frowned down upon and stamped out, but it took stringent measures to effect it. In great measure the deviling system was, so far as its most harmful features were concerned, but the ghost of its old self when Ralph McCrea entered the Academy just after the Centennial year. Then little by little means were taken to make the process still more difficult to the perpetrators, until twenty years after the War of the Rebellion hazing became indeed hazardous. Officers were kept on duty and on the alert in camp at all hours. Gas-lamps were placed along the sentry post. In every way the authorities could foresee the plebe was protected from the more active torment of the old days. But so long as boys will be boys some modification must exist; and as for the year of probation which the new-comer must pass – the year in which he is taught in every conceivable way that he is a creature far apart from the rest of the corps, a being to be drilled, trained, disciplined, badgered, even at times bullied – it is really a year of most valuable experiences, perhaps the most valuable of the four. It is this that teaches him that no matter what may be the wealth or social standing of his relatives, he is no better than the humblest clodhopper of his class. It is this year that teaches him to look to his own class-mates and no others for comrades and chums. It is this that teaches him silence, patience, and fortitude. Nine out of ten of the plebes and their relatives pronounce it inhuman and barbarous so long as it applies to them or theirs. Ninety-nine out of a hundred, however, uphold it so soon as their plebehood is done.

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