

the experiment of the fifth year was tried, by amplifying the theoretical course, but by placing the Cadet in the 5th year on the footing of an Officer or sub-lieutenant, relieving him from the routine of discipline at the Academy, and permitting him to pursue his particular specialty of Engineering, Artillery, Cavalry, Astronomy, Chemistry or Mining, or the duties of Elect Major at any institution he might select, in this country or in Europe, only reporting for final examination at the close of the year.

I still think some plan of the kind will have to be adopted to keep our military men on a level in education, with the military men of the leading nations of the world, particularly if a long peace ensues. The War of the Rebellion, from its vast proportions, was better than any school at home or abroad that could be furnished in time of peace, but the experience gained in that War must die out with the actors in it, and the art of war which changes and progresses with the march of science, is ever changing in its details and appliances. Five years spent at the same institution are too long, the pupil gets wearied out with the repetition of the same thing for too long a time, and becomes disgusted and insubordinate, or falls into a rut and becomes an inanimate machine.

After the hours and misfortunes of my first year at West Point and a gentle personal admonition from one of the noblest of parents who came on to look after my welfare, I turned sharp round in my course of conduct, and became one of the most law-abiding students, and never neglected the least duty however minute, so I passed through the last three years of my course without a single demerit, and rose to the rank of Captain in the Corps of Cadets, with but one to rank me, and as he was often absent and finally resigned his Captaincy, I became the senior Cadet Captain, and was often the Commandant of the Corps, and drilled it before the Board of Visitors, and when strangers of distinction visited the Point.