

sapient air of a connoisseur, and study the marks thereon inscribed. But it is well to avoid the catastrophe which befell an absent-minded man, not long ago, who, forgetting that he had just helped himself, reversed his plate and bestowed one of Delmonico's *bouchées à la reine* upon his neighbor's satin petticoat.

The use of heavy silver pieces has been very generally superseded by exquisite bits of porcelain or glass, bearing tribute of fruit and flowers. This is in reality an economy, as well as a pretty fashion, for a lady may select from her cabinet or shelf a Venice glass, an iridescent vase or two, and group her own flowers, without resorting to the costly structures sent in by her florist. A new fancy is to use but one kind of flower upon the table, as for instance, Jacqueminot, Maréchal Neil, or Gloire de Paris roses. For bouquets offered at each plate, there are lovely horn-shaped holders in Italian straw, flat baskets to hang with ribbons to the waist, and horse-shoes to be made of violets, and used in similar fashion.

One phase of the dessert at a recent dinner may prove suggestive, especially as the general effect resulted more from an harmonious assembling of colors than from a lavish display of wealth. The centerpiece was a glowing pyramid of scarlet poinsettia leaves, and white camellias, cut with long stems, and having glossy dark-green foliage. The shell-shaped dessert dishes, finger-bowls, and ice-cream plates, were all of ruby Bohemian glass. The doyleys were etched with red silk, in tiny Japanese designs. The candelabra used were of clear crystal, the *bobèches* of ruby glass, and the red wax candles had each one a little jaunty cap, or shade, of scarlet silk. The sparkle of fire-light and candle-light over all recalled the impression produced upon Jane Eyre by the drawing-room of Thornfield—"a general blending of snow and fire."

It ought to be quite a consolation to our country friends who have so long been sighing for the luxury of gas, that candles again play a prominent part in decoration. Sideboard, mantel-shelf and wall sconces glow with a subdued luster. Then the French moderator, or the familiar student's lamp, burning soft under a shade of antique lace, lined with crimson silk, makes so becoming a *chiaro-oscuro*, that it is doubtful whether they will ever be allowed to go out of vogue again.

Among dinner-table adornments, I know of nothing more beautiful and seductive to the housekeeper than the modern glass, now imported in quantities, and at prices within the reach of a moderate purse. What variety of form and tint in the Salvati or modern Venice glass! Amber, topaz, opal, sea blue, ruby, and bottle-green, make a beautiful radiance on a snowy cloth. In the Bombay striped glass, introduced into England by the Prince of Wales, after his visit to India, and since largely reproduced, there are beautiful specimens of fruit-dishes, flower-vases, and ice-cream plates. Bohemian and English enameled glass appear in such beautiful guise that it seems impossible for them to be excelled; and the ware from the Stourbridge

factory is a revelation of the refined art attained by skilled engravers upon crystal.

SACHARISSA.

#### The Boys of the Family. IV.

A MILITARY EDUCATION AT WEST POINT.

THERE are probably few parents who, in discussing what they may do with their boys, give much consideration to West Point, unless some other member of the family is, or has been, in the army; yet here is an opening for a spirited lad of intelligence to a profession, which, if it can never yield riches, at least belongs to gentlemen and leads to honor. It has some manifest advantages over other occupations; a moderate income is insured to its members for life, and a definite social status. Entering the church, or the professions of law or medicine, a youth needs such a university education as can only be acquired by large expenditures of time and money; the preparatory period is one of continuous outlay; while in entering the army as a cadet at West Point, he is provided with an education of a higher standard than that attainable in most colleges, and is paid a liberal salary during the course. He needs no more capital than his railway fare to the Academy; no other equipment than the few inexpensive articles hereinafter specified, and when he is graduated and is enlisted as a second lieutenant, an amount is paid to him sufficient to purchase the new outfit necessary. Instead of being aristocratic or in any degree exclusive, the Academy is open to all, regardless of birth or station, who are capable of passing its preliminary examinations, and the poorest boy may avail himself of the same education given to the richest without ever perceiving or being reminded of any difference in the eyes of the officials between himself and them.

The two essential things in successful candidates are robust physical health and a taste for mathematics. In awarding marks the greatest weight is given to mathematics—the maximum being three hundred; three hundred is also the maximum for natural and experimental philosophy and civil and military engineering; one hundred and fifty for law; one hundred for drawing; one hundred for French, and two hundred for discipline. From these estimates it is evident what abilities are most acceptable to the authorities. Without cleverness in mathematics, without self-control and subordination, a boy stands little chance of being graduated or being long continued on the rolls; unless he is physically strong, the somewhat Spartan manner of life would soon compel his retirement.

Each Congressional district and territory—also the District of Columbia—is entitled to have a cadet at the Academy on an appointment made by the Secretary of War, in accordance with the nomination made by the representative or delegate. Ten other appointments are conferred at large by the President of the United States. The appointees are usually selected by the Congressman of the district in which a vacancy occurs, at a competitive examination, announced in local newspapers; they must be not younger than seventeen nor older than twenty-two;

unmarried, not less than five feet in height, and clear of all deformity, disease and infirmity. They are required to report at West Point on the 1st of June, and are quartered there free of expense, apart from the cadets, until they are examined by the Academic Board, upon which body their final acceptance or rejection depends.

In the branches which it covers, the examination is exacting, but it does not include anything that an average boy of sixteen ought not to have learned in the public schools. A candidate must be able to read and write the English language correctly, and to be familiar with the four ground rules of arithmetic, with reduction, simple and compound proportion, and vulgar and decimal fractions; he must also have a knowledge of the elements of English grammar, descriptive geography and the history of the United States. No deficiencies or imperfections in these subjects are tolerated, as it is felt that the requirements for admission are too simple, and that they should include algebra and geometry. By the 20th of June the candidate is informed whether he is accepted or not; if accepted, he engages to serve in the army of the United States for eight years, four of which are to be spent at the Academy. During this latter period he receives a salary of five hundred and forty dollars a year. The salary is sufficient to cover all his expenses, including mess bills and clothing, and to leave him at the end of the academic course with money enough for the purchase of a lieutenant's outfit, although a hundred dollars from home in addition is never likely to be inconvenient or superfluous. If necessary, the outfit he requires on his entrance will be issued to him and charged against his pay, as all books, uniforms, etc., will be charged subsequently; but it is expected that he will defray the original outlay in advance. He must also bring with him the following articles: seven shirts, six pairs of winter socks, six pairs of summer socks, four pairs of summer drawers, three pairs of winter drawers, six handkerchiefs, six towels, one clothes-brush, one hair-brush, one tooth-brush, one comb, four sheets, and one trunk. The salary is only sufficient, provided economy is exercised. If the cadet is careless of his underwear or clothing; if he incurs fines for misusing the library or for other delinquencies; or if he is extravagant with his pocket-money, the annual amount paid to him may prove inadequate.

At West Point, as at Annapolis, every measure possible is taken to prevent other distinctions being drawn among cadets than those based on merit. The son of a millionaire is compelled to wear precisely the same kind of clothing, and to occupy precisely the same kind of a room, as the son of a clerk or mechanic. It occasionally happens that a cadet considers that the uniform trowsers issued to him are not stylish in cut, or that the uniform cap does not sit jauntily upon his head, and obtains duplicates from some fashionable clothier in the city; but as soon as they are discovered, the smuggled articles are invariably confiscated. The rooms are furnished alike, and the occupants are not allowed to adorn or add to them in any way. If the furnish-

ing were left to the taste or discretion of the cadets, it is obvious that, when off duty, one might have a drawing-room and could entertain in easy chairs on Turkey carpets; while the other, who is struggling through the Academy with only his salary to support him, might have a cheerless den with a chair, a table, and a rush-light in it. But the cadet has no privilege which his fellows do not share, and though his parents may supply him with unlimited pocket-money, he is not given an opportunity to spend it. He is not allowed to visit a shop or to receive parcels from abroad without the consent of the superintendent; and the mess is a common one, to which no additions may be made by individuals. There are two cadets to each room; no carpets, no pictures on the walls, and not more than a dozen books. The occupants are required, when they are called at six o'clock in the morning, to roll up their bedding, to sweep the floor, to dust the furniture; and they are punished if they are found lying down on their beds before "taps," which is the signal to put out the lights at ten P.M. The discipline seems severe to a civilian, and a nervous or peevish boy could not endure it. Several offenses—such as intoxication, falsehood, libel, hazing, dueling and dishonesty—are punished by dismissal; others are punished by fines, confinement or the abridgment of leisure hours.

It should be understood that though a candidate has passed the examination by the Academic Board in June, he is ranked as a probationer until he has also passed the semi-annual examination during the following January, when if he is successful, a warrant is issued to him; the difficulties of success may be estimated from the fact that only thirty-five per cent of those who are appointed, and less than fifty per cent. of those who are admitted, are graduated.

There is only one vacation during the course. From the end of the June examination till the end of August the cadets live in camp, and those who have been in the Academy two years are granted leave of absence for the weeks that intervene, provided that less than two hundred demerits are recorded against them. Those having two hundred and fifty demerits are detained two days; those having three hundred, eight days, and those having three hundred and fifty, twelve days. New-Year's, the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving and Christmas are observed as holidays, and, in cases of good behavior, a few days' leave of absence may be granted at Christmas. Friends or relatives may visit the Academy at any time, and permission to call upon them is given to the cadets, under certain restrictions.

After graduation, as before, the pay is small, and the promotion slow; in time of peace the prospect is by no means brilliant; the young officer may be ordered to some isolated frontier post in the far West and be kept there for several years,—it is probable that he will be; but if the principles instilled under the code martial at West Point have not been lost upon him, he will have, above any material advantages of his position, the satisfaction of having had the education and training of a gentleman.

WILLIAM H. RIDEING.