

The *cauc riens* and January fellows would soon be spotted and eliminated. The January examination was to be a test for us Plebes, as to our fitness for the cadet's appointment. Hitherto we had received warrants only. "Boning" for corporalcies next year was the chief ambition now.

There are certain phrases peculiar to West Point which must be explained here. "Boning," means to study. "Fess," to confess utter ignorance of a subject. "Fan," to excell. "Max," maximum mark for the lesson. "Zero," a total fess. "Math," mathematics. "Phil," philosophy. "Chim," chemistry. "To run it," is to be absent either from recitation or drill. "To wheaton it," is to sham sick. "To bugle it," is to linger at the blackboard until the bugle sounds for the next section.

The Winter is interlarded with various amusements. In November we had one day of grace for a fancy ball, which would be given in the cockloft of the north barracks. Elaborate preparations were always made for this festival, and various characters assumed. I remember Seneca Simmons, a first classman, appearing as Ninny Harris, one of our instructors of tactics. He was dressed entirely, *cap à pied*, in Ninny's own uniform, and played the character with all of Ninny's peculiarities. We had theatricals, using two of the section rooms for this purpose. The officers and their families would attend these, and showed their appreciation by their applause. I remember once "Kit" Hardia playing the part of a bewildered cadet at the blackboard. A blackboard had been placed on the stage, and on it was written, in chalk, the problem from Bourdon:  $a^m - b^m = a - b$ . Kit, when the curtain rose, was discovered in cadet costume, standing contemplating the intricate problem. No one suspected what was coming; the professors stared and craned their necks, the cadets tittered. It was all an enigma. At length Kit, turning to the audience, commenced:

"Bourdon, thou reasonest well! else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire, this longing after a good standing?" etc.

I thought the audience would have gone distracted. Kit was called out to repeat it. Old Dad Kendrick, he who was, until lately, professor of chemistry, played in the piece following the character of *Bob Acres*, and did it as well as ever I saw it.

One beautiful moonlight night a foot-race was announced between Benny Roberts and some unknown. Ninny Harris had been ascertained to be taking tea and spending the evening with the surgeon. Benny's programme was to loiter about, pretend to be making his way to Benny Havens's, and get a servant to whisper the fact into Lieutenant Harris's ear. He would naturally sally forth to catch the villain, and the race would take place.

As Benny had calculated, so the lieutenant came out from the house, beat around a little, Benny meanwhile dodging, as if to avoid discovery; at length, getting a glimpse, Harris started in pursuit, and this extraordinary race was improvised then and there between officer and cadet. The audience, the whole corps of cadets, assembled on the pavement in front of the barracks. The distance, about three hundred yards, tried the wind of both competitors. But, though the lieutenant pushed him hard, Benny did full credit to the cheering corps, amongst whom he rushed and made good his escape. The lieutenant, enraged and out of breath, demanded, in inarticulate words, who it was; no answer; all fled snickering to their rooms, while the crestfallen lieutenant, mortified and ashamed of the precipitancy which had made him the laughing-stock of the cadets, repaired to his castle, a small octagon brick building, which stood on the flank of the north barracks, and about fifty yards from it.

It was this same castle that Cadet Norris bombarded with a battery of six miniature mortars he had constructed out of the stems of old brass flat candlesticks, using cadet bullet-buttons for shells. The battery was established in one of his windows, and such a volley was rained around the premises that "Ninny" was loath to show his face. The perpetrator of this "outrage" was never discovered, but it was commented upon, commended and laughed at in high quarters. Poor Norris was dismissed in his graduating year, and became a distinguished civil engineer. The cadets were surrounded with spies and scouts, but they managed to circumvent them all, and the more rigid the discipline the more persistent the cadets became in contriving the means of circumventing the officers. Some of these, becoming obnoxious, were designated by hard sobriquets, such as "Ninny Harris," "Dickey the Punter," "Brute Waggaman," etc., etc., while others, more forbearing in their discipline, were adored.

We had our favorites, too, amongst the "strikers" attached in various employments to the Academy. There was Dan Avery, the bugler, and Si, or "Sloptub," his brother, and Tommy Cox, the fireman, a dwarfish kind of fellow, but a giant in his way; and old Wallace, the fifer, grown gray in the service; and "Peter It," a stalwart darkey, whom the boys thought to be of neuter gender, hence the name. He was a glorious fellow! lived in a cellar at the west end of the "old south," and would occasionally provide suppers for his favorites, *sub rosa*. Then there was "Joe, the barber," he who is father or grandfather to the darkies who were chums of Cadet Whitaker, the colored boy of African descent. Joe has been promoted of late years to superintendent of the cadets' bathrooms. All these were great favorites, and would do trifling jobs for their orony cadets, such as smuggling to them a bunch of Havanas or a bottle of the "ardent."

Christmas was a notable day, all the officers disappearing, and giving the barracks up to the devices of the cadets, and such a jolly time they would have, assembled in popular rooms, singing, dancing and carousing; awaking in the morning to their recitations with red eyes and haggard faces.

On one occasion a few choice spirits—Cock Rodney, Kit Hardia and Ziph Grandin—undertook the arduous job of bringing from the "plain" the six-pounder used for firing the morning and evening gun, and carrying it up four flights of stairs to the "cock-loft," to fire it out of the hall window. The gun was duly loaded and primed, and, but for the sudden intervention of an inspector, would have been fired. The actors in this desperate scheme got off scot-free. The authorities were greatly puzzled next morning in getting the piece down-stairs, the police party employed in the operation not understanding the *rationalis*, and they were continually mocked at and jeered by passing cadets.

Now comes the June examination, with all its doubts and fears and perturbations, and buck-fever withal. At this examination cadets who are "found," and have not exceeding two hundred "demerit," are "turned back," and commence the course again in the new class, thus running five instead of four years, before graduating.

The examination is conducted with the most rigid exactitude before the Board of Visitors and the Academic Board, by sections beginning with the first class, and thence downward to the fourth. The first class through parades, reviews, firing with big guns at a target, and mortars on the plain at a barrel; then fireworks, with pyrotechny of their own manufacture; then the relief of the class in general orders; and, as a *finale*, the sacrificial fire on Washington Rock, when books, notes, tables,