

The Hotel Clerk on West Point and Other Points

BY IRVING S. COBB

"WOT did the main guys do with them young fellows up to the Point that got fired out for hain?" inquired the House Detective of the St. Reckless.

"I don't think it's been settled yet," answered the Hotel Clerk. "As I just accounts nothing had happened since Teddy said Loeb and Wright were liars if they said he said what he said and they said it was just like what he said. The noble young cadets who'd made tobacco sauce and untwined prunes such popular articles of diet among their fellow students were still hanging around waiting to be reinstated and in the meantime thinking up a few new things to brighten up the tiresome menu of the plebs, such as raw oysters with sugar and cream on 'em. And down at the edge of the reservation was a promising brood of red ants that looked as if they'd probably be ripe enough to pick by early fall."

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"At the same time I've got a sneaking notion that they did things different in the old days, when some of the persons who were subsequently mentioned in connection with the Big War were getting their training. Back yonder in 1849 or thereabouts if any ingenious young upper classman had urged William Tecumseh Sherman to swallow a couple of gallons of the Hudson River, garlanded with chewing tobacco and cooking soda, and then to stand on the bank of the river, with a Nehaha, Laughing Water with the proper feeling and emphasis, I'll bet you that William T. would not only have played the part of a hero, but he'd a-played a whole troupe of performing horses with him, and a trick mule or two, and maybe a cute spotted pony. In my mind's eye I see a picture of the party who subsequently marched through Georgia spreading that upper classman out nice and flat like one of those deep sea waffles, known as a founder, and there with the goods if given the opportunity, but a few tips from you may help me a little at the start."

"Well," replied the Old Sport, "I've no doubt that a few tips from me'll put you hep to a few things that you'll butt into when you go out to stab the world in the face if you'll only plant them in your roof garden and give them a chance to sprout a little. But let me tell you that I know you kids who have just beat it out of the knowledge factory, and I know blamed well that you're not liable to break a leg trying to get your hooks on a wad of advice when you see it lying around loose. You kids who are handed a roll of sheepskin and dumped out of the knowledge factory must all hug the dope that the great throbbing world is standing with bated breath waiting to hear your opinion of the questions of the day, and you never get wise till a little good practical common sense is hammered into your educated knowledge boxes with the club of experience."

"There's many a guy who has spent the heyday of his existence laying in a supply of expensive experience, and has been benevolent and charitable enough to hand it to posterity to save the rising generation from being left at the post. But posterity seldom uses it. They seem to prefer going out and purchasing their own experience. Experience that doesn't cost a hundred a chunk isn't considered much of a commodity by the rising generation. Now, Kid, if you're one of these guys, I don't care to use the oxygen in this office by handing you something you won't use, and you can leave the door open as you go out in order to replace what I have already used."

"My dear sir," replied the college youth, "if I hadn't wanted your advice I wouldn't have asked for it. I have said I come from a line of ancestors who have made their mark in the world by their shrewdness and intelligence, and I have enough of their common sense in my veins to appreciate the good advice when I get it. Blood will tell, and it is my opinion that men are born to their destinies. I believe that men of rank are born and not made, and, therefore, my future success is assured."

"Well," replied the Old Sport, "take it from me that if you don't show more common sense when you butt into the business world than you have in the brief time in which I have been afflicted with your presence, you'll be both born and made. You'll be borne out of your office by the nose of the neck and made to travel up the street as fast as your little hexameters will carry you."

"Now, Kid, don't think I'm a crab, but you know you can take medicine a blamed sight better with vinegar than you can with sugar. The first tip I

even as a scroff, and trying his insteps around his forehead in a true love knot and otherwise making him look like something that Frolicsome Fido, the fox terrier, had been playing with under the front steps.

"And I never recall having heard that Albert Sidney Johnston used to travel up and down the company street on his stomach like a poached egg at the request of another cadet who enjoyed the right to give the command on account of his parents having gotten married one year earlier than Albert Sidney's did. It would have taken Al, the plebs, about three minutes, not more, to peel, core, grate and eat the thing, and he'd have been putting the finishing touches on their graduation year by hiking out across the staked plains, getting themselves shot up with quartz, moss-ags and plain flint arrowheads, and engaging in chance conflict every few minutes with passels of roan-colored strangers who were dressed principally in their own and other people's hair."

"Any yet, even the most zealous advocates of the present system of keying up the young cadet by poisoning him in turning out some pretty fair scrappers in the old days at the Point. I may be wrong, Larry, but I've got a half concealed belief that any rising young American who'll blithely chase himself about with 30 of the No. 1 grade hand-picked, hand red winter, or harvest ants under his hat because some other lad told him to, hasn't got much under the aforesaid hat except the above-mentioned ants."

"Still at that I suppose these combinations of New Orleans molasses with gherkin pickles and English mustard for a light breakfast and these brisk sorrel insects with six or more legs and pinchers like a pair of ice-hooks, for the recreation hour on the campus, all go to make up a modern military education. It's like everything else in this age of progress. Fifteen or 20 years ago they say a young woman could go along very comfortably in the best society if she didn't have any Pittsboro marks on her front teeth and did her hair up at the customary intervals. The clothes she wore didn't make so very much difference, so long as there were enough of them at one time. A young woman stepped from the schoolgirl stage into her chosen sphere in society without dropping her father in the bankruptcy court on the way. At least, so I'm given to understand. But now it's different. A debutante who gets her start with less than \$200,000 worth of portable equipment would feel considerable like a dominickor pullet in a parrot cage. If you believe the Sunday papers—and if you can't believe them, what in heaven's name can you believe?—the expense of launching an Elysian girl into the inside set is not quite as much as it costs for a defense of wealthy paranoia in a murder case where the defendant has money in Pittsburgh, but considerably more than the outlay for building a gunboat of the Dubuque type. I was reading here the other day about one of the biggest debuts of the coming fall. The young woman who's going to debut will have more fittings than an armored cruiser. There was one incidental item of 80 pairs of shoes.



You'd thing there was a pronounced strain of centipede running through the family. There was also a picture of the fortunate young person wearing her principal or grand entry lid. You know she was wearing it because you could distinctly see part of her under it. Judging by the picture, she was one of those regular millionaire's daughters with the fashionable absence of expression that will be so much worn this year, but the hat was all to the French dressing. If I may use the term, it has a center-pole and a hip-rod track around the outer rim and a superstructure and many other features. I've forgotten the Paris name for it, but I suppose a person talking United States would be safe in calling it a Ringling Brothers—three rings and an elevated stage on a vacant lot.

And you may have noticed some of these tender lamb stews with young vegetables that are being turned out by the colleges and allowed to vote just the same, as if they were human beings. I wonder how many hard-

worked fathers there are scattered along the Eastern seaboard at this moment saving up to pay the college education of a fascinating lad whose crowning ambition in life is to sing tenor in a college glee club and smoke monogram cigarettes with the monogram side turned prominently toward the opposite side of the street.

follow climbing over the back fence with his shoes in his hand, so much the better. But at this time any husband of importance would scorn to destroy his foe without noise or excitement. The subdued way of fastening the homicide average is as old-fashioned as a marble mantel. Among the best families it's considered very, very de trop unless you seek out the gentleman against whom you feel a pique on a roof garden or at a yacht-club regatta or an old-home week or some equally large social function and shoot the tar and other naval stores out of him with an automatic Maxim in the presence of a large crowd whose names will attract attention if printed well up near the top of the mast column. No murder is a success any more unless you have an Among-Those-Please following along after your Dead and Wounded.

"Back in the times when the Rogers Brothers were in the statutory business instead of musical comedy, if we went to a vaudeville entertainment—only we didn't call it by that name then—we'd be satisfied with a sisters act, and a gifted party in pink tights with large knotted leg muscles doing things on the horizontal bar, and a juggler who didn't knock more than has been done in plates, and a couple of talented musicians who performed Oh-listen-to-the-mocking-bird-for-the-mocking-bird-singing-in-the-wildwood-sweet-Halle on the toothsome xylophone and then by dipping their finger tips in resin and rubbing them on the rims of a row of damp tumblers, gave a lifelike and realistic imitation of the sound produced by dipping the fingers in resin and rubbing them on the rims of a row of damp tumblers. But this year we have to have everything that's too good or too bad for tragedy, comedy, the drama, the trained animal show and the disrobing room of the ladies' department that anything we shouldn't stand for we'll sit through."

"We're just a progressive in the food line. Possibly out in the heart of the deep wood the peasantry may still consume food that's been done by hand, but in the great throbbing, hurried life of the teeming city we have no time for anything except the intensified methods of producing fodder for the human race. I'll bet it's been years, Larry, since you saw a home-grown pie. They run off our pies for us on a cylinder press, a huckleberry edition or a lemon meringue edition or a sporting extra custard, as the case may be, and the peculiar prison pailor common to all pies is imparted by means of talcum powder and a mechanical bleaching apparatus. You can always tell the difference by the underneath crust which tastes like the sweatband of an old straw hat.

"So I guess, all things considered,



we ought to bear with those bad little boys that've been naughty up at West Point. They're only following the bent of a generation that is ever striving for the new and the unique and the progressive. And, anyway, say what you please about our National Military Academy, but in recent years it's turned out some of the best hands at thinking up cotton figures that the world has ever seen. Harry Lehr's got nothing on those lads when it comes to tactics.

"But suppose a war wuz to break out," said the House Detective. "Where'd the army be with a lot of little wasp-waisted chaps running things?"

"The army'll do very well as long as so many husky enlisted men keep on rising from the ranks," said the Hotel Clerk, "and the West Pointers will come in handy for the war balloons. We'll be able to send such a lot of them along on one trip."

Conversations with an Old Sport

IN WHICH HE HANDS THE COLLEGE GRADUATES A FEW WORDS OF WISDOM.

BY JIM NARIUM.

"I've got three offers of good jobs," said the young man just out of college to the Old Sport, "and as you've been through the mill, I'd like you to give me a few tips. I'm a beginner in bucking the world, but as soon as the business world gets wise to who my folks were I think my name will command respect and give me considerable prestige to start in with. My father's name was one of the best known in banking circles and he was the shrewdest man who sprouted a little. But let me tell you that I know you kids who have just beat it out of the knowledge factory, and I know blamed well that you're not liable to break a leg trying to get your hooks on a wad of advice when you see it lying around loose. You kids who are handed a roll of sheepskin and dumped out of the knowledge factory must all hug the dope that the great throbbing world is standing with bated breath waiting to hear your opinion of the questions of the day, and you never get wise till a little good practical common sense is hammered into your educated knowledge boxes with the club of experience."

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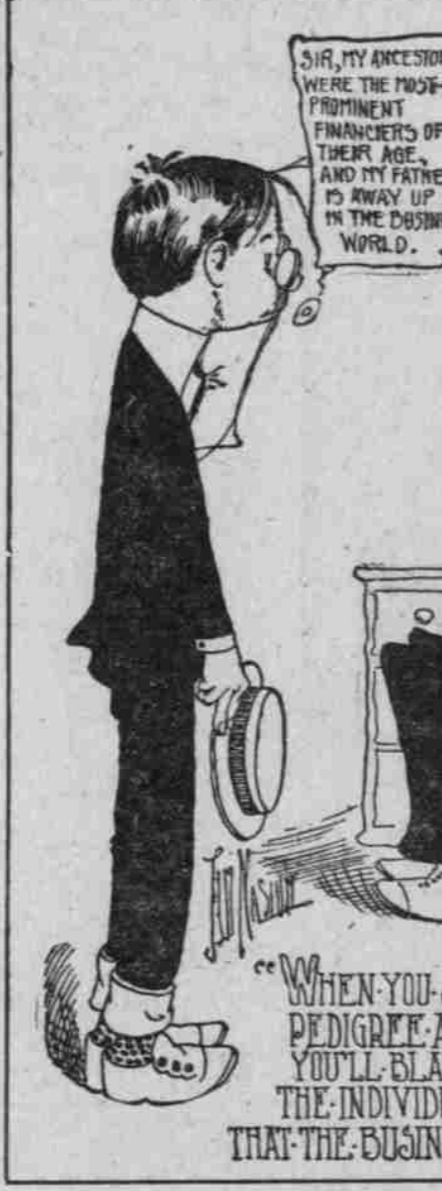
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"I've s'posed the lads'll git back finally," asked the House Detective. "They will, if the traditions of the academy are to be preserved," said the Hotel Clerk. "From what I've been able to gather it's deemed necessary to feed the future commanders-in-chief of the land forces of the United States large quantities of insalubrious articles while they're acquiring their military education, if any such there be, so they'll wear the proper look of hand-picked young faces after they're graduated and are leading the german at an army post hop on almost half as much salary as a union paperhanger gets. Every time I see a young second lieutenant with a 32-inch waist and a Harrison Fisher figure going around, bent back at an angle of 45 degrees and gazing at mere civilians with an expression of countenance as if he'd eaten something that hadn't agreed with him and never would, I feel certain in my own mind that here's the man who'll look the full course at the Point instead of being appointed from civil life on the strength of the fact that his father stood in with a Senator and he couldn't earn a living in a store."

"At the same time I've got a sneaking notion that they did things different in the old days, when some of the persons who were subsequently mentioned in connection with the Big War were getting their training. Back yonder in 1849 or thereabouts if any ingenious young upper classman had urged William Tecumseh Sherman to swallow a couple of gallons of the Hudson River, garlanded with chewing tobacco and cooking soda, and then to stand on the bank of the river, with a Nehaha, Laughing Water with the proper feeling and emphasis, I'll bet you that William T. would not only have played the part of a hero, but he'd a-played a whole troupe of performing horses with him, and a trick mule or two, and maybe a cute spotted pony. In my mind's eye I see a picture of the party who subsequently marched through Georgia spreading that upper classman out nice and flat like one of those deep sea waffles, known as a founder, and there with the goods if given the opportunity, but a few tips from you may help me a little at the start."

"Well," replied the Old Sport, "I've no doubt that a few tips from me'll put you hep to a few things that you'll butt into when you go out to stab the world in the face if you'll only plant them in your roof garden and give them a chance to sprout a little. But let me tell you that I know you kids who have just beat it out of the knowledge factory, and I know blamed well that you're not liable to break a leg trying to get your hooks on a wad of advice when you see it lying around loose. You kids who are handed a roll of sheepskin and dumped out of the knowledge factory must all hug the dope that the great throbbing world is standing with bated breath waiting to hear your opinion of the questions of the day, and you never get wise till a little good practical common sense is hammered into your educated knowledge boxes with the club of experience."



"When you start to splatter your pedigree around a business joint, you'll be blamed soon find that it's the individual and not the family that the business world deals with. This practical section of existence is hep to the fact that the best crops often spring from the rottenest soil, and it's a blamed sight more credit to be a daisy blooming on a back lot than a ragweed in a flower garden."

"Now, if you take my tip, Kid, you'll keep mum about your ancestors and your blue blood. Take it from me, blue blood and a long pedigree isn't in the fact that the best crops often spring from the rottenest soil, and it's a blamed sight more credit to be a daisy blooming on a back lot than a ragweed in a flower garden."

"You think that your roll of sheepskin is a through ticket to success?"

"Come back with a grin on your mug when some guy sticks one on your jaw that has you groggy and hanging onto the ropes."

"Well, we stung me on that deal, and it's down and out for me. But we'll call it another experience and I'll get that guy yet."

"I don't think it's been settled yet," answered the Hotel Clerk. "As I just accounts nothing had happened since Teddy said Loeb and Wright were liars if they said he said what he said and they said it was just like what he said. The noble young cadets who'd made tobacco sauce and untwined prunes such popular articles of diet among their fellow students were still hanging around waiting to be reinstated and in the meantime thinking up a few new things to brighten up the tiresome menu of the plebs, such as raw oysters with sugar and cream on 'em. And down at the edge of the reservation was a promising brood of red ants that looked as if they'd probably be ripe enough to pick by early fall."