CLASSICS TO GO

ON GUARD

MARK MALLORY'S CELEBRATION

UPTON SINCLAIR

On Guard

Mark Mallory's Celebration

Upton Sinclair

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CHAPTER I.
A LETTER FROM A "FURLOUGH MAN."

"A letter for me, did you say?"

The speaker was a tall, handsome lad, a plebe at the West Point Military Academy. At the moment he was gazing inquiringly out of the tent door at a small orderly.

The boy handed him an envelope, and the other glanced at it.

"Cadet Mark Mallory, West Point, N. Y.," was the address.

"I guess that's for me," he said. "Thank you. Hello in there, Texas! Here's a letter from Wicks Merritt."

This last remark was addressed to another cadet in the tent. "Texas," officially known as Jeremiah Powers, a tall, rather stoop-shouldered youth, with a bronzed skin and a pair of shining gray eyes, appeared in the doorway and watched his friend with interest while he read.

"What does he say, Mark?" he inquired, when the latter finished.

"Lots," responded Mark. "Lots that'll interest our crowd. They ought to be through sprucing up by this time, so bring 'em over here and I'll read it."

"Sprucing up" is West Point for the morning house-cleaning in the summer camp. A half hour is allowed to it immediately after breakfast, and it is followed by "the A. M. inspection."

In response to Mark's suggestion, Texas slipped over to the tent in back of theirs in "B Company" Street, and called its three occupants. They came over and joined those in Mark's tent; and then Mark took out the letter he had just received.

"I've got something here," said he, "that I think ought to interest all of us. I guess I'll have time to read it before inspection. We are a secret society, aren't we?"

"That's what we are," assented the other six.

"But what's that got to do with it?" added Texas.

"And we've banded ourselves together for the purpose of preventing the yearlings from hazing us?" continued Mark, without noticing his friend's inquiry. "Well, it seems that they've been doing about the same thing down at Annapolis, too. This is from Wicks Merritt, a second class cadet up here, who's home on furlough this summer. He took a trip to Annapolis, and this is what he says. Listen very dutifully now, and don't get impatient:

"DEAR MALLORY: I have heard a lot about you since the last time I wrote. Several of the fellows have written to me, and they haven't been able to mention anything but you. They tell me you are kicking up a fine old fuss in West Point during my absence. They say that you won't let anybody haze you. They say that you've gotten a lot of plebes around you to back you up, and that the yearlings are half wild in consequence.

"I don't know what to make of you. You always were an extraordinary genius, and I suppose you have to do things in your own sweet way, whether it's rescuing ferryboats or sailboats or express trains, or else locking us yearlings in ice houses. I cannot imagine what will be the end of the matter. I am sure the yearlings will never give in.

"I'm told that when they tried to lick you into submission you did up Billy Williams, the best fighter in the class. Also that Bull Harris, whom I warned you against as being a sneaky fellow, tried to get you dismissed by skinning you on demerits, but that you circumvented that. Also that you and your friends have made it hot for him ever since, upon which fact I congratulate you.

"I don't know what the yearlings will do next, but I imagine that they're 'stalled.' Since you've started, I suppose the best thing for you to do is to keep up the good work and not let them rest. But for Heaven's sake, don't let any of them see this! They'd cut me for aiding and abetting a plebe rebellion. You are certainly the boldest plebe that every struck West Point; nobody in our class ever dared to do what you've done.

"It seems, though, that you have imitators, or else that you are imitating somebody. Down here at Annapolis this year pretty much the same state of affairs is going on just now. There's a plebe down here by the name of Clif Faraday (I've met him, and I told him about you), and he's raising the very old boy with the third class fellows. It seems that he outwitted them in all their hazing schemes, and has got them guessing at what he'll do next, which is about as B. J. as anything you ever did, I imagine. It looks as if plebes both at West Point and here would get off with almost no hazing this year. And it's all on account of you, too.

"Genius knows no precedent, they say. Farewell.

"Your friend,
"Wicks Merritt.

"P. S.—They tell me you've saved the life of Judge Fuller's daughter. Just take a word of advice—make the most of your opportunity! She's the prettiest girl around the place, and

the nicest, too, and she has half the corps wild over her. If you can make friends with her, I think the yearlings would stop hazing you at her command."

Mark finished the reading of the letter and gazed at his comrades, smiling.

"You see," he said, "our fame has spread even to Annapolis. Gentlemen, I propose three cheers for our crowd!"

"An' three fo' Clif Faraday!" cried Texas.

"Only don't give any of them," added Mark, "for somebody might hear us."

There was a moment's pause after that, broken by a protest from one of the Seven, Joseph Smith, of Indianapolis, popularly known as "Indian," a fat, gullible youth, who was the laughingstock of the post.

"I tell you," said he, his round eyes swelling with indignation, "I don't think what Clif Faraday did was a bit more B. J. than some of our tricks!" (B. J. is West Point dialect for "fresh.")

"That's what I say, too, b'gee!" chimed in another, a handsome, merry-eyed chap with a happy faculty of putting every one in a good humor when he laughed. "Just look at how Mark shut two of 'em up in an ice house. Or look at how, when they took Indian off to the observatory to haze him, b'gee, we made 'em think the place was afire and had 'em all scared to death, and the fire battalion turning out besides. Now, b'gee, I want to know where you can beat that!"

And his sentiment was echoed with approval by the remainder of those present. The seven had by this time scattered themselves about the tent in picturesque and characteristic attitudes, listening to the discussion carried on by the excitable Master Dewey.

First of all and foremost was the grave and learned "Parson," the Boston geologist. The Parson was stretched on his back in one corner with nothing but his long, bony shanks visible. Somehow or other Parson Stanard always managed to keep those legs of his with their covering of pale green socks the most conspicuous thing about him.

Sitting erect and stately on the locker, was Master Chauncey, the "dude" of the party. A few weeks of West Point had already worked wonders with Chauncey; his aristocratic friends on Fifth Avenue would scarcely have known him. In the first place, he, with the rest of the plebes, were compelled to walk, whenever they went abroad, with "head erect, chest out, eyes to the front, little fingers on the seams of the trousers, palms outward." Try this and you will find, as Chauncey was finding, that it is hard to do that and at the same time keep up the correct London "stoop." Chauncey had been obliged to leave his cane and monocle behind him also, and a few days later, when plebe fatigue uniforms were donned, his imported clothes and high collar went by the board, too.

But Chauncey still clung to his accent, "bah Jove;" and was still known to the seven as "the man with a tutor and a hyphen"—his name being Mount-Bonsall, if you please—and to the rest of the corps as the dude who most did up six yearlings.

The corner opposite the Parson's contained the dozing figure of Methusalem Zebediah Chelvers, the "farmer" from Kansas, popularly known as "Sleepy."

Sleepy never did anything or said anything unless he had to; the seven had known him for weeks now, and knew no more about him than at the start. Sleepy was still sleepy, and that was all.

The other members of this bold and desperate secret "anti-hazing" society were Dewey, the prize story-teller of the party, "b'gee;" Indian, the "prize pig;" Texas, a wild and woolly cowboy just from the plains, with a right arm that had paralyzed four cadets in as many minutes, and, last of all, Mark Mallory, the leader.

"Just look at the things we've done, b'gee!" continued Dewey. "Look at the times they've tried to haze us and we've outwitted them! See how we had the nerve to yank 'em out of bed the other night, b'gee. Or, if that isn't enough, just think of Bull Harris."

This last remark was greeted with a chuckle of laughter from the seven, in which even Sleepy found sufficient energy to join. And, indeed, the recollection was enough to make one laugh.

As readers of the first books in this series, "Off for West Point" and "A Cadet's Honor," know, Bull Harris was the sworn enemy of the seven, and of Mark in particular. He never had ceased plotting in his mean, cowardly way to get Mark into trouble, and it was the joy of the plebes' lives to outwit him. On the day previous they had succeeded beyond their wildest dreams. Given a bloodhound that had been sent out from a neighboring village to trail a burglar who had stepped into a barrel of pitch, the seven had put pitch on Bull Harris' shoe and started the dog after him during the evening's dress parade. The dog had chewed Bull's trousers to ribbons, had broken up the parade, had made Bull the laughingstock of the place and earned him the deathless nickname of "Bull, the Burglar." Naturally, Bull was wild with rage, and the seven with hilarity.

They were still chuckling over it and the general discomfiture of the yearling class and their own future

prospects as triumphant plebes, when inspection put an end to the discussion and scattered the crowd.

"But just you keep in mind," was Dewey's parting declaration, "that we're the B. J.-est plebes that ever were, are, will be or can be. And, b'gee, we're going to show it every day, too!"

Which the Parson punctuated with a solemn "Yea, by Zeus!"

CHAPTER II.
MARK'S IDEA.

The yearling corporal who did the inspecting had done his criticising and gone his way, leaving four of the seven in their tent—Mark, Texas, the Parson and Sleepy—who, being the tallest, had been assigned to Company A. And the four sat down to await the signal to "fall in" for drill.

"I reckon, Mark," said Texas, meditatively surveying his new uniform in the looking-glass. "I reckon that we fellows kin say that hazing's most over now."

"Assuredly!" said the Parson, gravely, "for indeed we have completely broken the spirit of the enemy, and he knows not which way to turn. I think that, in words of the song of Miriam, we may say:

> "'Sing, for the sword of the tyrant is broken!
> His chariots and horsemen are rent in twain.'

"Yea, by Zeus!"

The Parson said this with his usual classic solemnity. Mark smiled to himself as he sat down upon the locker and gazed at his friends.

"I've got something to tell you fellows," said he. "I think now's about as good a time as any. I haven't said anything about it to the crowd yet. When I do they'll have their eyes opened, and realize that if we're going to subdue the yearlings, we've got to start right at it all over again. We've scarcely begun yet."

The three others looked at him in surprise; Texas rubbed his hands gleefully, seeing that Mark's statement, if true, meant lots more fun for the future.

"You remember last night," Mark continued, "about midnight, how the Parson shouted out in his sleep and woke the whole camp?"

"Yes," added Texas, "and scared me to death. I thought I was down home and the ole place was being run in by rustlers or somethin'."

"You met me at the door of the tent," Mark went on. "I didn't tell you where I'd been; I'll tell you now. Last night a dozen or two of the yearlings took me out of camp—they surprised me, and held me so that I couldn't move. They tied me to a tree, and were just on the point of beating me."

"What!"

The three were staring at Mark in unutterable amazement.

"Yes," said Mark. "They told me I'd either have to promise to be a milk-and-water plebe after this or else be licked until I would. And Bull Harris took a big rope and——"

"Did he hit ye?" cried Texas, springing to his feet excitedly. "Wow! I'll go out an' I'll——"

"Sit down!" said Mark. "He didn't hit me, for the Parson yelled just then and scared 'em all back to camp. And you needn't tackle Bull anyhow, for I'm going to do that myself pretty soon. The point just now is that the yearlings haven't given up. They're still fighting."

"I didn't know there were so many cowards in the place!" muttered Texas.

"They're desperate," said Mark. "They've got to do something. Now we'll watch out for such surprises the next time, and meanwhile we'll show them that we're determined not to stop."

And Mark saw by the faces of the other three that that was just what they wanted. Texas especially was twitching his fingers nervously and looking as if he were wishing for some yearling to tackle right then and there.

"I tell you what we'll do, Mark," he broke out, suddenly. "We'll tie ourselves together an' sleep that way, an' then if they take one they'll have to take all."

"That's quite an idea," said the other, laughing. "But the main point now is just this: We're to set out with only one idea in our heads to think of; perhaps it might be well to offer a prize to the fellow who thinks of the best scheme. We want to keep those cadets fairly on the jump from the start."

"Bully!" cried Texas.

"And it seems to me, moreover," continued the leader, "that we make a big mistake if we let this day pass without doing something."

"Yea, by Zeus!" vowed the Parson, his solemn face glowing with interest. "For this day is the day of all days in the calendar of Freedom. This day is the day when our immortal colonies did vow and declare that the dragon of tyranny they would trample beneath their feet. This day is the day when first the eagle screamed, when humanity cast off its fetters and stood in the light of God's truth. This day is the glorious Fourth of July!"

The Parson had arisen to his feet, the better to illustrate the casting off of the fetters, and his long black hair was waving wildly and his long white arms yet more so. Boston and

Boston "liberty" were dangerous topics with him; he got more excited over them than he did when he found his immortal cyathophylloid coral "in a sandstone of Tertiary origin."

"Yea, by Zeus!" he continued. "Such are the auspices, the hallowed recollections of this immortal moment that I verily believe no revolution can fail on it. I say that if ever we strike boldly, we do it to-day. And I, as a citizen of Boston, pledge my aid to any plan."

"Yaas. An' we got a half holiday to-day, tew."

This rather prosaic peroration to the Parson's speech came from one corner, where Sleepy sat lazily regarding the scene. That was the first hint that the "farmer" had offered, and it had corresponding weight. The four shook hands on it then and there, that by the time dinner was over they would have a brand new and startling plan to work for the yearlings' edification. The signal to fall in for drill found them still pledging themselves to that.

Mark said nothing more to any one upon the subject; he left his friends to think for themselves, and he, when he got a chance, started out likewise on his "own hook." In the first place, it was necessary to find out just how the yearlings meant to spend that half-holiday afternoon; having found that, it would then be time to think up a plan for spoiling the fun.

There was a member of the plebe class who had been a plebe the year before, that is, who had failed on examinations and had not been advanced. Naturally, he knew all the yearlings, and, having been through camp once, knew also what would be apt to happen on the Fourth of July. Mark himself knew nothing about it, for no one

thought it necessary to tell plebes about such things; and so to this "hold-over" Mark went to learn.

That gentleman, in response to some diplomatic interrogation, emitted the information that there was nothing "on." That a ball game had been intended, but prevented at the last moment. That probably most of the cadets would go walking, or amuse themselves any way—some of them do a little hazing. That it was a pleasant custom to make the plebes dress up in masquerade and give a parade or something. And that finally there was to be an entertainment in the evening.

What sort? Well, it was dignified and patriotic. There were programmes issued—not given to plebes, of course. Would Mallory like to see one? Perhaps he could get one, would see after drill, etc., etc. "Much obliged. Good-morning."

The affable young gentleman did manage to get Mallory a programme. He gave it to him just before dinner. "Thank you." "Oh, not at all, only too glad to oblige you," etc. And Mark rushed into the tent and eagerly read the handsomely printed pasteboard:

United States Military Academy.
July 4th, 8.30 P. M.
PROGRAMME.
Overture.
Prayer.
Music.
Reading of The Declaration of
Independence.
Cadet George T. Fischer, Pennsylvania.
Music.
Oration.
Cadet Edmund S. Harris——

Mark read not another word; he stared at the paper in amazement and incredulity, rapidly changing to glee. Harris! Bull Harris delivering an oration! Mark turned and faced his companions, feeling about ready to burst with hilarity.

"Listen here, fellows!" he cried. "Here's a chance, a chance of a lifetime! Oh, say! Bull's going to make a speech! Gee whiz! We'll——"

"Didn't you fellows know about that?" put in a voice in the doorway, as Dewey's face appeared there. "I heard the yearlings talking about it. They say Bull's a fine orator, that he's been working at an elegant speech for months. And, b'gee, he means to bring down the house."

Mark's face was simply a picture of merriment at that.

"Fellows," he said, as soon as he could manage to get breath to say anything at all. "Fellows, I'll go you just one bargain more."

"What is it?" cried the others.

"It's very simple. It's just that we spoil that beautiful speech of Bull Harris', if we have to bust to do it."

And the seven cried "Done!" in one breath.

CHAPTER III.
A NEW ALLY.

The more they thought over that scheme the better they liked it; the more they imagined Bull Harris, pompous and self-conscious, spouting his magnificent periods and then brought to an ignominious and ridiculous conclusion, the more they chuckled with glee. They felt no prickings of conscience in the matter, for Bull was not a personage to inspire such. His devices had been cowardly and desperate; only last night he had been on the point of lashing Mark with a rope when the latter was helplessly tied to a tree. With such a man ordinary standards of fairness did not hold good.

The only trouble with the "scheme" was its general indefiniteness. And that the seven recognized. It was all very well to say you were going to "bust up" Bull Harris' speech. But how? It would not do to guy him, or to use any device of which the authors might be found out. It was quite a problem.

Texas suggested an alarm of fire, which was outvoted as dangerous, likely to produce a panic. Some one else wondered how about kidnaping Bull and tying him up. This suggestion was put on file as being possible, to be consulted in case no better appeared, which bid fair just then to be the case.

Mark and his friends marched down to dinner without any further ideas appearing. The plebes still marched separate from the rest of the corps, though they were allowed to share the privilege of the spirited band which enlivened the proceedings. They still sat at separate tables, too, which made most of them feel very much outcast indeed.

The command "Break ranks," after the march from mess hall again, marked the beginning of that holiday during which the seven had vowed to do so much. And still nobody had seemed to hit upon any suitable plan for the discomfiture of Bull Harris.

"We've got to hurry up about it, too," Mark declared. "For, if there's any fixing up to be done, we ought to be doing it now."

"Where's the thing to be, anyway?" inquired Dewey.

"In the big gymnasium building, they say," was the answer. "They'll probably cover the floor with seats. But I don't think we can do anything inside the place. I think we ought to kick up some sort of rumpus outside."

And with this advice the seven heads got to work again.

Ideas come slowly when you want them badly. It would seem that with those seven minds busy on the same subject something should have resulted. But it didn't. The seven strolled away from camp and wandered about the grounds cudgeling their brains and calling themselves names for their stupidity. And still no plan came forward.

They strolled down to the gymnasium building in hopes that proximity to the scene itself would prove efficacious. They stared at the vestibule and the windows blankly, wondering what the place might be like inside, wondering if there would be much of a crowd, wondering if Bull would have much of a speech—wondering about everything except the matter in hand.

"Plague take it all!" they muttered. "Let's walk out Professor's Row and find some quiet place to sit down. Perhaps we can think better sitting."

Professor's Row is a street that bounds the parade ground on the west. It is cool and shady, with benches and camp chairs on the lawn. But there were plenty of people to occupy the seats, and so the seven found no place there to cogitate.

They had not gotten much farther before all ideas of plots and orations were driven from Mark's head a-flying. They were passing a group of people standing on the opposite side of the street, and suddenly one of them, a girl, hurried away from the others, and cried out:

"Mr. Mallory! Oh, Mr. Mallory!"

Mark turned the moment he heard the voice, and, when he saw who it was, he promptly excused himself from his friends and crossed the street. The six strolled on, smiling and winking knowingly at one another.

"Hope he'll remember what Wicks Merritt said, b'gee!" laughed Dewey.

Mark had no time to remember anything much. He was too busy, watching the vision that was hurrying to meet him.

Grace Fuller certainly was a beautiful girl, beyond a doubt. She was a blonde of the fairest type; her complexion was matchless, and set off by a wealth of wavy golden hair. She was dressed in white, and made a picture that left no room to wonder why "half the cadets in the place were wild over her."

"I'm glad I swam out to save her," was the thought in Mark's mind.

A moment later he took the small white hand that was held out to him.

"Mr. Mallory," said the girl, gazing at him earnestly, "I shall not wait for any one to introduce you to me. I must tell you that I appreciate your bravery."

Mark bowed and thanked her; he could think of nothing more to say.

"They just let me out of the hospital to-day," she continued, "and I made up my mind that the very first thing I was going to do was to tell you what I thought of your courageous action on my behalf. I want to know you better, Mr. Mallory."

She said it in a plain and simple way that Mark liked, and he told her that nothing would please him more.

"I would ask you to take a walk with me now," said Grace, "but for all those cadets who are with me. I don't think they'd relish that, you being a fourth class man."

"I don't think they would," responded Mark, with a queer smile which the girl did not fail to notice.

"I don't care!" she exclaimed, suddenly. "They can get mad if they want to. I think a great deal more of some plebes than I do of yearlings. Excuse me just a moment."

And then, to Mark's infinite glee, this beautiful creature hurried over and said something to the group of cadets, at which they all bowed and walked off rather stiffly, sheepishly, Mark thought. The girl rejoined him, with a smile.

"I told them they'd have to excuse me," she said, as she took Mark's arm. "I told them I owed you a debt of gratitude, and I hoped they wouldn't mind."

"Probably they won't," observed Mark, smiling again.

"I don't care if they do," vowed Grace, pouting prettily. "They'll get over it. And they're awfully stupid, anyway. I hope you're not stupid."

With which Mark quite naturally agreed.

"I don't think the cadets like you much," she went on, laughing. "I had such fun teasing them by talking about your heroism. They didn't like it a bit, and they'd try all sorts of ways to change the subject, but I wouldn't let them. They say you are terribly B. J. Are you?"

"I suppose they think so," answered Mark. "I'm nothing like as B. J. as I shall be before I get through."

"That's right!" vowed the girl, shaking her head. "I like B. J. plebes. I think I should be B. J. if I were a plebe. I don't like these mild, obedient fellows, and I think the plebes stand entirely too much."

"I wish you were one to help me," laughed Mark, noticing the contrast between the girl's frail figure and her energetic look.

"I'm stronger than you think," said she. "I could do a lot." And then suddenly she broke into one of her merry, animated laughs, during which Mark thought her more charming than ever. "If I can't fight," she said, "you must let me be a Daughter of the Revolution. You must let me make clothes and bake bread the way the colonists' daughters did. It's just appropriate for to-day, too."

"I don't want any bread——" began Mark, looking at her thoughtfully.

"Perhaps not," she put in, with a peal of laughter. "If you saw the bread I make, you'd be still more emphatic. It's like the fruit of the tree of knowledge—'Whoso eateth thereof shall surely die.'"

"I see you read the Bible," said Mark, laughing. "But to get back where I was. I'll let the tailor make my clothes, also. What I need most just now are tricks to play on the yearlings."

"Do you?" inquired Grace. "I can tell you of lots of tricks the cadets have played. But that's the first time I ever heard of a plebe playing tricks on yearlings. It's usually the other way."

"Variety is the spice of life," said Mark. "The yearlings have tried rather contemptible tricks on me once or twice, very contemptible! I could tell you what several of those cadets who were with you did to me last night, and I think you'd be angry. Anyway, I'm going to make them miserable in return."

"I helped the yearlings get up a beautiful joke last year," said Grace, looking at Mark in ill-concealed admiration. "Wicks Merritt was the ringleader. He wrote to me, by the way, and told me to be very nice to you now that you'd saved my life—just as if he thought I wouldn't! Anyway, I got them some powder to use for the scheme."

"Powder!" echoed Mark. "How did you get powder?"

"They couldn't manage to run off with any around here, so I got George to buy some. George is our butler. You'll see George when you come over to visit me, which I hope you will."

"I thought you lived across the river, beyond cadet limits," put in Mark.

"So I do, but the cadets come, all the same, lots of them."

"So will I, then!" laughed the other. "But you haven't told me what you did with the powder."