



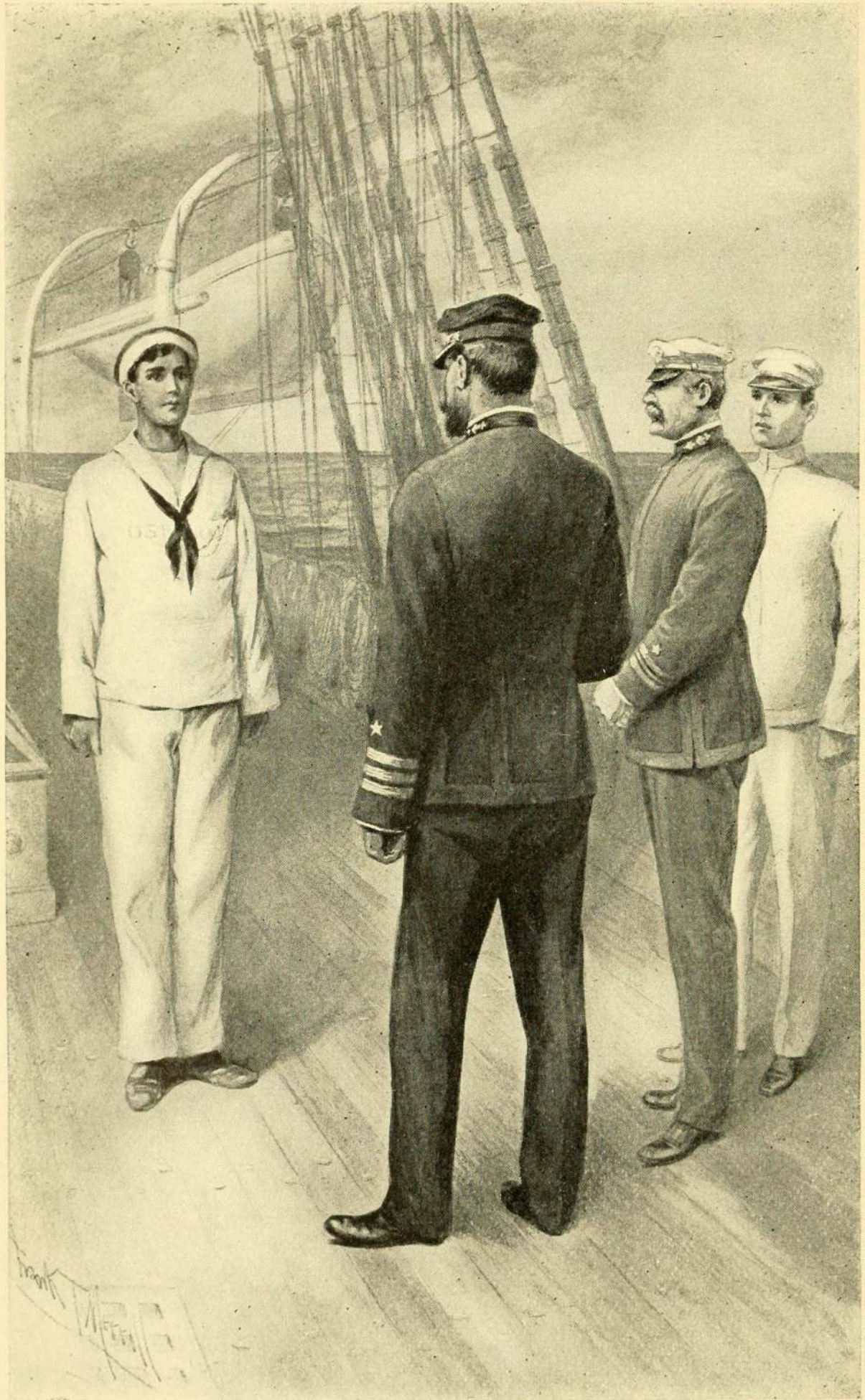
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Ralph Osborn—Midshipman at Annapolis





"You did well, sir"

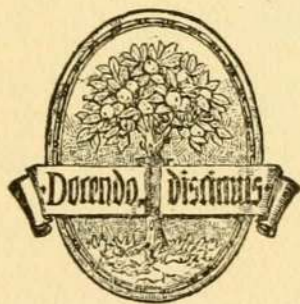


# Ralph Osborn—Midshipman at Annapolis

*A STORY OF LIFE AT THE  
U. S. NAVAL ACADEMY*

By LIEUT. COMMANDER  
EDWARD L. BEACH, U. S. NAVY  
*Author of "An Annapolis Youngster," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY  
FRANK T. MERRILL



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RALPH OSBORN—MIDSHIPMAN AT ANNAPOLIS



## P R E F A C E

THE purpose of this story is to bring before the American youth who read it a correct portrayal of midshipman life at Annapolis, to bring out in story form the routine of drills, studies and customs of our Naval Academy, the discipline there undergone by American midshipmen and the environment in which they live and which controls them from the time they enter.

“The Osborn Demonstration” of the Pythagorean problem may not be new. It hardly seems reasonable that such a simple solving of this ancient problem should be discovered at this late date. However, it is certainly shorter and more graphic than any given in present day geometry text-books. Some search has been made, but up to the present no evidence has been found showing previous knowledge of this method of demonstration.

Should this story create any interest in Ralph Osborn and his friends it may here be stated that they have all lived. They were not the first nor will they be the last to have trials and triumphs at Annapolis.

EDWARD LATIMER BEACH,  
*Lieutenant-Commander,*  
*United States Navy.*

*United States Ship Montana.*





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# Ralph Osborn—Midshipman at Annapolis

## CHAPTER I

### A COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION FOR THE NAVAL ACADEMY

“FATHER,” said Ralph Osborn, looking up from the book he had been reading, “I want to go to the Naval Academy.”

“Why, Ralph, how did you happen to think of that?” asked his father putting down his paper and giving to the earnest youth at his side his sympathetic attention; “what has attracted you to the naval life?”

“Father, you’ve always talked about my going to college and studying to be a lawyer. I’d much rather be a naval officer than a lawyer, and besides I don’t see how you can afford to send me to college. I’ll finish high school in a few months and then must look for some position; you can’t hope to be able to send me to college next year.”

“I’m afraid not, Ralph,” returned his father;



“but you might go into a lawyer’s office; many of our best lawyers have never been to college.”

“That was the old way, father, but nowadays practically all lawyers are college graduates. A lawyer of to-day who has not had college training is tremendously handicapped and must be a genius to be really successful. And besides, father, I have never felt I wanted to be a lawyer; my tastes are more mathematical.”

“Well, what has mathematics got to do with being a naval officer?” queried the father, Ralph Osborn senior.

“Why, father, Jack Farrer says, and he ought to know, that engineering, and electricity, and ship-building, are founded upon mathematics, and the naval officer has everything to do with these sciences. And if I could go to the Naval Academy I’d get a splendid education without its costing you anything. And after I was graduated if I didn’t want to be an officer I’d have a splendid profession. Now, father, won’t you please help me?”

Mr. Osborn sighed. “I wish I could, Ralph,” he said, “but I don’t know how I could. It’s a difficult thing to get into the Naval Academy; you must get the congressman of your district to appoint you, and we don’t even know our congressman. Such an appointment is generally given by a congressman to the son of some close friend, and ——”



“Yes,” interrupted Ralph, eagerly, “but sometimes the congressman orders a competitive examination. Now Jack Farrer finally graduates from the Naval Academy next June; you know it is a six years’ course, four at the Academy and then two years at sea aboard a cruising ship, and his graduation will make a vacancy at Annapolis for the Toledo district. Now, father, won’t you get some friend of yours who knows Congressman Evans to write to him and ask the appointment for me? And if Mr. Evans won’t do that, ask that the appointment be thrown open to competitive examination? Please do, father.”

Ralph’s brown eyes more than his words imploringly begged his father. The latter was silent for a few moments, then said: “Ralph, I’ll ask my employer, Mr. Spencer, to write to Mr. Evans to-morrow, but don’t be too hopeful. There will undoubtedly be many others who have greater claims upon Mr. Evans.”

“Oh, thank you, father,” cried the now delighted Ralph. “If Mr. Evans won’t give me the appointment but opens it to a competitive examination I’m sure I’ll have a good chance of winning it.”

“Well, I’ll see Mr. Spencer to-morrow. By the way, Ralph, to-day I received a letter and a present from your Uncle George.”

“From my Uncle George!” exclaimed the young man, in great surprise. “Why, I’d for-



gotten I had an Uncle George ; I've never seen him, and you haven't spoken of him for years. What did he say in his letter, and where is he ? Tell me something about him."

" Here is his letter. I hadn't heard from or of him for ten years. His letter is absolutely brief. He says he is well and is doing well. He enclosed a check for two hundred dollars as a remembrance. He says that for the next week only his address will be the general delivery of the New York City post-office."

" Two hundred dollars ! " repeated Ralph, enthusiastically. " Why, father, if I am admitted to the Naval Academy that is just the amount I will have to deposit for my outfit. But why have you never told me anything about my Uncle George ? "

" It's a sad story," replied Mr. Osborn, " and there isn't much to tell. He was one of the most attractive young men in the city of Toledo, twenty years ago. Your grandfather was strict with him, and at times harsh, too harsh, I now think. However, one day about twenty years ago, your grandfather sent your Uncle George with two thousand dollars to deposit in a bank. Well, George turned up two hours later and said he had been robbed. Your grandfather became very angry and said that George had been drinking and gambling. Your uncle indignantly denied this, and your grandfather in a passion struck him. It was an awful time. George left the house, said he would never



return. I'll never forget his white face. He asked me if I believed he had gambled that money away. I assured him I did not. He said : ' I thank God for your belief in me, Ralph.' Those were the last words he ever spoke to me.

" We never knew where he went or what became of him. At long intervals letters would come from him, each one enclosing a draft. In each letter he stated the amount he sent was to be applied to what he termed his financial indebtedness to his father, but he always maintained the money had been stolen from him. In about ten years the entire amount, with interest, was repaid to your grandfather. Until this letter came to-day I had not heard from him for ten years."

" But, father, were not his letters enclosing the drafts acknowledged ; did you not write to him ? "

" Of course, but each letter was returned to us."

" Where were these letters from ? "

" From different places ; your Uncle George has evidently been a great traveler. During those ten years several of his letters came from New York ; two, I think, from Norfolk, Virginia. I remember one came from San Francisco, one from London, and one from Yokohama, Japan."

" Now isn't that interesting ? " remarked Ralph. " Why, it almost seems like a mystery. Perhaps he's a millionaire and some time will come to Toledo in his private car. But, father, what is your idea of it all ? "



“ I don't know what to think, Ralph ; your uncle was very proud as a young man, and my notion is that he has had a hard time of it like the rest of us ; that he would come back here for a visit if he could do so in style, but would not like to come back without the evidences of prosperity. But I shall write to him immediately and ask him to visit us. You know he may have a notion that people here imagine he used that two thousand dollars gambling, whereas the fact is the matter was never discussed outside of our family. Twenty years ago people wondered at his departure but none ever learned the cause of it.”

“ Father, if I get the appointment to Annapolis may I have the two hundred dollars Uncle George has sent? I have been wondering where we would get the money to deposit. And I would need about one hundred dollars more ; I must have some for traveling expenses and for board in Annapolis, and I would like to go to the preparatory school there for a month.”

Mr. Osborn smiled. “ Indeed you may have the two hundred, Ralph,” he replied, “ and I will manage to find another hundred for you. But aren't you getting ahead a little fast? You appear to take it for granted that there is no doubt of your getting that appointment.”

“ Bully,” cried Ralph ; “ I'm going to get the appointment, I feel sure of that. And I'm going to write to Uncle George right away and tell him



I'm going, or at least that I hope to go to the Naval Academy. And I'll tell him how grateful we are for the two hundred. Good-night, father."

One evening, a week later, Mr. Osborn handed his son a letter, saying: "Here's something that may interest you, Ralph." The latter read the letter with great eagerness. It was as follows:

"MY DEAR SPENCER:—

"In reply to yours of the 9th instant would say I will have an appointment for Annapolis next June. I will throw this open to competitive examination, and if your young friend, Mr. Ralph Osborn, wins, and is recommended by the board of examiners, I will appoint him with pleasure.

"Yours very truly,

"JOHN H. EVANS."

"Hurrah!" shouted Ralph. "Now I'm going in to win. I've several months ahead and I'm going to study hard and review everything. I'm going to leave high school to-morrow and study at home. Now, father, keep quiet about this; don't advertise the fact there's going to be a competitive examination. Everybody has the same chance I have to learn about the vacancy to Annapolis and the coming competitive examination, but it isn't necessary that I should stir up people to try to beat me out."

At this time Ralph Osborn was about eighteen years old. He was of medium height and build; his eyes were brown; in them was a steadfast



earnestness that always attracted friendships and inspired confidence. His salient characteristics were truthfulness and determination. Except when his mother died no sorrow had ever been a part of Ralph's life. Time had dimmed that sorrow, and to him his mother was now a beautiful, tender memory. His affection for his father was unbounded. The Osborns were a good family; there had never been a better one in Toledo, but Mr. Osborn had not been successful as a business man and now depended for his support entirely upon the salary he earned as bookkeeper.

Ralph wrote to his uncle, and received the following letter in reply :

“DEAR NEPHEW RALPH : —

“I was much pleased to receive your letter, and interested to discover I have a nephew. I know something of Annapolis, and recommend it for you. I am leaving New York now but will write you later, and shall look forward to meeting you.

Your affectionate uncle,

“GEORGE H. OSBORN.”

Mr. Osborn also received a letter from his brother in which the latter expressed the intention of visiting Toledo, but at some future time.

“Well,” said Ralph, disgustedly, “I found a nice uncle, and now I've lost him, and don't even know where to write to him.”

For the next three months Ralph devoted him-



self to his studies. He imagined the competitive examination would be in arithmetic, grammar, geography, and spelling, and these he thoroughly reviewed.

The day came when announcement was made that there would be a competitive examination for the Naval Academy at Annapolis, and this was held in April. Ralph found that he had twenty-two competitors. It is doubtful if any had done such thorough reviewing as Ralph had. The examination lasted three days and Ralph felt he had done well.

“Father, the examination is all over,” cried Ralph, when Mr. Osborn returned home that evening. “I suppose the results will not be published for several days. There were twenty-three of us in all, and it will take some time to examine and mark all the papers that were handed in. Oh, I’m so anxious to see who gets the highest marks, I can hardly wait.”

“Do you think you have won, Ralph?”

“I’m certain I did well. I felt I knew every question that was asked, but of course some one may have done better.”

A few days later Ralph opened the evening newspaper, and the first thing that met his eyes was his own name in big head-lines. It was as follows: “Ralph Osborn, Jr., wins the Competitive Examination for Annapolis.” And then followed a description of Ralph that was most pleas-



ing to that young man. He was wild with joy, and could not contain himself. Before the night was over he had read that article hundreds of times. And Mr. Osborn, seeing his only child in such transports of happiness, was himself filled with joy.

Ralph received congratulations from hundreds of friends, and soon commenced to make preparations to leave for Annapolis.

As Ralph bade Mr. Osborn good-bye in the station, little did he dream that it was the last time he was to see that dear father alive.



## CHAPTER II

### MR. THOMAS G. SHORT AND HIS MAN

RALPH OSBORN arrived in Annapolis in May, just a month before the entrance examinations were to take place. He secured room and board at the price of eight dollars a week, and immediately enrolled himself for one month's tuition in Professor Wingate's preparatory school. Here the special instruction given consisted in studying previous examination questions, and Ralph soon felt he was well prepared for his coming ordeal.

At this time Annapolis was full of visitors, and the number of these increased daily. There were here many of the friends and relations of the midshipmen soon to graduate, and also more than a hundred and seventy candidates were distributed in the different boarding-houses of the old town. One of these aspirants came into immediate notoriety because apparently he possessed enormous wealth and made much noise in spending his money. His name was Short; he arrived in Annapolis in a private car and immediately rented a handsome, well-furnished house in which he installed a retinue of servants. Short was an orphan. He had inherited millions, and though



nominally under the control of a guardian, he actually ruled the latter with an imperious will that brooked neither check nor interference. Though he was not aware of it, Short as a midshipman was an impossible contemplation. First, he was utterly unprincipled; secondly, he was uncontrollable. But he made an effort to prepare himself, engaged special tutors, and promised them large bonuses if he passed the examinations successfully. A week before the examinations were held he was frankly told he would certainly fail in mathematics. Short immediately went to the telegraph office and sent several messages to New York. The next day two flashily-dressed men came to Annapolis, had several long talks with Short and received money from him.

Short enjoyed company and soon after he was domiciled in Annapolis he had invited several of the candidates to live with him as his guests. As these young men were earnestly preparing for their examinations, their presence probably influenced Short to study more than he otherwise would have done.

A few mornings before the day set for the commencement of the examinations, Short at breakfast asked one of his guests to come with him to the library. With them was also one of the men who had come down from New York. Short was in particular good humor.

As soon as they reached the library, Short



turned to the young candidate, and without any preliminary words said abruptly, "The jig is up. I've got you."

The young man spoken to turned pale and trembled violently. "What do you mean?" he gasped.

Short laughed. "I mean you're caught," he replied. "I've been missing things of late and spotted you for the thief. The two hundred dollars you took at two o'clock this morning was a plant for you. Every bill was marked, and there were two detectives hidden in the room who saw you steal the money. I've a warrant for your arrest; you'll land in the pen for this instead of becoming a midshipman."

The young man addressed dropped helplessly into a near-by chair, and hysterically cried, "I didn't do it. This is a put up job."

Short grinned. "Perhaps," he said. "But I hate to be hard on a chum. There's a way out of it for you, though, if you will do exactly what I say."

"I didn't do it; you can't prove I did," exclaimed the young man.

"I'm not going to try to prove it," smiled Short, in reply. "I'm just going to have you locked up in jail; the prosecuting attorney of Annapolis and a jury will take charge of you; but I guess you'll live at public expense for a few years. It's a clear case, my boy, but I bear you no



ill will; two hundred dollars or so isn't much to me. But I told you there was a way out of it for you, and an easy way out of it, too."

"What do you mean? Oh, Short, you wouldn't disgrace me, you wouldn't ruin me?" implored the young man in trembling tones.

"Stop your sniveling," commanded Short. "Now do you want to get out of this and have no one know anything about it or do you want to go to jail? Take your choice, and be quick about it."

"I'll do anything. What do you want me to do?"

"First, I want you to write a confession stating you stole the two hundred dollars and other amounts from Thomas G. Short."

"I'll not do it."

"Oh, well, then, go to jail; I'm tired of bothering with you."

"Oh, Short, don't. What would you do with that confession?"

"I don't mind telling you. I'd lock it up and no one would ever see it. But I'd own you, do you understand? I'm going to be the most popular man at the Academy; I'm going to be class president and cut a wide swathe here. Now you'd help me and I'll need help. That's all you'll have to do. And there'll be a lot of money and good times in it for you. Come, write me that confession. You'll never hear of it again; you'll



simply know I'm your boss and you'll have to do what I tell you."

The hapless young candidate immediately brightened up and taking pen and paper rapidly wrote a few lines. Short read what he had written, and then, in a satisfied manner, said, "That's sensible. You'll never regret it."

The young man then said, "Short, here's your two hundred. Thank you so much for your goodness to me; but I can't help taking things, I really can't; I'm what they call a kleptomaniac."

"Oh, keep the two hundred," said Short, folding up the paper the young man had written, and putting it in his pocket. "Now see here, I can't afford to have my right-hand man get caught stealing and you surely will be if you keep it up. Whenever the feeling comes over you again come to me and I'll give you fifty or so. Now skip out. I've some private matters I want to talk over with my friend here."

The young candidate returned the two hundred dollars to his pocket and left the room in an apparently happy frame of mind. With him the crime of a thing was not in the guilty act but in the publicity and punishment following detection.

"You've got that fellow good and hard," remarked the other man who had remained in the room with them.

"Yes, and he'll stay got," returned Short, drily.



“ Well, what have you to report? Are you going to get the math exam for me? ”

“ You bet, we’ll have it to-night sure thing. We’ve got it located, have a complete plan of the building, and Sunny Jim, the greatest safe cracker in the world, will get it to-night. Nothing less than a burglar-proof time-lock could keep him out. He’ll get here to-night on the six o’clock train and you’ll have a copy of your mathematical examination before this time to-morrow, and no one will ever be the wiser unless you choose to tell. Sunny Jim will not know who it’s for and he’ll lock up everything behind him when he leaves. He’ll not leave a trace behind him and no one will suspect the building has been entered.”

“ Good. I’ll depend upon you. I can pass in the other subjects, and will in mathematics if I get hold of the examination several days ahead of time. That’s all for the present.”

The examinations were to begin on Monday, the first of June. Ralph Osborn felt well prepared and confident, yet he dreaded the ordeal and longed for it to be over.

On Friday night preceding the examinations, Ralph was in his room studying. At nine o’clock there was a sharp rap at his door.

“ Come in,” he called out; and a man he had never seen before entered and said: “ Mr. Osborn? ”



“Yes; what can I do for you?” replied Ralph, feeling an instinctive dislike for the coarse-featured man he was addressing, and wondering what could have brought him to his room.

“You are a candidate, I believe, Mr. Osborn?”

“Yes,” replied Ralph, “and I’m very busy studying my mathematics.”

“Just so,” said the stranger with a knowing look, and taking a step nearer. “And your mathematics examination is going to be difficult. I’m sure you’ll not pass—unless you get my assistance.”

“Who are you, and what are you talking about?” asked Ralph sharply.

“Never mind who I am,” retorted the stranger, unfolding a paper, “but do you see this? It is the examination in mathematics. You can have it for fifty dollars.”

Ralph sprang at the stranger, his eyes dilated with wondering indignation, his soul aflame at the infamous proposal made to him. His breath came short and he almost choked. Nothing like this had ever entered his life and he was utterly unprepared with word or thought.

“The examination in mathematics!” he stammered as he started toward him.

“Take it easy,” smiled the stranger; “others have it, why shouldn’t you?”

At that moment there came a rap at the door and a black, woolly head was thrust into the room.



“Mistah Osborn,” said the intruder, “dere’s a telegram boy what’s got a telegraph fo’ you; he says dere’s fo’ty cents to collec’.”

“Excuse me for a minute,” said Ralph to the stranger, “while I see the telegraph messenger.” As he hurried out of the room and down the stairs, he felt glad of the interruption as it gave him time to gather his scattered thoughts. What should he do? He was in a terrible quandary. Somehow he did not doubt the fact that the stranger’s claim to possess the examination was correct. His whole nature revolted at the notion of passing an examination by such underhand means; he was horrified, but he did not know what to do. If he refused to take the examination the stranger would leave with it. And if he reported the occurrence without proof other than his unsupported word he was afraid nothing would come of his report.

He received the telegram which was of little importance, and still in perplexity as to what to do, he started to return when his eyes fell upon a telephone in the hall. A sudden inspiration came to him. He took down the receiver and said: “Central, give me the house of the superintendent of the Naval Academy immediately.”

Soon a voice came which said: “This is the superintendent; what is it?”

“Is this the superintendent of the Naval Academy?”



"It is. What do you want with him?"

"I am Ralph Osborn, a candidate."

"What is it, Mr. Osborn?"

"Sir, I am at number twenty-six Hanover Street. There is a man in my room who has a paper which he says is the examination in mathematics the candidates are to have next Monday morning. He wants to sell it for fifty dollars. What shall I do, sir?"

"Keep him there. Offer a less price, haggle with him, but keep him there. Lock your door if you can, and open it when you hear four loud, distinct knocks."

"All right, sir."

Ralph immediately went to his room. His mind was now perfectly clear and determined. He had to kill time and he proposed to do it. First he deliberately rearranged the chairs; then he made a great pretence of getting ice-water for his visitor. Then he engaged in conversation, and asked all kinds of questions. Finally his visitor became impatient. "Do you want it or not?" he cried. "If you don't, say so. I've no time to fool away."

"Yes, I want it, but not for fifty dollars."

The stranger got up to leave. Ralph begged him to reduce the price. When Ralph saw he could not delay the man longer, he jumped to the door, locked it and quickly put the key in his pocket.



“What are you doing?” angrily demanded the intruder, advancing upon Ralph.

“I’m going to get that paper at a cheaper price,” returned Ralph, picking up a heavy andiron with both hands. “Now keep away or you’ll get hurt.”

“You’ll have a big job if you think you can stop me from leaving,” shouted the man with a curse. “Open that door or I’ll break your head.”

“Keep off, or I’ll brain you,” cried Ralph, excitedly, but with menacing determination; just then there were four loud knocks on the door. Ralph quickly unlocked the door and threw it open. In walked two officers, one of magnificent presence, with two silver stars on his coat collar and broad gold bands on his sleeves. With the officers were two Naval Academy watchmen and an Annapolis policeman.

The superintendent, for it was he, looked at Ralph, who, with flushed face and panting breath, the irons in hand, now felt much relieved. The superintendent then addressed the stranger. “Who are you, sir?” he demanded.

“A free American citizen,” returned the man sulkily, “about my own business.”

“Officer, arrest that man on a charge of burglary. Go through his pockets and let me see what papers he has in them.”

“I protest against this indignity,” cried the man; “you’ll pay for this;” but his protests were



unavailing. He was searched, and in a moment a paper was handed the superintendent.

"Professor," asked the superintendent, "is this the examination the candidates are to have Monday?"

The officer with the superintendent looked at the paper and instantly replied, "It is indeed, sir."

"Very well; officer, I'd like to have you lock that man up over night. I'll prefer charges against him to-morrow. The watchmen will go with you to help take him to the jail."

And then the superintendent looked at Ralph; his steel gray eyes seemed to pierce him through and through. He then offered Ralph his hand and said: "Good-night, Mr. Osborn. I congratulate you; you have done well, sir. Continue as you have begun and you will be an honor to the Navy."

Ralph, overcome with feeling at the superintendent's words of commendation, could stammer but unintelligibly in reply. And for some time after the superintendent had left, Ralph stood in the middle of his room, and iron still firmly grasped, wondering at the exciting events he had just experienced.

The bars of the Annapolis jail may be sufficiently strong to keep securely negro crap shooters, but they were hardly child's play to the skilful Sunny Jim, who had broken through and was far away long before morning.



A searching investigation developed no clue as to how the examination questions had gotten adrift, but a new examination was immediately made out and substituted for the one previously made. All in the ignorance of Mr. Thomas G. Short, who marched to the examination Monday morning believing that he was to make close to a perfect mark in mathematics.



## CHAPTER III

### SHORT'S METHOD OF PASSING AN EXAMINATION

ON Monday morning the candidates flocked by scores to the room in the Naval Academy where they were to be examined. After the inspection of their appointments each candidate was assigned to a numbered desk. Ralph Osborn found himself at a desk numbered 153. On the desk was a pad of paper on which he was to do his work, pencils, and the written examination questions which this first day were in arithmetic, and algebra as far as quadratics. Ralph picked the examination paper up and eagerly scanned it; but in a moment a bell rang, and he heard a loud cry of: "Attention," uttered in an authoritative manner by an officer in lieutenant's uniform, who said, when complete quiet existed: "Each candidate will number each sheet of his work in the upper left-hand corner with the number of his desk. In no case will the candidate write his name on any sheet; when you have finished leave all your papers on your desk. Now go ahead with your work; you have four hours and you'll need it."

There was immediately a shuffle of papers and a stirring in seats as the candidates commenced



their first test. Ralph Osborn looked the examination paper rapidly over, and a feeling of confidence came over him as he read. "It's easy," he said to himself; "I can do it all."

He commenced to work rapidly and had just finished the first problem when his attention was attracted by some whispered imprecations close to, and just behind him. There at a desk numbered 155 was the candidate whom Ralph had seen riding behind a handsome pair of horses, but to whom he had never spoken.

It was Short; and his face was convulsed with rage, and blank with disappointment. In his two hands was clenched the examination paper. His eyes seemed to dart from their sockets. He looked utterly confounded.

Ralph was surprised but didn't have any time to waste on the young man behind him, so he resumed his work. He had finished the third question when he felt his chair kicked from behind, and then heard a whispered voice say:

"Sh. Don't look around. Lend me your papers; I wish to compare your answers with mine."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," returned Ralph, indignantly.

When Ralph had finished the fourth question, he felt his chair kicked again, and then the whispered words:

"Let me have your papers for a moment. No



one will see. The lieutenant is in the other end of the room. I'll give you one hundred dollars if you'll let me look at them."

Ralph turned squarely around and deliberately eyed the young man who had made this dishonorable proposal. He was silent a moment and then in a low tone said: "How much did you pay for the examination you had stolen for you, you scoundrel? Speak to me again and I'll report you."

Short's whole body trembled, and fierce hatred shone from his moody eyes. In his whole life he had never received such a defeat and such contemptuous treatment. His feelings were almost beyond his small powers of endurance, and this state of feeling was aggravated by a feeling of utter powerlessness. After that he made no further effort to speak to Ralph, and he was too far from the other candidates, and was also afraid to try to attract their attention.

Short tried to work but only made poor headway. Even had he been in a good humor he could not have passed the examination.

Ralph found the problems all easy and made rapid progress. After a while Short left his seat and approached the lieutenant in charge and asked him some trivial question. In returning, as he passed Ralph's desk his eyes looked at the number 153, painted in white letters on the front of it, and a gleam of satisfaction passed over his



face. "I'll fix that fellow, the hound, if he leaves this room before I do," he remarked to himself. After that Short worked fitfully, occasionally glancing up at Ralph. He noticed with much approval that Ralph apparently finished his work an hour before the time allowed had expired, and was impatient when Ralph started to read his papers over, deliberately stopping at some places to make corrections.

Half an hour before the time was up a number of the candidates had finished and were leaving the examination room. Ralph was one of these. He folded his papers neatly, placed them on one side of his desk, and left the room entirely confident he had passed the examination.

As soon as Ralph Osborn had left the room Short began to arrange his papers, and started to number each sheet. The number of his desk was 155, but instead of writing this number on the pages of his work, he wrote on each of them the number 153, which he had seen on Ralph's desk. He then gathered his papers together and walked to the lieutenant in charge. "Shall I sign my name at the bottom?" he asked.

"No, number each page with your desk number," was the reply.

Short returned to his desk, but just as he reached Ralph's desk he apparently stumbled, and for a moment rested both of his hands on it, still holding his own papers. In doing this he



attracted no one's attention, but when he had straightened up he had Ralph's papers in his hand. He had quickly substituted his own for Ralph's papers and the papers left on Ralph's desk, though numbered 153, were in reality Short's. Short now carefully erased the upper part of the figure three, of the number 153, on each page of Ralph's papers, and made a five out of it. He then carefully and neatly arranged these papers on his desk, and with an exultant feeling of success and gratified revenge, he left the room. He knew his own papers would never pass him, and rightly judged from the rapid way in which Ralph had worked that the latter would be successful.

The examinations were all finished Wednesday, and Ralph was confident he had passed, and therefore was exultant. But late that afternoon he received a telegram as follows :

"Your father has been seriously injured in an accident. But little hope. Come home at once."

This was signed by his father's friend, Mr. Spencer.

In anguish of grief and fear Ralph left by the next train ; and late the next night was in Toledo but only to see the dear father in his coffin. The boy's grief was pitiable. He felt he would never be comforted. The funeral was held two days later, and then the saddened young man returned



to Annapolis. There was no question in his mind but what he had been completely successful in his examinations.

Upon his return, which was Monday, he immediately went into the Academy grounds and there met a young man, dressed in civilian's clothes with uniform cap. He recognized him as a candidate he had known in the preparatory school, Bollup by name.

"Hello, Bollup," said Ralph. "I see you've passed all right. I knew you would, in spite of the way you used to talk."

"Thanks, Osborn," returned Bollup. "I'm awfully sorry you didn't get through. I hope you'll get another appointment next year. That nine-tenths in math of yours was certainly a big surprise to me, and to you, too, I guess; you thought you had done so well in it."

"What are you talking about?" asked Ralph, hastily. "I'm sure I passed in everything, but I couldn't wait to see the marks; I had to go to my father's funeral in Toledo." And Ralph's eyes filled with tears. "What do you mean about my nine-tenths in mathematics? Surely that wasn't my mark; why, that's utterly ridiculous."

"Look here, old fellow," said Bollup, uneasily, "I don't want to be the one to spread bad news, but on the bulletin-board in main quarters, you are credited with having made nine-tenths only in math, and are marked as having been rejected



for that reason by the Academic Board of the Academy."

"My heavens," ejaculated Ralph, thunderstruck at this information. "Look here, Bollup, there's a mistake about that. I'll bet I got over thirty on that math exam. Nine-tenths? Why that's simply preposterous. Let's look at that bulletin."

It may here be remarked that at the Naval Academy marks range from 0, a total failure, to 4.00, which is perfect. 2.50, equal to 62½ per cent, is the passing mark in all subjects.

Ralph and Bollup were soon standing before the bulletin-board and then Ralph realized that Bollup's news was only too true.

"Too bad, old fellow," commiserated Bollup. "I'm awfully sorry and disappointed."

"There's a mistake, I tell you," returned Ralph, with staring eyes. "If my published mark had been two-thirty I might doubt my own judgment, but nine-tenths,—why that's entirely impossible."

"I do hope so, Osborn; but what are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going direct to the superintendent. I don't know what else to do."

"What, the superintendent himself? He won't see you. I wouldn't dare to go to see him myself."

"That's just where I'm going," said Ralph, determinedly, "and I'm going right away, too."

In a few minutes Ralph was at the door of the



superintendent's office, and said to the orderly :  
“ Will you ask the superintendent if he will please see Ralph Osborn on a matter of great importance ? ” A moment later he was told to walk in.

The distinguished officer greeted Ralph kindly. “ I'm sorry you failed, Mr. Osborn, ” he commenced. “ I was so impressed with the way you handled that stolen examination affair that I wanted you to pass, and I personally ordered the result of your examination to be sent to me. You made excellent marks in everything except mathematics ; had you made anything over a two in that I would have waived a slight deficiency. But with only a nine-tenths in mathematics it was impossible to pass you. ”

“ Sir, ” said Ralph, “ I wish to report that a great mistake has been made. I ought to have been given at least three-five on that examination. Of this I'm absolutely certain. I worked correctly nearly every problem. I compared my answers with those of other candidates and I can state positively that I made at least three-five on that examination. I cannot be mistaken in this matter. ”

“ The papers are marked independently by two different officers, Mr. Osborn ; it's not possible such a glaring mistake could be made by two different people. ”

“ I can't explain it, sir ; but I know I got the right answer to nearly all the questions. ”



"Why have you been so late in reporting this matter?" inquired the superintendent, looking at him keenly.

"I have just learned it, sir. My father was killed in an accident and I left the day the examinations were finished and have just returned." There was a break in Ralph's voice as he spoke.

"I'm very sorry indeed. I'll look into this matter. Be at my office at two o'clock."

"Thank you, sir; I will."

Ralph was there at the time appointed and was immediately called before the superintendent. "Mr. Osborn," said the latter, "I have had your mathematical papers read over again by a third officer who did not know the original mark given them, and he marked them eight-tenths. He says they are very poor. I'm sorry, but I can do nothing more for you. Good-day, sir."

There was an air of finality in the superintendent's manner and voice.

"Sir," said Ralph, now desperate, "I have to report that I answered nearly every question correctly,"—a look of displeasure crossed the superintendent's face,—"I beg of you to let me see my papers."

"I will do so immediately. Take a seat outside, please." Then sending for his aide, a lieutenant, he said, "Telephone for the head of the department of mathematics, Professor Scott, to bring to my



office immediately Candidate Ralph Osborn's examination papers in mathematics."

A few minutes later an officer came in with some papers in his hand. "Admiral, these are Candidate Osborn's papers," he said.

"Professor, will you please convince Mr. Osborn that those papers are worth no more than nine-tenths?" said the admiral, continuing his writing.

"That will be easy," smiled the professor in reply. "Now, Mr. Osborn, see here."

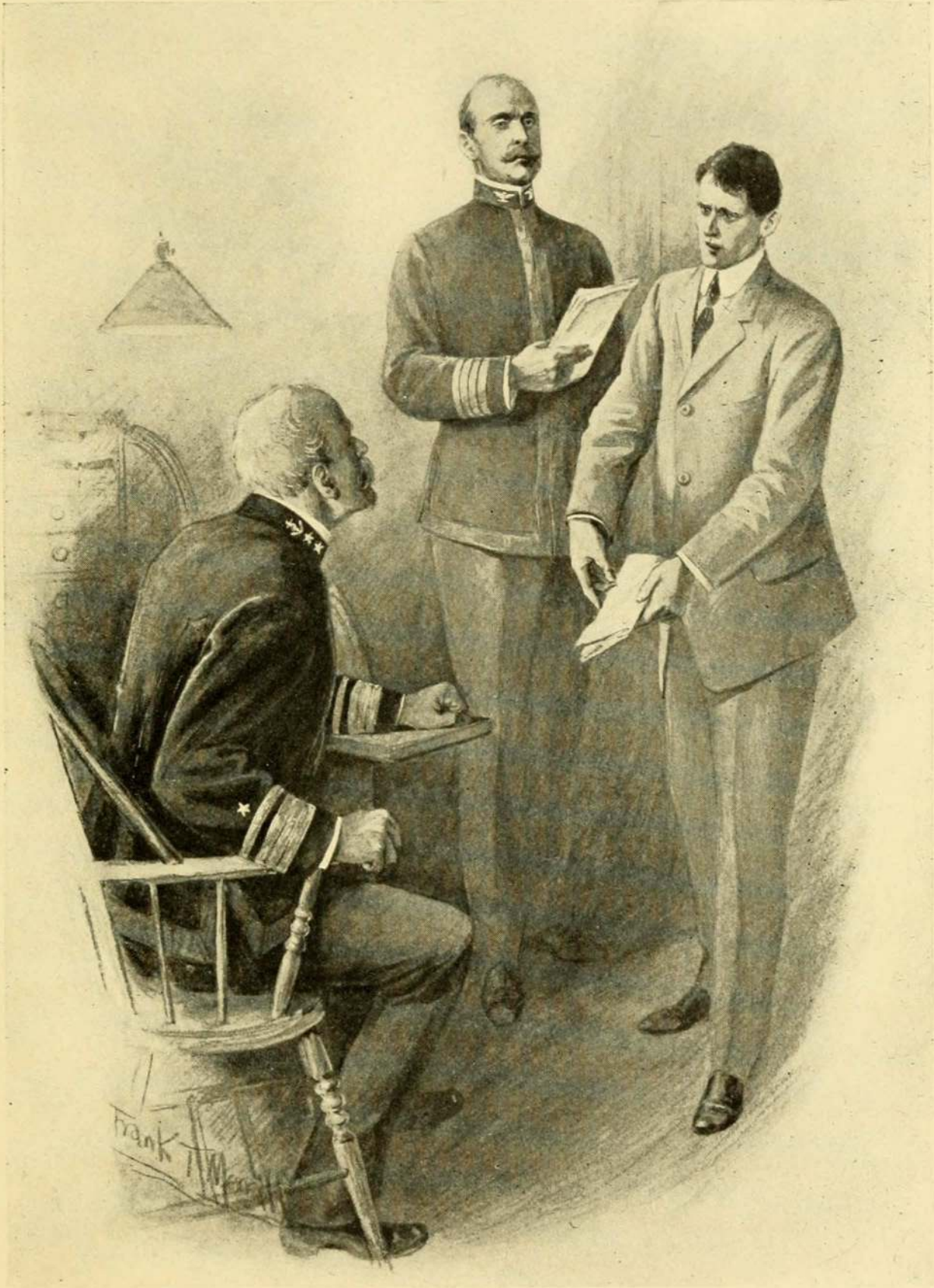
Ralph went eagerly to the professor's side, and took the papers from his hand. "Oh!" he cried, in a tone that startled the professor and the superintendent. "Are these the papers, sir, which have caused my rejection?" he demanded in a breathless tone.

"Why, yes, of course they are; they are your papers."

"They are not my papers, sir. That is not my work. The handwriting is not mine. I never saw these papers before, sir." And turning to the admiral, his face aglow with excitement and indignation, he said, "Surely you will not keep me out of the Academy on account of this poor work which belongs to some other person."

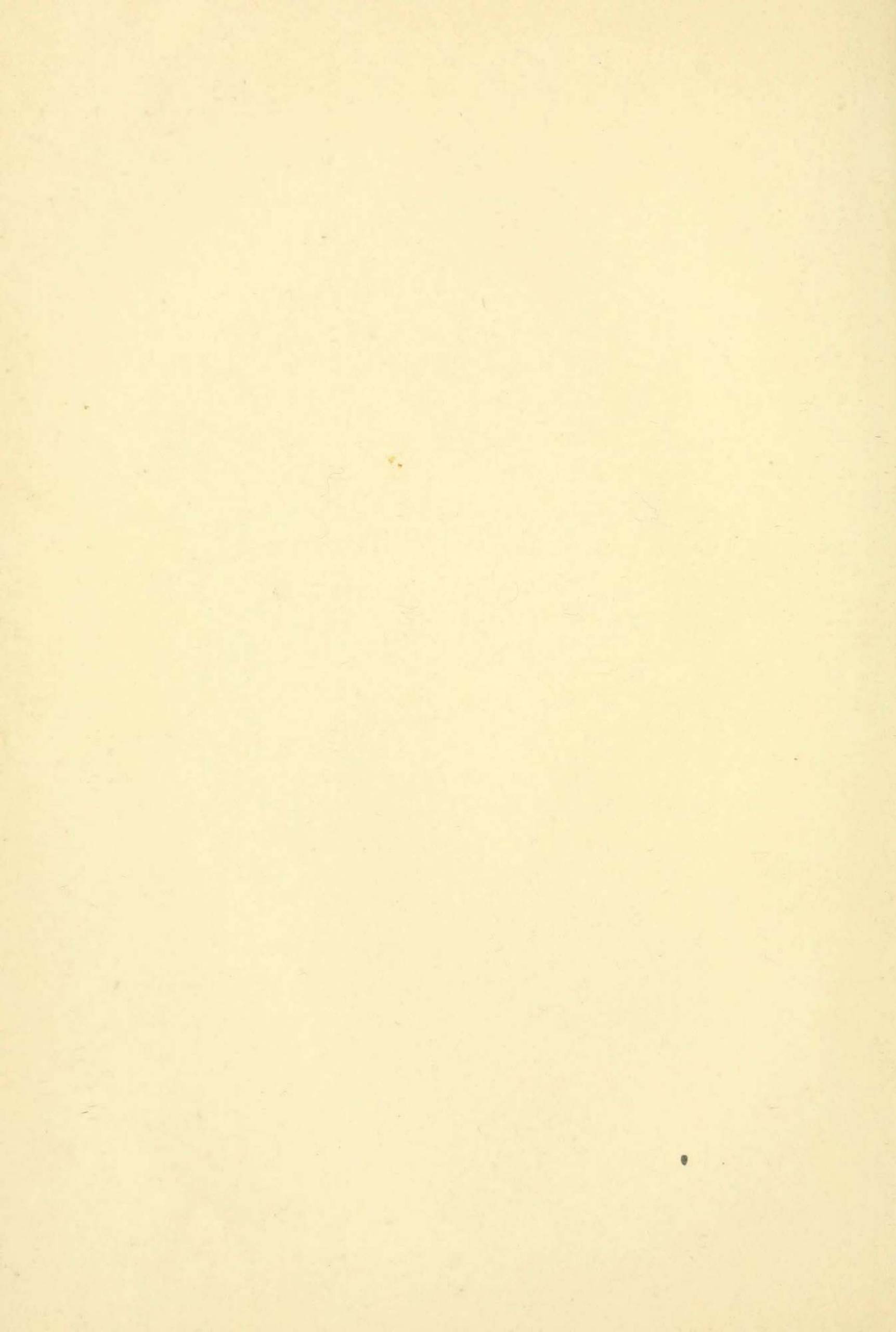
"These are your papers," maintained the professor, looking indignant. "They were on your desk; each one, you see, is numbered 153, your number."





“ They are not my papers ”







"They are not my papers," insisted Ralph, "and no person on earth can prove them to be. Sir, I request this matter be further investigated."

"A mistake is impossible," exclaimed the professor.

"Is it possible for an examination paper to be stolen before the examination occurs?" asked Ralph suddenly.

"By George, Mr. Osborn, we'll look into this matter," said the superintendent, now full of interest. "I'll send for your other papers and compare the writing. But can you imagine how this could have happened?"

Then came vividly to Ralph's mind the angry, revengeful face of the man behind him in the examination room the week before. Recalling the number of the desk back of his, a thought flashed through him.

"Yes, sir, I can," he quietly said. "I can imagine how a person doing poorly could have marked his sheets with my desk number, and then could have exchanged his papers with mine, erased my desk number, and on my sheets write his own number. I would ask that the papers of number 155 be brought here."



## CHAPTER IV

### SHORT'S NAVAL CAREER IS SHORT

“**W**HY do you ask for the papers marked 155?” inquired the superintendent.

“That was the number of the desk nearest my own, the desk just behind mine,” explained Ralph.

“Did you have any conversation with the candidate at desk number 155? Was there anything in his manner, or did he do anything that now leads you to believe he might have exchanged his papers for yours?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What was it, please? Tell all the circumstances.”

“Soon after I commenced my work last Monday morning,” began Ralph, “my attention was attracted by a noise of heavy breathing, and I heard some whispered swearing. I turned around. The candidate behind me looked wild with anger. Then he whispered to me to let him have my sheets as I finished with them, to compare the answers, he said, but I wouldn’t do it. Then a little later he kicked my chair and whispered to me that he would give me one hundred dollars if I would give him my papers.”



“What did you say to that?”

“I called him a scoundrel and asked him what he paid for the examination he had had stolen, and told him if he said anything more to me I would report him.”

“You should have done so anyway, Mr. Osborn.”

“Yes, sir, I know I should, but I was thinking of nothing but my examination.”

“Do you know the candidate's name?”

“I think it's Short, sir; I don't know anything about him except I have heard people say he is a millionaire.”

“Mr. Osborn, please sit down at that desk and write a complete statement of what you have just told me.” And calling his aide, he directed that all of the entrance examination papers of Candidates Short and Osborn be brought to him. “Did Mr. Short pass the other examinations?” he asked.

“Yes, sir,” replied the professor, “and he was sworn in as a midshipman and is now aboard the *Santee*.”

“Send for Mr. Short,” directed the superintendent.

By the time Ralph had finished writing the statement required, the examination papers which the superintendent had sent for were brought to the office.

“Here are Mr. Short's mathematical papers, admiral,” remarked the professor. “He did very well indeed; he made 3.63.”



“May I look at those papers, sir?” asked Ralph, eagerly. He took but one rapid glance at them, and then said simply, but with glistening eyes: “That is my work, sir; I left those papers on my desk. Each sheet was marked 153 when I left the room.”

“They are marked 155, sir,” said the professor.

“Will you please see if the last figure on each sheet does not look as though it had been erased?” asked Ralph.

The superintendent took the sheets, and without remark, deliberately examined each number with a magnifying glass. Then he said slowly: “Professor, the last figure of the number 155 shows evidence on each sheet of having been erased. There is no doubt whatever of this fact. And on some of the pages you can plainly see that the figure 3 was erased and made into a 5. See for yourself.”

“This is unquestionably so,” remarked the professor, after deliberate scrutiny.

“Now compare these papers,” continued the superintendent, “with the examinations in the other subjects; they are all here, I believe.”

The two officers were much interested. After a few moments, the admiral said: “It is certain that the mathematical papers marked 155 were written by the same person who wrote these papers on my left hand. Now we’ll see who are credited with having written these respective piles.”



It was soon evident to whom the respective piles belonged, and the superintendent, turning to Ralph, said, "Mr. Osborn, there isn't a doubt but what you are entitled to 3.63 on your examination in mathematics; and it is certain that Mr. Short should have received the nine-tenths. But I'll make a further test. Professor, please send for the officer who was in the examination room when these young men were examined."

"Yes, sir. It was Lieutenant Brooks; I'll have him here in a moment."

Before long Lieutenant Brooks appeared in the superintendent's office: and a moment later the orderly came in, saluted, and said: "Sir, there be a new midshipman, Mr. Short, sir, who says he was directed to report to you."

"Show him in immediately."

Short entered, dressed in civilian's clothes and midshipman cap. On seeing Ralph he gave a start and turned pale, and seemed to tremble.

"Are you Midshipman Short?" demanded the superintendent.

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Brooks, have you ever seen this midshipman before?"

Lieutenant Brooks looked intently at the young man. Then he said: "Yes, sir, I remember that half an hour before his examination in mathematics had finished, last Monday, he came up to me with his papers and asked me if he should sign



his name. I told him no; there was really no need whatever for his question; full instructions had been given."

"Thank you; that's all, Mr. Brooks. Now, professor, you will take these two young men and give them immediately the same examination they had last Monday, and when they have finished, bring the papers to me."

Ralph was exultantly happy. Terror was exhibited in every feature of Short's face; he was nervous and frightened, and hesitation and uncertainty were in every motion he made.

"Wh—wh—what's the matter, sir?" he faltered. "I—I have finished my examination in mathematics; I made 3.63, sir."

"Which is your paper, sir?" demanded the superintendent, "this numbered 153, or this numbered 155?"

"This, this one, sir," indicating the latter.

"Then will you please tell me why the number 155 bears evidence of erasure on every sheet? And can you explain why the handwriting of the papers marked with your number and which you claim as your own, should be in such utterly different handwriting from that of your papers in geography, grammar and history? Are not these your papers, sir?" And the superintendent handed him the mathematical papers marked 153, for which Ralph Osborn had received the mark of nine-tenths. "These papers are certainly



in the exact handwriting of your papers in the other subjects, and yet they are charged against Mr. Osborn."

Short was unable to speak, and he stood before the superintendent awkward and abashed. He dared not, could not answer.

"Professor," continued the superintendent, "start these two young men on this same examination immediately; take them into the board room across the hall."

Ralph started in vigorously with exuberant joy in his heart. Having once worked the questions they were now doubly easy; and he figured away with enthusiasm.

Short fidgeted about in a most unhappy way. In a little over two hours Ralph reported he had finished. The professor took his papers to the superintendent's office where they were compared with the papers marked 155.

"Professor, there is not the slightest doubt but young Short handed in Mr. Osborn's paper as his own. It is certainly fortunate that this young villain's naval career has been nipped early. But get his papers and we'll compare what he has done with the papers that were accredited to Mr. Osborn."

In a few moments Short was called into the superintendent's office.

"You have done a low, dastardly act," exclaimed the superintendent, as soon as he had en-



tered ; “ you are a thief. Before I leave my office to-night I shall recommend your dismissal to the Secretary of the Navy.”

“ I will resign, sir.”

“ Indeed you’ll not resign. You will be dishonorably dismissed. I have given orders you are to be kept in close confinement until word of your dismissal comes from Washington. I now am certain that you are the scoundrel who stole the examination questions in mathematics.” Then turning to a midshipman who was now in his office, he continued, “ Are you the midshipman officer of the day ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Mr. Short is in arrest. You will march him to quarters and deliver him to the officer in charge.”

“ Aye, aye, sir. Come along, Mr. Short.”

They marched out, Mr. Short presenting a most crestfallen, contemptible figure.

“ Now, professor, I’ll call a special meeting of the Academic Board,” said the superintendent, “ at ten o’clock to-morrow morning and we’ll make a midshipman out of Mr. Osborn. Good-night, Mr. Osborn ; I congratulate you. If you pass your physical examination to-morrow you’ll be a midshipman before twenty-four hours have passed.”

“ Good-night, sir, and thank you so much for everything,” replied Ralph, picking up his hat



and leaving the office, probably as happy a young man as Annapolis has ever seen.

His feelings were much to be envied that night. He had passed through a most anxious time with defeat staring him in the face, but had emerged triumphantly successful.

By noon the next day he had passed the severe physical test which all candidates to Annapolis undergo, and had been sworn in as a midshipman, and was happily walking about the decks of the old *Santee* where the enlisted men employed at the Naval Academy and recently sworn-in midshipmen are quartered, feeling that the most glorious thing was to be a midshipman in the Navy.

Mere words are incapable of expressing Short's state of mind. Wild rage possessed him. Bitter hatred against Ralph Osborn filled his heart, enveloped his whole being. After the examinations had been completed he had been somewhat nervous, but became reassured when he heard that Ralph had suddenly left town that Wednesday evening. And as Short's name was reported as having passed and he was sworn-in as a midshipman, he soon became confident that his cheating would never become known. He was feeling particularly pleased with himself at the instant he was directed to report to the superintendent. He was somewhat uneasy when these summons came, yet could not believe he had been found out.



And what a difference on his return! Black, wicked passion so possessed him that all other feelings were driven from his mind.

Upon his return to the *Santee* he was informed he was to be kept in close arrest until further orders, and was to hold no communication with other midshipmen.

A little before nine that night while Short was brooding and planning schemes for revenge against Ralph Osborn, a midshipman passed near and whispered: "What's the matter, Short?"

"I want to talk with you," replied Short. "Be at the forward gun-port on the starboard side at about eleven o'clock to-night."

"I can't. No one is allowed to speak to you. I'd get into trouble if I did."

"You'll get into more trouble if you don't," whispered Short. "You will be there to-night or you'll be in the Annapolis jail to-morrow; take your choice," and Short turned away.

At ten o'clock taps were rung out by the bugler, and the new midshipmen turned into their hammocks. Soon after all lights were put out and everything was quiet aboard the *Santee*. At eleven o'clock two dark forms quietly slipped out of their hammocks and crept to an open gun-port. Here they had a whispered conversation that lasted till after midnight. Then one handed the other a roll of bills; the latter said: "Thank you, Short; you may depend upon me. I under-



stand what you want done and I'll do it. I'm glad you've given me more than one year. He would feel it much worse four years from now than he would to-day."

"I suppose so," grumbled Short. "He's the superintendent's white-haired boy now and it would be useless to try anything just at present. But mind you, if you let up on him when the time comes, or play me false, I'll have you landed in jail as sure as my name is Short. Have no false notions on that subject."

"All right, Short, I'll remember; you need have no fear of me. I guess everything is understood, so good-night."

They separated, and each returned to his hammock.

Three days later, at dinner formation, Midshipman Short was directed to stand in front of his classmates. Then the acting cadet officer, who mustered the new midshipmen at all formations, himself one who had been turned back into this class, read the following order which was signed by the Secretary of the Navy.

*Order.*

"For having been guilty of the most dishonorable, contemptible action, for being in effect a thief, thereby proving himself to be unfit for any decent association, Midshipman Thomas G. Short is hereby dishonorably dismissed from the Naval Academy and the naval service. Two



hours after the publication of this order he will be marched to the Naval Academy gate, and hereafter he will never be permitted to enter the Naval Academy grounds."

Astonishment was depicted on the faces of most of Short's erstwhile classmates, for though much speculation had been indulged in as to the nature of Short's trouble the exact facts had not been divulged and were known to but few people at the Naval Academy.



## CHAPTER V

### HIMSKIHUMSKONSKI

**B**EFORE eleven o'clock Tuesday morning, Ralph Osborn had been duly sworn in as a midshipman, and was directed to report to the paymaster for the purpose of depositing the money for his outfit, and to draw required articles from the midshipmen's store. This did not take very long. At the store the first thing Ralph received was a uniform cap. He immediately put this on and regarded himself in the mirror with unconcealed satisfaction. Then he was given a great number of different articles; duck working suits, rubber coat and boots, flannel shirts, underclothing, shoes, towels, sheets, blankets, collars, cuffs, shirts, and so on. These he dumped heterogeneously together in a clothes bag, and with this heavily-filled bag thrown over his shoulder he started for the *Santee*, the old ship where his already admitted classmates were quartered. The first person he saw aboard the *Santee* was Bollup. The latter rushed toward him enthusiastically. "Hello, Osborn," he cried. "You are a sure enough midshipman, aren't you? I can see that by your cap. Well, I'm delighted, old chap; you were right about



there being a mistake in that nine-tenths, weren't you? But I wasn't giving much for your chances yesterday at this time, I can tell you. Now how was the mistake made? Tell me all about it."

Bollup's greeting was most warm and cordial and it was very pleasant to Ralph. The latter had been warned by the superintendent not to talk about Short's dastardly act, so he merely said: "Oh, there was a mistake somewhere. My papers were examined again and were found to be satisfactory after all; so they let me in. But I tell you I was awfully blue for a while, old man. But I'm happy enough now! It seems awfully good to be a midshipman; I'll probably never enjoy another bit of uniform as much as I do this cap. Now put me on to the ropes; what's the first thing I must do?"

"I'll take you to see old Block; he's the chief master-at-arms; he'll give you a mattress and hammock and a locker for your clothes and things. Come along, there's the old man now."

A little distance away was a man of enormous build berating an ordinary seaman for the neglect of some order. "You're not fit to be an after-guard sweeper," he roared. "Polish up this hand-rail properly or I'll have you lose all your liberties for a month. Get a move on you, you alleged sailorman, or ——"

"Block," interrupted Bollup, "here is another young gentleman for you; he wants a mattress



and a hammock, and a locker. Can you fix him up right away?"

"Indeed I can. What's your name, young sir?"

"Ralph Osborn, sir."

"Avast your sir, when you're talking to any one forrud of the mast, Mr. Osborn. This is your first lesson in man-of-war manners. Keep your 'sirs' and your 'misters' for the quarter-deck; they'll be mightily missed there if you don't put them on. Do you smoke cigarettes, Mr. Osborn?"

"I neither smoke nor chew, sir."

"Never mind the 'sir,' sir. I'm glad you don't smoke cigarettes; I report all midshipmen who do that. They're regular coffin nails, but chewing is healthy; no sensible man ever objects to a person chewing; and a pipe now and then is a good thing for anybody. But no cigarettes, mind you, no cigarettes." And Chief Master-at-Arms Block glared at Ralph in a way that would have surely intimidated him had he been guilty of the habit Block so heartily despised.

"Now this way," continued the huge and formidable-appearing, yet kindly chief master-at-arms. "Here's your locker key, No. 57, and I'll send that make-believe sailorman down to you with your mattress, hammock and hammock clews, and I'll tell him to put in the clews for you and show you how to swing the hammock. And, Mr. Osborn, I'm glad to know you; your classmates are a fine lot of young men, the best I've



known in the thirty years I've been aboard the *Santee*."

"Thank you, Block, you're very kind ; I'll get along, I'm sure."

Bollup took Ralph down to his locker and immediately they were surrounded by a group of Ralph's new classmates.

"Here, fellows, here is Osborn," cried Bollup ; "he got in after all. Why, when they saw what sort of a man they were losing they just naturally slipped a three in front of that nine-tenths of his. 'You've made a mistake,' says Osborn to the supe, 'I made more than nine-tenths ; send for my papers and read them over again.' 'To be sure I did,' says the supe, 'but a mistake that's easily remedied ; here, give me my pen and I'll make your mark 3.9 instead of .9. I don't need to read your papers over again ; I remember them perfectly.'"

Everybody laughed at Bollup's remarks, and they crowded about Ralph, giving him a hearty welcome. "Here, Osborn," continued Bollup, "here's Himski ; you remember him, Osborn ; never mind the rest of his name—it's as long as a main to' bowline, though what that is I don't know, but it sounds good. I heard old Block this morning tell an ordinary seaman his face was as long as a main to' bowline ; but I'm sure there never was a face as long as Himski's name is. And here is Creelton ; you know him, don't you, Os ?"



"I never had the pleasure. I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Creelton," replied Ralph, laughing in great good humor at Bollup's nonsense.

"There are no misters here, Osborn," replied Creelton, a pleasant-faced, blue-eyed youth. "I see Bollup has nicknamed you Os, already, and everybody in our class calls me Creel."

"And William Hamm wants to make your acquaintance, Os," continued Bollup; "now, William, make your politest bow and tell of the great pleasure you experience in making Mr. Osborn's acquaintance. Mr. Osborn, Mr. Hamm; Mr. Hamm, Mr. Osborn. Smith M. T. and Smith Y. N., shake with Osborn; Taylor, you and Os are old friends. Herndon, give Os the glad hand. Murphy, you old sinner, don't be shy about greeting a new classmate."

Bollup proved to be a regular master of ceremonies and in a short time Ralph found several scores of intimate friends. While yet a candidate Ralph had known Bollup and Taylor fairly well but now he felt he was on terms of great intimacy with them. He had known casually in Annapolis at the preparatory school quite a number of the candidates who were now his classmates; but none well except Bollup and Taylor. But now they all seemed friends of the most intimate nature. And Bollup seemed to be the leader of them all. The spirit of the new class centered in Bollup.

While Ralph was putting away his things and



talking volubly with his new friends at the same time the harsh notes of a bugle were heard sounded on the deck overhead.

“The bugle has busted, fellows,” shouted Bollup; “break away from Os, or he’ll be late to formation. That’s for dinner formation, Os,” he continued. “Now hurry; we’ve only five minutes before muster; here, let me pack your locker for you; I’m an experienced packer.”

Bollup pushed Ralph out of the way and proceeded to finish putting his things away. He threw the remaining articles in pell-mell without regard to order, in about thirty seconds. “There, I told you I was an experienced packer, Os; now let’s beat it to formation.”

They rushed up to the upper deck and reached the formation just in time to avoid being marked late. Ralph was much interested. Here was his entire class gathered together, over a hundred young men, all dressed in uniform caps and civilian clothes; they had been measured for their midshipman uniforms but it would be several days before the uniforms would be ready. In the meantime they were anything but military in appearance. A midshipman in uniform was apparently in charge. He had been turned back into this new class for failure in his studies.

The midshipmen were mustered, absentees were reported, and then, in a column of twos, were marched off the *Santee* to main quarters at the



other end of the Academy grounds. Here they were halted, were dismissed and told to stand by to fall into ranks with the battalion at the regular dinner formation.

The new midshipmen stood about in groups feeling ill at ease in their new surroundings. All about them were hundreds of other midshipmen, waiting for formation. Many of these, evidently upper classmen, paid no attention whatever to the newcomers. Others, more youthful in appearance, and evidently of the lowest class, about to be made third classmen, glanced at Ralph's incongruously attired classmates with unconcealed gratification. They were serving the remaining few days of their plebedom and they gloated over the young men who were not yet even plebes.

One of them came up to Ralph and said: "Mister, what's your name?"

"Ralph Osborn."

"Never mind your first name, and always say sir, when addressing an upper classman. Try it again. Now what's your name?"

"Osborn, sir."

"Where are you from?"

"Toledo, Ohio, sir."

"Never mind the town; just name your state. Now try it again!"

"From Ohio, sir."

"That's better. Why have you entered the



Navy; for money, glory, patriotism or an education?"

"I don't know how to answer, sir; I like everything about it."

"Say sir when you end a sentence to an upper classman. Now try it again."

Ralph did as directed.

"What is history in its highest and truest sense?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Well, you'd better learn before next February, or you'll bilge upon the semi-an," commented the young man, gruffly. And turning to the midshipman standing next to Ralph, he said: "What's your name?"

"Bollup, sir, from Virginia, sir, one of the Bollups of that state, sir; a descendant of the Lieutenant-Colonel Bollup who was on General Washington's staff, sir. I came into the Navy, sir, because my father told me to, sir; and I can't tell you about that history question, sir; history was always my weak point, sir; I nearly bilged on history in my entrance examination, sir, and I hope you'll excuse me from it, sir."

The questioner glared upon Bollup, and demanded, "What are you trying to do, mister? Are you trying to run me?"

"Not at all, sir; I was just trying to save you from the trouble of asking me the questions you asked Mr. Osborn."



“I’m inclined to think you’re cheeky. I’ll take it out of you if you are, with more trouble to you than to me. Can you stand on your head?”

“Oh, yes, sir, just watch me.” And instantly Bollup was standing on his head with his heels high in the air, to the overwhelming consternation of his questioner.

“Get up, get up, mister,” he shouted; “do you want to bilge me?”

“Oh, no, sir,” returned the now erect Bollup, innocently. “I just wanted to prove to you that I could stand on my head, sir; that was all, sir.”

“Well, I’ll give you plenty of chance to prove that, but not under the eyes of the officer in charge.” And then he said to the midshipman next to Bollup: “What’s your name, mister?”

“Himskihumskonski, sir.”

“Hold on there, that’s enough. Suffering Moses, mister, where on earth did you ever pick up such a name?”

“It was my father’s name, sir, and my grandfather’s before that; I’m a Jew, sir.”

“Well, you’re a blame good man, Mister Himski and so forth. Shake hands, will you? And if you want a friend just send for ‘Gruff’ Smith. You’ll find a Jew at this school is as good as anybody else if he’s got the stuff in him. And what is your name, mister?” continued “Gruff” Smith, turning to a small, round-faced, blue-eyed little fellow.



“William Hamm, sir.”

“The next time anybody asks you your name tell him it's Billy Bacon; now don't forget. There's the bugle for formation and you'd better get in ranks or you'll hit the pap for being late.”

It was in this manner that Ralph Osborn received his introduction to the battalion of midshipmen.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE SUMMER PRACTICE CRUISE BEGINS

ON Friday of this week the senior or first classmen were to be graduated, and each of the lower classes was to be promoted one class. Up to this time Ralph's classmates were derisively called fifth classmen and functions. Though the upper classmen, from the midshipmen point of view, esteemed fourth classmen, or plebes, to be the lowest things in the Navy, having no privileges and but few rights, yet the new midshipmen had not even yet arrived to that low estate.

These young gentlemen looked upon every upper classman as a possible enemy from whom brutal hazing might be expected. But the actual hazing proved to be very different from what had been anticipated. Ralph Osborn found himself standing on his head several times and sang several songs, but these acts, though certain to cause the dismissal of the perpetrators if detected, were always done in a spirit of fun, and were as much enjoyed by Ralph as by the hazers. Naturally Bollup received more hazing, or running, as it is called at the Naval Academy, than any of his classmates. Bollup deliberately determined to have as much fun out of the hazing as he could, and his zeal in always doing



more than the hazer demanded, and his antics and absurd answers created much merriment and gave him a reputation as being "a fresh plebe." He frequently intentionally forgot to add the word "sir" in replying to questions. This was always insisted upon as expressive of a proper respect toward his seniors.

"You must never forget to say sir, Mr. Bollup," gravely ordered Mr. Smith, who was well known as "Gruff" Smith by all midshipmen.

"Must I even think it, sir?" demanded Bollup, innocently.

"Yes, you must always think it, even to yourself; the first training a midshipman receives is to respect his seniors."

"All right, sir; you'll find I'm always the most respectful midshipman at the Academy."

"Put on a sir at the end of your sentence, Mr. Bollup."

Bollup did so, and before the end of the week he used the word sir in every possible way when speaking to an upper classman.

In this week preceding graduation day, Ralph Osborn's classmates were exercised in the mornings, first at infantry, in which they were drilled as recruits, and after that in the gymnasium. Each afternoon they were sent out in cutters for rowing exercise. By night all of these midshipmen were thoroughly tired. The purpose of this was to harden them physically in preparation for the ap-



proaching summer cruise and to initiate them in naval beginnings. It was after supper, while strolling about the grounds, that the cases of hazing occurred.

Friday was graduation day; the next day the midshipmen were to embark aboard the practice ships for the summer cruise. The *Chesapeake* and *Monongahela*, both sailing ships, were to be used this summer. Half of Ralph's class were to go on each ship, and Ralph found he was billeted for the *Chesapeake*.

At breakfast formation, Friday, an order was read out that there would be no drill that day for the new fourth class; that all were to mark the jumpers of their working suits with their names in indelible ink; the name in each case was to be in black letters an inch high. After the return from breakfast to the *Santee* the new fourth classmen distributed themselves on the gun-deck with their working jumpers and with pen and ink and started to mark their jumpers.

"Hello, Himski," called out Bollup as he was passing the former. "Why don't you get busy? What are you so blue about?"

Himskihumskonski looked hopelessly at the six jumpers about him.

"I wish you'd tell me how to mark my name," he replied; "part of it will be on the front and part on the back of my coat, and I'll be forever turning around so that these third classmen can



read it. I can just imagine myself spinning around all day long. Can't you help me out, Bollup?"

"Surely I can," returned that youth, cheerily. "Here, give me a piece of paper; thank you." Bollup wrote rapidly. "Now, just fix up your jumpers that way and you'll be all right."

"Thank you," replied the other, smiling. "It's worth trying."

The new fourth class took no part in the beautiful graduation ceremonies nor in the grand ball of Friday night. The next morning they were conveyed with members of the first and third classes to the practice ships, and the summer cruise commenced. The second classmen were to remain at Annapolis during the summer for practical work in the shops.

As soon as Ralph was aboard the *Chesapeake* he was directed to stand in line in front of a small office. Here he gave his name, and then received a small piece of paper which gave him information where he was to eat, where to sleep, at what gun he was to drill, and what part of the ship he was to work in. He then was told to shift into working clothes immediately and to stow his locker. This latter proved very difficult, for Ralph had an enormous lot of clothes and the locker was very small. When he had finished, his locker was jammed so full that its door could be closed only with difficulty. This finally done, Ralph went up



on deck and there in the port gangway was Bollup and Himskihumskonski surrounded by many upper classmen, all of whom were laughing heartily. On the front of Bollup's jumper was printed, in great block letters,

“ *Bollup, sir,*”

and on his companion's jumper was printed,

“ *Himski, etc.*”

This amused Ralph. “ It's just like Bollup,” he remarked to his classmate, Taylor.

On Monday morning the *Chesapeake* weighed anchor and got under way for New London. The first and third classmen fell into their places easily. Ralph and his classmates at first were much bewildered with the strange things about them, the multiplicity of ropes and the jargon of strange sounds that constantly were dinned into their ears. The lieutenant in charge of the deck would shout some unintelligible order in loud, harsh tones. Then piercing, shrill whistles would be blown, followed by the screaming of the boatswain's mates; and then everybody would jump up from whatever he was doing and rush to one end or other of the ship. Here Ralph would always find some men leading out a rope, and some first classman would gruffly say: “ Fist onto that rope, mister, and put your weight on it.” Ralph would always join in the rush, and before long he commenced to understand the



orders that were shouted and soon the meaning of them.

The *Chesapeake* anchored each of the six nights she was in Chesapeake Bay, and a little mild fun was indulged in by the upper classmen.

“Bring me something to read, Mr. Bollupsir,” said First Classman Baldwin, one evening soon after the *Chesapeake* had left Annapolis, to Bollup.

After some minutes the latter returned and said: “I’ve hunted everywhere, sir, but can find nothing, sir; I’m sorry, sir; I did the best I could, sir.”

“Well, Mr. Bollupsir,” returned Baldwin in menacing tones, “you’ll bring me something to read within the next few minutes or you’ll stand on your head every night for a week. Get me something; I don’t care what it is.”

“Say, Os,” said Bollup soon afterward, “for heaven’s sake give me a book or a paper, anything will do; I’ve got to get Baldwin something to read or stand on my head for a week.”

“I’m sorry, old fellow!” replied Ralph. “I wish I could but I haven’t a thing.”

“Yes, you have; I see a book and a paper in your locker; let me have them, quick.”

“Help yourself,” said Ralph, smiling, “but I’m afraid what you see is not what Baldwin wants.”

“Anything will do,” shouted Bollup, snatching



the book and paper from Ralph's locker and running aft without looking at them, fearing he would receive condign punishment for being so long on his errand.

"Here, sir," cried Bollup a moment later to Baldwin, "I've hunted the whole ship over and this is all I can find," and he quickly handed Baldwin the book and paper.

Baldwin looked at them and then at the plebe in front of him. "I think these will be very interesting to you, Mr. Bollupsir," he remarked quietly. "This paper is *The Sunday-School Herald*; it has a number of things in it, some articles and some poems. I'm quite fond of poetry. Suppose you learn all of these poems by heart, commencing with this one, entitled: 'Our Beautiful Sunday-School;' there are only twenty-two verses to it. And this is a very valuable book you have brought me; I know it well; it helped me get into the Academy three years ago. It is 'Robinson's Practical Arithmetic.' Now when you are tired of learning poetry you may work out some problems, there are hundreds of them, and commence at the first. And every night you'll please report to me at seven o'clock."

Bollup was aghast. But Baldwin was determined and directed Bollup to commence immediately. And for the rest of the summer cruise for part of each day Bollup was to be seen on



the berth deck by Baldwin's side industriously working problems or committing some part of the *Sunday-School Herald* to memory. This created lots of fun for everybody except poor Bollup. His own classmates plagued him unmercifully and he was in constant demand by the third classmen to recite "Our Beautiful Sunday-School." In this recitation, performed hundreds of times, Bollup became impassioned and created uproarious laughter.

On the afternoon of the day of Bollup's misadventure, Baldwin passed Ralph who was standing by his locker and said: "Here you, take this rubber coat and keep it in your locker for me, and whenever it rains bring me my coat on the run. Do you understand? And what's your name?"

"Yes, sir, I understand and my name is Osborn; but my locker is now so jammed I can't get all of my own things in it, sir; I'm afraid I can't do it, sir."

"Never say 'can't' when your senior gives you an order, Mr. Osborn," said Baldwin severely, throwing his rubber coat to Ralph and walking on.

Ralph was in despair. He tried his best but simply was unable to stuff Baldwin's coat in the already overfilled locker. So finally he took his own rubber coat out and laid it on top of his locker, and then managed to stow Baldwin's.



The next morning Ralph's coat was missing; this was a hardship for it started to rain heavily. Ralph rushed to Baldwin with the latter's coat, and then went up on deck to haul on some ropes. He was soon drenched, and to add to his misfortunes he received five demerits for being out of uniform, and later three more for having a rubber coat in the "Lucky Bag." He received his coat back and stood ruefully before his locker wondering what he could do, when Baldwin came up; the latter spoke kindly. "I'm sorry about those demerits I caused you to get, Mr. Osborn," he said. "Your classmate, Bollup, has just told me about your having received them. If I'd known it in time I could have fixed the matter up. I could do it now by going to the captain and stating the circumstances; he would take off your demerits but would report me for hazing you; even such a little thing as that would be considered hazing and would cause my dismissal. I don't suppose you would want me to do that?"

"Oh, no, sir," replied Ralph, "indeed I wouldn't; your coat is now back in my locker and I've just received mine from the 'Lucky Bag' and am wondering what I had best do. If I leave it on top of my locker it will be taken up again and I will get more demerits, and really I can't possibly get it in my locker."

"I should say not," remarked Baldwin, looking into Ralph's locker. "Here, Mr. Osborn, give me



my coat, and come along with me. Bring your own coat with you."

Ralph did so, wondering what was going to happen. They walked aft for some distance, and then Baldwin said, "Here are my lockers, Mr. Osborn; I am quite fortunate; I have two lockers and I'm going to give you a big shelf in one of them. You can stow your rubber coat here and some other things. And if at any time I can do anything for you, come right up. I have those demerits of yours on my conscience and I want to square up the account. I want to be your friend. You needn't run to me with my coat any more, and shove your own coat in there."

Ralph was overjoyed. This was the first upper classman who had expressed an interest in him. For those who had spoken to him he had stood on his head and had performed various other antics as ordered. And besides, with this additional stowage room, he would be quite comfortable. "Oh, thank you ever so much," he said effusively, "and don't think of my eight demerits; I'd have traded them and more, too, for this nice shelf."

Baldwin smiled. Then turning to Bollup, who was seated close by, he asked: "Have you come across any hard problems this morning?"

"Yes, sir," replied Bollup, "a very hard one, but I didn't find it in my book here. Somebody last night annexed a twenty-dollar bill I had in



my locker and the problem is to discover how I'm going to have a good time in New London without any money, sir. I won't be able to buy myself even so much as a bag of peanuts," and Bollup grunted disgustedly.

"Go to the executive officer right away and report the circumstances to him," directed Baldwin. Bollup did so, but nothing came of the investigation. All that was proved was that several servants had been near Bollup's locker during meal-times, but no incriminating evidence was developed against any of them. That the thief might have been other than a servant was a matter not considered.

The *Chesapeake* took six days to sail from Annapolis to the mouth of the bay. The ship was tacked innumerable times, constantly from eight in the morning till six in the afternoon. First classmen took turns in handling the ship. The rest rushed to and fro, hauling on this rope and then on that. All day long the cries: "Ready about, stations for stays," and, "Haul taut, main-sail haul," and, "Haul well taut, let go and haul," and, "Reeve and haul the bowlines," rang incessantly in Ralph's ears. But during these days he came to know the names of different ropes and where they were to be found, and the particular purpose of each rope; also how the sails were managed.



## CHAPTER VII

### MAN OVERBOARD

**G**ENTLE breezes steadily blew the *Chesapeake* to the south'ard, and in a few days she had cleared the Capes and was out on the broad Atlantic. Ralph Osborn made daily progress in knowledge of the ropes and sails and rigging of the ship. He quickly learned he should say gear, not ropes, and early imbibed the contempt every true sailor-man has for one who says : " up-stairs," or " down-stairs," instead of the approved terms of " above " or " below." Very glibly did the midshipmen adopt ship terms in their speech, and soon ship life became very natural to them. On this cruise Ralph's duty in making and taking in sail, and in all ship evolutions, was to haul on different ropes. The third classmen did the furling and unfurling aloft. These young gentlemen scrambled up the rigging when ordered, like so many squirrels ; each bent on being first up the dizzy heights, they ran with as much speed and as little concern as if they were running foot-races on the deck below ; though the fourth classmen had deck stations they were all sent aloft and exercised in furling and loosing sail, and in learning the lead of the gear aloft. A lesson in seamanship was assigned each day and



all midshipmen were kept constantly busy. They soon knew all about clew-lines and buntlines, tacks and sheets, and the braces, and in less than two weeks most of the midshipmen could have told where any particular gear was belayed and how it was rove, whether it was the flying jib halyards, the weather cross-jack brace, or what it was. Outside of Chesapeake Bay the ship ran into half a gale, and plunged and rolled considerably. Ralph Osborn had the usual taste of seasickness, but after recovering he delighted in the experiences he was having.

One morning late in June while Ralph was looking at the gear that belayed at the fore fife-rail, Bollup came up to him and said: "Hello, Os, what's that you've got in your hands?"

"This is the main to' bowline. I remember your saying the first day I was aboard the *Santee* that Himski's name was as long as the main to' bowline."

Bollup grinned. "It pretty nearly is," he remarked. "How does she reeve? I'm rusty on that particular piece of hemp."

"Look up at the main topsail; you see we are braced high up in the wind. Now the leech of the sail is pulled forward by the main to' bowline. Don't you see that line running forward from that bridle on the leech of the sail? Follow it along with your eye and you'll see it leads right under the fore top. It runs through a block hooked un-



der the top, and then down to this fife-rail. It's a long lead, Bollup."

"Of course it is," returned Bollup, "if it is as long as Himski's name. By the way, Os, what was all the row about this morning?"

"Oh, that miserable Coleman told me to stand on my head in a slop bucket, and I told him I wouldn't do it. Then he tried to jump me, and asked me if I didn't intend to obey a third classman's order. I told him I wouldn't obey that order, I didn't care who gave it. He then got wrathful and struck me in the face. Well, I punched him a few times good and hard; of course he's a baby and had no show with me, but he deserved all he got. Then 'Gruff' Smith rushed up mad as could be. 'Why don't you take a man of your size?' he shouted. 'What are you hammering a kid like Coleman for?' I said: 'Mr. Smith, Mr. Coleman told me to stand on my head in this slop bucket and I told him I wouldn't do it for a third classman or for anybody else, and I won't. He then struck me in the face and got hit back.' Well, Bollup, you should have seen old 'Gruff.' He said to Coleman: 'You miserable idiot, if you ——'"

At this instant Ralph was interrupted by a cry from the officer of the deck, repeated by the boatswain's mates, of: "Stand by to take in the royals and topgallantsails! Lay aloft royal and topgallant-yard men! Man the royal and topgallant



clew-lines and buntlines! Clear away the sheets! In royal and topgallantsails!"

At the first order the midshipmen concerned with these duties ran aloft with great speed and soon were at the dizzy heights their furling stations took them to. Before they had arrived there the sails had been clewed up and were ready to be furled. Ralph and Bollup with others had manned the weather foretopgallant clew-line, and now had returned to the fife-rail and were looking aloft, interested by the young men working one hundred and fifty feet above the ship's deck.

Of a sudden a fearful scream, a shout of agonized terror was heard, and Ralph's blood seemed to freeze. His horrified eyes, fastened on the weather fore royal yard-arm, saw a midshipman suddenly lose his balance and tumble backward. There was a sheer fall of one hundred and fifty feet to the deck below.

A frightful feeling possessed Ralph, he knowing that in the next instant a mangled corpse would be dashed to the deck beside him. The body came whizzing down. But look! The unfortunate midshipman in his fall struck a small iron rod used as a railing on the after rim of the fore top, and then tumbled backward. Right below him was the main to' bowline, and he landed squarely on this. Ralph saw all this with terrified eyes. He then saw that the midshipman was clinging to the main to' bowline with his hands



and had shifted a leg over it. With quick presence of mind Ralph threw the coil of the main to' bow-line off the pin where it had been belayed, and started to slack it away. A couple of first classmen standing near jumped to where Ralph was and helped him to do this, and in a few seconds the midshipman who had fallen was safely lowered to the deck.<sup>1</sup>

It proved to be "Gruff" Smith. He was bruised and badly shaken up but not seriously injured and in a few days was about as usual, though his station was changed from the royal yard to the deck.

Late in the day Ralph heard a word passed: "Midshipman Osborn, report to the quarter-deck." He went aft, wondering what he was wanted for. On the weather side of the quarter-deck he saw the captain, Commander Bolton, the executive, Lieutenant-Commander Roberts, and First Classman Baldwin. Ralph approached them uneasily, fearing that perhaps he was to receive some severe punishment for his fight with Coleman. He had never spoken to these high officers. He recognized them with awe and feared them.

"Mr. Osborn?" questioned the captain.

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Baldwin has reported to me that in the accident this morning you were the first to get to

<sup>1</sup> An actual occurrence on a midshipman's practice cruise witnessed by the author.



the main to' bowline to lower Mr. Smith to the deck. That was well done for any one, particularly for a fourth classman; and it is gratifying that such signal proof should come of the instruction received by midshipmen. You did well, sir. Mr. Roberts, you will please give Mr. Osborn a four for this week's mark in seamanship. That's all, sir."

Ralph walked away, tingling with pleasure. He had received emphatic praise from his captain for acting with good judgment during an emergency.

The midshipmen were much impressed by Smith's fall and miraculous escape and talked of but little else for days. The time fairly flew by for Ralph. In the daytime he was kept constantly busy, either running aloft to examine different things in preparation for the day's seamanship lesson, or else by working at prescribed tasks on deck. At night each midshipman stood (or rather stood lying down) a four-hour watch on deck. This was no hardship. The weather kept fine and it was delightful to be lulled to sleep by the easy roll of the ship with the wind blowing softly, and hearing the comfortable swish of the water against the ship's hull.

Ralph thoroughly enjoyed the companionship of his classmates. They were a fine group of young men, full of life and spirit. Those he liked most were Bollup, Himski, Creelton, and Taylor.



Creelton was an agreeable young fellow ; he was engaging and sympathetic in manner and generous to a fault.

“ Who are you going to room with, Os ? ” asked Bollup the day before the *Chesapeake* arrived in New London.

“ Why, I’d like to room with you. What do you say ? ”

“ Thanks, Os ; I’m sure I’d find that very pleasant, but Himski and I have fixed up to room together. The fellows are all talking about who they are going to room with next year and if you have any particular choice you’d better get busy.”

Creelton now approached, and Ralph said : “ Say, Creelton, what do you say to rooming with me next year ? ”

“ Now isn’t that remarkable ? ” replied Creelton. “ I was coming over here for the particular purpose of asking you to room with me. But it will be bully. I’d like it ever so much, Os.”

“ All right, Creel ; then we’ll look upon that as settled. I’m awfully glad we’re to be roommates. We’ll have a bully good time together.”

The *Chesapeake* was kept at sea until July 10th, when it put into New London and anchored off the old Pequot Hotel. The midshipmen were here given leave every day for two weeks ; on first getting ashore they were all wild with delight and enthusiasm, but before the ship started on her homeward cruise most of them had spent all the



money they had and were glad to be off. The *Chesapeake* left New London July 25th and was scheduled to arrive at Fort Monroe August 20th, spend a few days there, and anchor at Annapolis the 30th.

On this homeward bound cruise was shown the benefit the midshipmen had received from their previous six weeks' work. Ralph Osborn now ran aloft boldly and went out on the highest yard-arms with perfect confidence. He could reef and furl and make all sort of knots and he felt he knew every rope aboard and where it was and what it was used for. He could heave the lead and give correct soundings, and heave the log to get the ship's speed. The good-natured enlisted men took a real interest in giving the midshipmen information, and before the ship had returned to Annapolis it can be safely said that she had a very efficient ship's company.

When the ship was under way, each morning at seven o'clock the midshipmen who had been on watch since four o'clock were required to run up the rigging to the top and from there up the topmast rigging over the topmast head, and then down to the deck. This was supposed to be good exercise for them and tended to make them nimble aloft.

On one cold, gray morning in the middle of August the *Chesapeake* was bowling along at a ten knot speed. The wind was fresh and the ship was



driven into rough, heavy seas. The ship was under all sail to topgallantsails.

“By George, Os,” remarked Creelton to Ralph, after six o’clock, as the young men were having their morning coffee, “I hope the officer of the deck won’t send us over the rigging this morning; it’s awfully cold and I’m almost numb, and just see the ship roll! It’s dangerous to go aloft this weather.”

“It won’t bother us a bit after we once get started, Creel,” replied Ralph. “We’ve been over the rigging in much worse weather than this; it’s only a fresh breeze.”

“What are you two plebes yapping about?” snarled Third Classman Coleman who was standing near. “And what do you mean by loafing on the windward side of the forecastle? Oh, it’s you, is it, Mr. Osborn? You have the cheek of a right whale. Get out of here, you miserable beast.”

Ralph became angry but tried to control himself. “Take it back, Mr. Coleman,” he said; “as a third classman you may run me; I’ll stand for that, but you can’t insult me. Take it back, sir.”

“What’s all this row about?” demanded “Gruff” Smith, coming up to the group.

“Oh, this spoon of yours is cheeking me, that’s all,” sneered Coleman.

“Mr. Coleman called me a miserable beast. I told him that as he is a third classman he could



run me but that he couldn't insult me. I told him to take it back, sir."

"And didn't he?"

"No, he didn't," interrupted Coleman; "and furthermore, he won't."

"Well, Mr. Osborn, as a third classman I'll apologize to you for him. Third classmen run plebes but they don't insult them. Now see here, Coleman, if you ——"

But "Gruff" Smith was interrupted by a loud order from the officer of the deck, of:

"Midshipmen of the watch on the weather sheer poles! Stand by to go over the topmast heads."

The midshipmen divided themselves on the three sheer poles abreast the foremast, mainmast, and mizzenmast, each braced for a run, eager to be first. On Ralph's right was a third classman named Richards.

"Now look here, Mr. Plebe; don't you dare get ahead of me," he said.

"No, sir," replied Ralph.

At the order, "Lay aloft," the young men streamed up the rigging. Richards was first and right after him came Ralph. Each went over the futtock shrouds to the topmast rigging, disdaining the lubbers' hole, and in a moment were high up the topmast. In going over the crosstrees the ship was making a quick roll to leeward, and Richards tripped and lost his hold, and was thrown downward head first. As he half turned around in a



vain effort to clutch something Ralph saw a white, agonized face, and a second later he heard a scream of, "Man overboard," which brought terror to every heart. No fancy drill ever inspired the frightened tones of that particular cry. It was immediately followed by sharp, quick orders from the officer of the deck, Lieutenant Minturn.

"Hard down!" he shouted to the helmsman. "Let go the life-buoys! Lay down from aloft! Silence fore and aft! Every man to his station! Clear away the lee life-boat! Main clew garnets and buntlines! Weather main and lee cross-jack braces! Clear away the bo'lines! Up mainsail, brace a back!"

The six enlisted men and the coxswain forming the life-boat's crew jumped into her. Two enlisted men rushed to the boat's falls and commenced to lower it. They were overanxious; the man at the forward fall threw the coil off the pin; the man at the after fall did the same and both men started to lower the boat rapidly.

"Belay forrud, I'm jammed," shrieked the man at the after fall. But in the din about the deck, men rushing about, pulling and hauling at the braces, his frightened cry was unheard, and the bow of the life-boat came down rapidly while the stern was still high in the air. In another instant a heavy sea crashed into the life-boat and wrenched it clear from the ship.

In the meantime the executive officer, Lieu-



tenant-Commander Roberts, had rushed up from below and had taken charge. He soon had the other life-boat in the water; it immediately shoved off in the hope of picking up the men who had been swept into the sea. It found but one man. Two others had clutched the pendant of the stern Jacob's-ladder as it trailed behind and were hauled aboard. But nothing whatever was seen of Midshipman Richards who had fallen overboard nor of the four men of the first life-boat's crew, nor could the life-boat itself be found.<sup>1</sup>

An indescribable gloom settled upon the ship. Awful death had in the twinkling of an eye snatched five lives from the ship's company. Officers, midshipmen and enlisted men went about in a subdued, quiet way. The running of plebes ceased, and there was no more pell-mell scrambling aloft.

The *Chesapeake* arrived at Annapolis August 28th and the upper classmen all went on leave for a month. Ralph Osborn's classmates during this time were again quartered aboard the *Santee* and were drilled mornings and afternoons, and when the school year commenced, October 1st, they were all eager to begin their studies.

<sup>1</sup> This accident happened just as described during a midshipman practice cruise.



## CHAPTER VIII

### BOLLUP'S WATCH IN A QUEER PLACE

AT this time in the battalion of midshipmen there were something over three hundred young men, of whom about one hundred were fourth classmen or "plebes." Some years were yet to elapse before the battalion was enlarged into a brigade of eight hundred.

The day the upper classmen returned from leave was one of great activity. They had to unpack and arrange their rooms, turn in their citizen's clothes, and naturally there was much hand-shaking and many enthusiastic greetings. Lists had been posted on the bulletin-boards containing the new battalion organization, and each midshipman found his own name and after it the number of his room and of his seat in the mess hall, and other necessary information. Other lists were posted, dividing each class into sections of from eight to twelve men for recitations, and on these lists were to be found the lessons prescribed for the next day. By these means there was no confusion whatever. Everything had been thought out beforehand and all necessary information of one kind and another was found posted on the bulletin-boards.



Ralph Osborn found himself assigned to the second division, the commander of which was Cadet Lieutenant Baldwin. He and Creelton were quartered in room No. 131. The senior midshipman in command of the battalion was Cadet Lieutenant-Commander Holman. His rank was denoted by four narrow gold stripes on his sleeve. The cadet lieutenants commanding the divisions wore three stripes. Lower in rank were "two stripers" and "one stripers," and below them were the "cadet petty officers," or "buzzards," as they were termed from their wearing on their sleeves a gold embroidered American eagle.

The cadet officers and petty officers were all of the first class. They had prescribed daily duties, and under the general direction of the commandant of midshipmen were in military control of the battalion. Besides these there were always on duty an officer-in-charge who was a lieutenant, and a number of midshipmen temporarily detailed as "officers of the day," and "midshipman in charge of floor." These midshipmen were of the first and second classes and were changed daily, all coming on in their regular turns.

There were three lieutenants detailed as "officer-in-charge." Each of these officers came on duty once in three days for twenty-four hours, during which time he messed with the midshipmen and slept in the same building where they were quartered. He was the mouthpiece of the comman-



dant and in addition carried on the routine and issued orders to the cadet officers, and had certain inspections to make. His immediate assistants were those midshipmen who were on the temporary detail.

At formations the new cadet officers took charge with the air and manner of veterans. Their orders rang out sharp and clear. At supper formation of the first day of their return Ralph Osborn found himself in the middle of the rear rank of the second division. Soon there was a bugle call, and then the cadet first petty officer, standing fronting the division, read the roll of the midshipmen of his company. "Here," answered Ralph, when he heard "Osborn" called out. Then Cadet Lieutenant Baldwin took charge. "Second company right dress! Back in the center, dress up on the left. Up a little extreme left. Steady! Front!"

Then the cadet adjutant, a two striper, read out several orders, and soon after, the cadet lieutenant-commander gave the order: "Battalion fours right! March!" The battalion moved like clockwork into the mess hall and when it was halted Ralph found himself at the table seat which had previously been assigned to him.

The study hours were called at half-past seven and all midshipmen were required to remain in their rooms until half-past nine. Then they were free until ten o'clock, when the midshipmen had to be in their beds,



Ralph and Creelton took up their books with great interest.

"These lessons are too long!" exclaimed Ralph. "Great Cæsar's ghost, Creel, we'll never have time enough to get these lessons; why look here, the algebra lesson is thirteen pages, the rhetoric is fifteen, and just look what we have to do in French! I'll bilge sure."<sup>1</sup>

"They are long, Os," replied Creelton, "but they're easy. I've boned<sup>2</sup> all this stuff in college and can speak French. French is always hard at first, but I'll help you."

"Now that's good of you, Creel; you'll do me lots of good."

Their attention was now attracted by a rap on the door, and then immediately opened. A first classman wearing white gloves now entered. Ralph and Creelton jumped up, and stood at attention. The first classman looked at them and then growled, "Work hard or you'll bilge," and then left.

"What's that for, I wonder?" inquired Ralph.

"Oh, I guess that's the midshipman in charge, making his inspection to see if we're here."

Ralph and Creelton now commenced to study. Ralph rather skimmed through his algebra. He had always done well in mathematics at school and

<sup>1</sup> "To bilge," midshipman parlance for being dropped for failure in studies, or violation of regulations.

<sup>2</sup> "To bone" is to study.



expected to do the same at the Naval Academy. Besides he had studied algebra as far as quadratics. So he devoted himself to rhetoric which was new and to French which was entirely foreign.

At about nine o'clock there came another rap on the door, and immediately Lieutenant Wilson entered. "Good-evening, gentlemen," he said, glanced about the room and then withdrew.

At five minutes before ten a bugle call was heard, and both Ralph and Creelton got into their beds. Shortly after ten Cadet Lieutenant Baldwin entered their room, saw they were both turned in, and left.

The next morning, they were turned out by reveille and gun-fire at six o'clock, and soon after a cadet officer inspected the room to see that they were up and that their beds were turned back. Breakfast formation was held half an hour later.

"Open ranks," ordered the four striper. A moment later he reported to the officer-in-charge: "Sir, the battalion is ready for inspection."

Lieutenant Wilson walked in front of the ranks, scanning each midshipman narrowly. Pausing in front of Creelton he said: "Clothes not properly brushed. Report him." In front of Ralph he said: "Hair not properly cut. Shoes not polished. Report him." Their names were taken and were read out the next morning before the battalion on the "Delinquency Conduct Report."

Ralph was given three demerits for "shoes not



polished." Creelton received three for his offense. "Thunder," grumbled Ralph. "If I receive demerits like this I'll never get a Saturday liberty. Fourth classmen are only allowed twenty-one demerits a month."

"Oh, we'll be more careful," returned Creelton lightly.

It must be admitted that in the first days Ralph did miserably in his recitations. His mark in algebra was barely satisfactory, and in rhetoric he was most unfortunately sent to the blackboard to write on a subject in the last part of the prescribed lesson, something he had not even read over. In French all of the midshipmen of his section except himself had previously had some instruction, as it happened, and poor Ralph by comparison was at a great disadvantage. The French instructor had him repeat after him some simple French words and sounds and was indignant at his inability to do so.

"Ah, Meestair Osborng, eet ees so eazie. Ven feerst I learn ze Eenglis, vairy feerst day, I haf eegsatlie ze vairy zame prononciacion zat I haf now. I feair zat you do not haf ze eentelejence; I nevair haf no trouble in prononcing ze Eenglis, not from ze feerst. Vat you must do, Meestair Osborng, ees to remember how eazie eet vas for me to pronounce ze Eenglis; you hear how correct I am? Vell, you must try to do ze zaim vis ze Français."



Poor Ralph stood mute. There was nothing he could say under the circumstances.

There were three instruction periods a day; each was of two hours' duration, one of which was spent in the section room reciting; the other the midshipman spent as a study hour in his own room.

Ralph was much impressed by the number of inspections that were made. Each hour in the day an inspecting officer, one of the midshipmen on special duty, entered his room to see that he was there; or if not there, to inquire into the cause of his absence. Ralph felt, as never before, he was under the iron hand of discipline, where he was under constant surveillance and had to account for himself and his actions for every moment of the day. Studies finished at four o'clock and then drill commenced and lasted until half-past five and sometimes later. At the end of the drill Ralph was always tired, but a rest, a bath, and supper proved very refreshing, and during the evenings he always studied with great determination.

The days rapidly passed and were full of interest to Ralph, but he was in a much distressed state of mind about his studies. He continued to do poorly in rhetoric, and for his French his instructor exhibited impatient contempt. In mathematics Ralph was satisfactory, but not much more so. He felt he could not spare much time to pre-



pare his lessons in this subject because he was so low in the other two. He felt very grateful to his roommate for the earnest efforts the latter took to help him in French. Creelton gave up much of his leisure time for this purpose, and but for him Ralph would have been badly unsatisfactory the first month in that subject. As it was, his first month's mark in French was but 2.53, only three-hundredths above satisfactory. In rhetoric Ralph had 2.68, and in algebra 2.73, for the first month's average.

When these marks were published Ralph was a very crestfallen young man. In his secret thoughts he had hoped to stand number one in his class; he always had done so in Toledo, but his rank for the first month was far down. It was Ralph's nature to be thorough in what he did, and as a result he never was able to get completely over the lesson before starting for recitation; and he was remarkably unfortunate in frequently being called upon to recite on a part of the lesson he had not studied.

Creelton was doing splendidly; for the first month he had over 3.50 in each subject and stood about number three in class rank; he was devoted to Ralph; there was never a time but what he willingly put away his own work to help Ralph in his French.

In November Ralph did somewhat better in his studies and this encouraged him. Himski was



apparently standing number one, and to the surprise of all, the irrepressible, rollicking Bollup was easily number two. Taylor, Streeter, and Warren were also of this group, and these seven young men were always to be found together and were known to the rest of the class as "Himski's Bunch."

One day late in November, Bollup came to Ralph's room, his face flushed with anger. "There's some thief in this building," he indignantly cried. "Somebody has pinched my gold watch."

"By George, that's too bad, Bollup!" exclaimed Ralph. "That was a fine watch you had; are you certain it was stolen? Couldn't it be misplaced?"

"Of course I'm certain! I left it in the top shelf of my wardrobe when I went to drill to-day; I always do that; and as soon as I came back from drill I went to get it and it wasn't there."

"Who could have done it?" asked Creelton.

"I wish I knew; he wouldn't stay long at this place. Fellows, there's a thief in this school wearing a midshipman's uniform. I'm certain of it."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Creelton. "It must have been one of the colored building men."

"Not on your life. The watch was stolen between four and six o'clock to-day and in those hours there wasn't a corridor boy in the building."



"By George, that's an awful thing to say, Bollup; I hope it isn't so."

"Well, it is, mark me. And it was the same thief who stole twenty dollars from me on the cruise. I'm going to try to find out if anybody was seen going to my room when I was out."

"I stopped in your room on my way to drill to-day thinking to pick you up, but you had gone," remarked Ralph, quietly.

"Oh, that's all right, Os. But I'd like to catch the thief, that's all. And he'll be found out, mark my words," and Bollup left.

"This is awful, Os," said Creelton. "I hope Bollup is mistaken."

"I hope so, but he seems certain."

Bollup went about, telling of his loss, and the matter was much talked of by the midshipmen. The idea that there might be a thief among them produced a most uncomfortable feeling.

A couple of days later, at about eleven o'clock in the morning, a letter and a small box were delivered to Ralph. Opening the letter he was delighted to see it was from his Uncle George. It was dated from New York City, and said:

"DEAR NEPHEW RALPH:—

"I am sending you a watch and chain for a Christmas present. I am sending it ahead of time as I am leaving the country to-morrow. Will let you have my address later. I expect to



return in seven or eight months. Remember me to your father when you write to him.

“Your affectionate uncle,  
“GEORGE H. OSBORN.”

“Oh,” Ralph exclaimed, “just listen to this, Creel,” and he read him the letter. “Now let’s open the box.” He did so, and in it found a handsome gold watch with a light gold chain attached to it. Ralph was wild with delight. He had always wanted a watch and he was enthusiastically happy to have such a beautiful one. “And just think, Creel,” he said, “I can’t even thank my uncle; I don’t know where a letter would reach him.”

“Indeed,” remarked Creelton, much interested; “how’s that, Os?”

“Well, you see none of us know anything about him; he left home twenty years ago, and only occasionally writes us a letter. Sometimes he has written us from New York and sometimes from London and other places, but we don’t know what business he is in and he seldom tells us where to address him. Now look at this letter. Uncle George doesn’t even know that my father is dead.”

Ralph put his uncle’s letter in his table drawer and again both youths delightedly examined and handled the watch. In the back it was inscribed:

“To Ralph Osborn, from his uncle, George H. Osborn.”



The watch interfered with his studies for the rest of that morning. Before going to drill, as he changed into working clothes, he carefully placed his beloved treasure on a shelf in the wardrobe under some towels. "I hope the thief won't find it," he remarked to Creelton. "I'm almost afraid to let it be known that I have it."

Creelton left and Ralph followed a few minutes later.

Just after drill, while Ralph was shifting from his working clothes to his service uniform, Bollup and Himski came into his room.

"Hello!" cried Ralph. "Say, fellows, I've something to show you; my Uncle George has sent me a watch. Here it is."

Ralph went to his wardrobe, put his hand on the shelf and took out the watch and chain.

"Isn't it a beau——" Ralph started to say when a look of blank amazement spread over his face.

"Why, why," he feebly said, "this isn't my watch, Bollup, why, why—it's yours—why, I don't understand this; why, Bollup, my uncle sent me a watch. I received it at eleven o'clock this morning; at four o'clock, just before I went to drill, I put it in my wardrobe—this is your watch, Bollup."

"I should say it was, Osborn; it's been mine for a couple of years. Now look here, Osborn,



there's a thief in this Academy, and it's up to you to explain how you got this watch." And Bollup looked keenly at Ralph.

"Bollup, you know as much as I do as to how I came in possession of your watch."

"Well, I'd like to know something more about the story of the watch sent you by your uncle."

"I most certainly shall insist upon everybody knowing about that," said Ralph. "The watch came by registered mail this morning, and with it a letter from my Uncle George telling me he was sending it to me."

"Of course you haven't torn up the letter?" questioned Bollup in a sneering tone.

"I have not. The letter is in my table drawer; I'll show it to you." And Ralph drew open the drawer.

The letter was nowhere to be found.

Bollup turned shortly on his heel, and without another word left the room, followed by Himski.



## CHAPTER IX

### “INDIGNANT FOURTH CLASSMAN”

RALPH stood in the middle of his room helpless, dazed and stupefied. In a moment hot feelings surged through his heart and uncontrolled tears blinded his sight. He had lost his beautiful watch, true: this was aggravating and annoying almost beyond endurance. But as Bollup so abruptly left the room Ralph suddenly realized that Bollup believed him to be a thief. Bollup, the man he loved, his best friend in all the world! The thought was maddening. Ralph looked around helplessly, and his eye lighted upon a crumpled bit of paper in the corner of the room. It was the wrapper and box in which the watch had been sent. He seized this and was about to rush out when Creelton entered.

“Hello, Os,” he said, in his bright, cheery way; “what’s up? Why, old chap, what’s the matter with you?”

“Everything is the matter,” cried Ralph. “Come along with me; I need you.” Ralph clutched him by the arm and hurried him down the corridor, much to the astonishment of Creelton. In a moment Ralph had thrown open the door of Bollup’s room, and still having Creelton by the arm, rushed in.



“It’s awful to think such a thing of Os, but what can I believe?” Bollup was saying to a group of his classmates, composed of Himski, Taylor and Streeter. All were much disturbed and excited in manner.

“Bollup, you think I stole your watch!” exclaimed Ralph, bursting into the conversation. “Can you imagine a thief would show you the watch he had stolen from you, pretending it was a present from his uncle? Look at that paper and box,” and Ralph threw them on the table before Bollup. “That’s what my watch came in this morning. It was registered, you can see for yourself. Creel saw the watch and the letter and knows I received the watch. He saw me open the package and take it out. Ask him; I haven’t spoken to him about it since I saw you.”

“What’s all this about?” asked Creelton, bewildered.

“It’s just this, Creel,” interrupted Himski; “Os told Bollup and me he had received a watch from his Uncle George, and went to get the watch out of his locker to show it to us: and it happened to be the watch that had been stolen from Bollup. Os went to get the letter he said he had received from his Uncle George but couldn’t find it, and he doesn’t know his uncle’s address. Do you know anything about the watch Os claims to have received?”

“Why, yes,” answered Creelton slowly; “a



watch came to him this morning. I saw it; it was a handsome gold watch, and also a chain came with it.”

“What was inscribed on the inside case?” exclaimed Ralph, impatiently.

“‘Ralph Osborn, from his Uncle George,’ or something like that,” replied Creelton deliberately.

“Did you see the letter he spoke of?” asked Himski.

“Yes, I read it. His uncle wrote from New York, and spoke of the watch as a Christmas present; he said he was leaving the city and would write later; I don’t remember exactly—but I saw the letter.”

“Fellows,” said Ralph, “I’m paralyzed, that’s all I can say. And I’m suspected of being a thief! I’ve lost my beautiful watch, but that’s a small thing in comparison.” Ralph spoke bitterly. “And there’s one thing that’s got to be settled right now. I want to know just exactly what you think of me.”

Himski crossed the room to where Ralph was standing with outstretched hand, and said heartily, “That’s what I think of you, Os.”

Bollup came up and offered his hand and said: “Forgive me, Os, if I need forgiveness. I’d rather bilge than believe that you had taken these things. But great heavens, how can this thing be explained? My watch is stolen. You receive a present of a watch and go to show it to me, and on



the end of your chain is my watch. There's a dirty thief here, fellows, and he's got something against Os; that's all there's about it. Os, you must have an enemy here."

"I can't imagine it," replied Ralph; "enemies so dark and mysterious don't exist in real life; there isn't a soul here I have ever had trouble with. It's beyond me, fellows."

Everybody present assured Ralph of their belief in his innocence, and Ralph felt better; Creelton now said: "Fellows, suppose we all agree not to speak of this matter to any one; it will be distorted and rumors will be spread about that will injure Os. Besides, if we ——"

Ralph turned upon Creelton with flashing eyes and said: "Creel, do you pretend to be a friend of mine?"

"Why, you know I am, Os," replied Creelton weakly, and much surprised at Ralph's vehemence.

"Then don't you ever propose to hush this matter up. We're going to see the commandant at nine to-morrow morning, you and I and Himski and Bollup. We'll tell him everything about it, and I want every one of you to talk about this thing to everybody you know."

"All right, Os, but I think my way is best."

"Stop thinking that way, or I'll stop thinking you're a friend of mine," retorted Ralph.

The four midshipmen were before the com-



mandant the next morning. The latter asked innumerable questions and directed each to write a complete statement detailing all he knew of the matter. In dismissing them he said: “I congratulate you on having such staunch friends, Mr. Osborn.”

The matter was discussed at great length by all midshipmen. The general feeling throughout the battalion was that a thief was present, probably one of the corridor boys, who had stolen Bollup’s watch and had endeavored to have the theft fastened on Osborn. But the matter was enveloped in so much mystery that no very clear ideas about it were expressed.

Ralph was very fearful and much worried. He resolved, if anything were said casting a reflection in any way upon him, to hold his temper and immediately report the matter to the commandant.

One afternoon, a few days after this occurrence, Third Classman Coleman came into his room. Ralph and Creelton immediately stood up, a mark of respect always shown by plebes to upper classmen who enter their rooms.

“So, Mr. Osborn,” sneered Coleman, “somebody stole Mr. Bollup’s watch, I hear, and the watch was found at the end of your chain. And so your uncle, whom you have never seen, who lives, you do not know where, has sent you a watch! Strange, about your uncle and the watch he sent you, and the letter he wrote you, all of



which have disappeared. Strange, isn't it, Mr. Osborn? So strange, in fact, as to be pretty thin." And Coleman's lip curled in disgust.

"One minute, Mr. Coleman; I'll give you a chance to say all that before the commandant."

"What are you going to do?" cried Coleman in alarm.

"I'm going to have you say that to the commandant, and I'm going to see him this minute." \*

"I order you not to; that's personal. I direct you to do nothing of the kind and I advise you to remember that I'm a third classman and you're a plebe."

"Give me any orders as a third classman, you whippersnapper, and I'll report you for hazing. Now, get out of my room, you ugly-faced coward, or I may forget myself." Coleman, intimidated, withdrew. A few moments later he was called to the commandant's office and received a severe reprimand, and next day was given twenty-five demerits, a punishment that entailed loss of many esteemed privileges, for "using provoking language to another midshipman."

At this time, everybody at the Naval Academy, officers and their families included, were tremendously interested in football. Some of Ralph's classmates, Himski and Streeter and Creelton, were playing with the second team occasionally, and went out for practice every day. Ralph had a feeling that he would like to try football, but



he was doing so poorly in his studies that he felt he could not afford to. Football practice not only took up much time but also it was exhausting, and after strenuous work at football a midshipman was not apt to be in good shape for intense mental application. It was a disastrous football season for Annapolis, and finally the Naval Academy team went down to overwhelming defeat by West Point in Philadelphia on December first.

In December the midshipmen of Ralph's class in mathematics had algebra and geometry. Ralph felt he was barely holding his own, yet he studied conscientiously. He was improving in French, thanks to Creelton's constant help, though he stood very low in it. He did but indifferently in rhetoric. In mathematics he felt he should be doing much better than he was; as Ralph later discovered he put too much time on studying the rules and the formulas and the way they were derived, instead of working out problems. When one works out problems he naturally uses the rules and these become impressed upon him. But in learning formulas and rules one should also apply them in working out problems. Ralph trusted to his knowledge of rules and principles and formulas to help him with the problems he had to do in recitation and on examination, and in doing this he was too slow to accomplish much.

On his December examination in geometry was



a problem to prove that the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle was equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides. In preparing for this examination Ralph had felt so confident of this particular problem that he had not reviewed it; but when he came to solve it he utterly failed. He was amazed and disgusted, and made desperate efforts to do it, using up far more time than he should have afforded for one question. He finally gave it up and did the best he could in the remaining time. But when he saw his month's standing in mathematics he was alarmed. He had made only 1.1 on the examination, and was unsatisfactory, having but 2.38 for the month.

"I'll bilge sure," said Ralph to Creelton, "unless I take a brace." And he did study hard.

The month of January was spent in reviewing the work already gone over, and here Ralph's good work in previous studying rules and formulas helped him considerably and he did fairly well in his recitations. At odd times he endeavored to prove in his own way the problem in geometry at which he had so signally failed in the December examination, and by the end of January, when the much dreaded semi-annual examinations were to begin, Ralph felt he was well prepared. After this examination the midshipmen who fail to make 2.50 for the term's average are required to resign, and between



twenty and thirty fourth classmen are generally found to be unsatisfactory each year.

“I’m on the Christmas tree,”<sup>1</sup> exclaimed Ralph to his roommate before the examination commenced. “I’ve only got 2.57 to go into the examination. Now let’s see. The examination mark has one-fourth weight. Three times 2.57 is 7.71. This subtracted from 10.00 leaves 2.29. And that’s what I’ve got to make on the exam ; I ought to do that.”

“Of course you ought to, Os, and I’m sure you will,” replied Creelton. “You are all right in French and rhetoric, aren’t you?”

“I think so, and I have so thoroughly reviewed the math and worked out so many problems this month that I expect to make much more than a 2.50 on the exam.”

On the examination Ralph worked rapidly and he had a happy feeling he was doing everything right. Two hours were spent on algebra and two on geometry. After the examination he was confident he had made more than the requisite 2.29, but he was feverishly hungry for a sight of the marks.

On a Friday Bollup came into his room and said: “Let’s go down to the bulletin-board, Os ; the math marks ought to be posted by this time.”

<sup>1</sup> “Christmas tree,” a list of midshipmen published in December, who are officially warned to be in danger of failing at the semi-annual examinations.



“All right,” said Ralph, and they went down together. A crowd of midshipmen were eagerly looking at the bulletin-board. On the board was posted a large sheet with the names of midshipmen in two columns, they being graduated according to their excellence. Ralph and Bollup crowded in.

“You’re number two, Bollup,” called some one in the crowd; “Himski is number one.”

Ralph looked up and down the right-hand column, containing the names of the lower half of the class, looking for his own name, as had been his wont. He could not find his name. He glanced up and down again and failed to see “Osborn” anywhere in the column. Then he became worried; he could not imagine why his name should not be there. That it was possibly over in the first column, in the upper half of the class, never occurred to him.

“Good gracious, Os,” suddenly called out Bollup, “but you did everlastingly thump that geometry exam, didn’t you?”

“I can’t find my name,” cried Ralph excitedly; “where is it?”

“Number 35, Os, left-hand column. You made 3.82 on your geometry and 3.26 on your algebra; your average for the examination is 3.54, and for the term 2.81.”

Ralph gave a wild “hurrah,” and feasted his eyes over these marks. Never before had any-



thing ever looked so beautiful to him. Now he felt all his worries were over.

Two days later he was called to the office of the officer in charge. “Osborn, sir,” he reported, saluting.

“Report to the superintendent’s office immediately, Mr. Osborn,” directed Lieutenant Wilson.

“Very well, sir,” replied Ralph in great surprise, wondering what in the world the superintendent could want with him. He was soon admitted to the superintendent’s presence.

“Good-morning, Mr. Osborn,” said the latter, fixing his penetrating gray eyes upon Ralph.

“Good-morning, sir. I was directed to report to you, sir.”

“Yes. I want you to read a letter I have just received.”

He picked up a paper from his desk and handed it to Ralph. It was as follows :

*“To the superintendent of the Naval Academy :*

“I desire to call your attention to the fact that Midshipman Osborn of the fourth class made but 1.1 on his December examination in mathematics, and is credited with having made 3.54 on the semi-annual examination in the same subject. The two marks are incompatible. The explanation is that Midshipman Osborn had an algebra inside his coat, left-hand side, and a geometry on his right-hand side ; during the examination I saw him use



them. Osborn stole Bollup's watch. This matter seems to have been hushed up. It is an outrage to his classmates and to all midshipmen that such a character should be retained at the Naval Academy.

“INDIGNANT FOURTH CLASSMAN.”



## CHAPTER X

### “ THE OSBORN DEMONSTRATION ”

RALPH read the letter, which was written in printed characters, through slowly a second time. Then he looked up at the superintendent with a troubled expression on his face.

“ You needn't say anything about the letter, Mr. Osborn,” the superintendent remarked in a kindly tone. “ It contains nothing but lies and the writer is a contemptible coward. But have you any idea as to who the writer may be ? ”

“ Not the slightest, sir,” replied Ralph, much relieved at the superintendent's words. “ Had you heard about Mr. Bollup's watch being stolen and of how it was found on my watch-chain, sir ? ”

“ Oh, yes, I have the letters you four young gentlemen wrote before me now. Do you think this letter was written by a midshipman or somebody else ? ”

“ I have no idea, sir ; I can't imagine any midshipman would wish to hurt me. I have never had any trouble that amounted to anything with anybody here, except Mr. Short ; you know about that, sir.”

“ Yes, and Mr. Short is a long ways off. I'll



keep this letter carefully and perhaps something may turn up ——”

“ Sir, may I offer a suggestion ? ”

“ Certainly, Mr. Osborn ; what is it ? ”

“ I would request that that letter be published to the battalion with your order that the writer of it, if a midshipman, should report to you.”

The superintendent thought a moment and then said : “ I won't publish the letter, that could do no good, but I will have an order read requiring the writer of a letter to me signed ‘ Indignant Fourth Classman ’ to report to me. Now, Mr. Osborn, whenever a charge of any kind is made against any person in the Navy it is always investigated. So I have directed Professor Scott to go over your papers himself, and then to come here with them. I expect him here in a few moments—here he is now. Good-morning, professor.”

“ Good-morning, admiral. I have been over Mr. Osborn's papers, and ——”

“ One minute, professor ; just read this letter and you will know why I had you go over Mr. Osborn's semi-annual examination papers in mathematics.”

The professor read the letter, and then indignantly threw it down on the desk. “ That's contemptible, sir ; in his work Mr. Osborn has shown thorough comprehension. In his algebra questions Mr. Osborn stumbed somewhat on a few of the problems but in every case displayed



a good knowledge of the principles involved. A number of answers he obtained by original methods; this has pleased me very much. In spite of his low marks last month—I looked into that—he has shown a real knowledge, and has not made his good marks by means merely of a good memory. But his geometry paper is magnificent, admiral,” continued Professor Scott, enthusiastically. “Had I been the one to have first marked his paper I would have called attention to a beautiful piece of original work. In the December examination he stumbled over the problem in geometry of proving the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides. He clean forgot how to do it; the same problem was given in the semi-annual, and Mr. Osborn proved it in his own way by a method I have never before seen or heard of. I have examined every book we have in the department and can find no mention of this method. I talked with every one of my assistants and all were delighted with Mr. Osborn’s method. I suppose the method must be known; it’s not possible that Mr. Osborn could be the original discoverer of it, but I’ve never seen the method before nor can I find any one who has; admiral, here it is——” and Professor Scott took one of the sheets of Ralph’s paper on which was written the following :



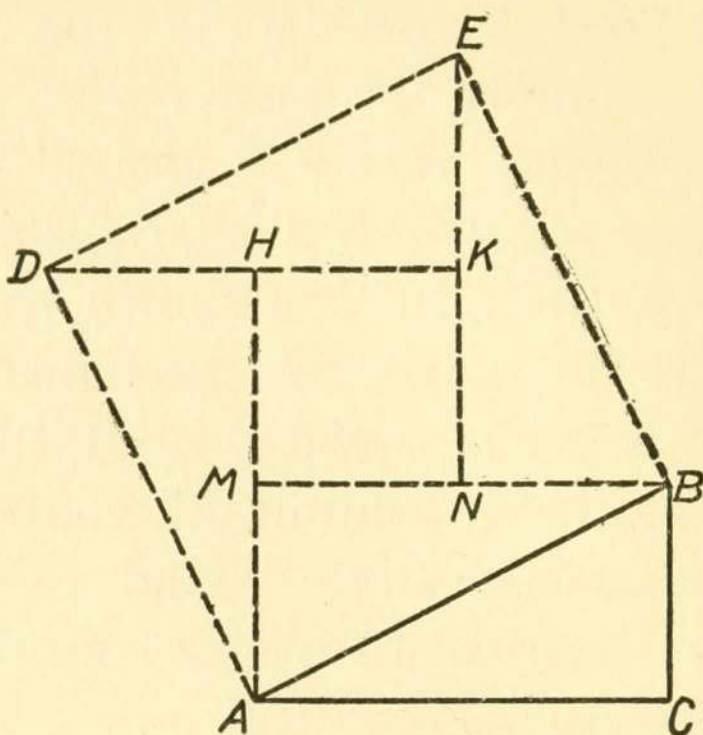
*Question :*

Prove the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle, is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.

*Demonstration :*

Let  $ABC$  be a right-angled triangle.

To prove  $\overline{AB}^2 = \overline{AC}^2 + \overline{BC}^2$ .



On  $AB$  erect the square  $ABED$ . Draw  $BM$  parallel and equal to  $AC$ . From  $A$  erect a perpendicular through  $M$ .

By inspection triangle  $AMB$ , triangle  $ABC$ .

From point  $E$  drop a perpendicular to the line  $BM$ . The triangle thus formed,  $ENB$ , having a side and angles equal to a side and angles of triangle  $AMB$ , is seen by inspection to be equal to triangle  $AMB$ , and therefore to triangle  $ABC$ . Hence  $BN$  is equal to  $BC$ .

In a similar way construct the triangles  $ADH$  and  $DKE$ . By inspection each of these is seen to be equal to triangle  $ABC$ .

The square erected on  $AB$  is thus equal to four times the triangle  $ABC$  plus the rectangle  $HMNK$ .

$$\text{Rectangle } HMNK = MN \times MH.$$

$$MN = BM - BN = AC - BC.$$



$$MH = AH - AM = AC - BC.$$

Four times area of triangle  $ABC = 4 \times \frac{1}{2} AC \times BC$ .

Hence  $\overline{AB}^2 = 4 \times \frac{1}{2} \overline{AC} \times \overline{BC} + (\overline{AC} - \overline{BC}) (\overline{AC} - \overline{BC}) = 2 AC \times BC + \overline{AC}^2 - 2 \overline{AC} \times \overline{BC} + \overline{BC}^2$ . Or,  $\overline{AB}^2 = \overline{AC}^2 + \overline{BC}^2$ . Q. E. D.

“Now, admiral,” continued the delighted professor, “I’m going to send Mr. Osborn’s demonstration to some of the colleges and mathematical societies. Although it is original with Mr. Osborn, at least I imagine that it is, I really cannot believe that it is possible that he is the first discoverer of this method. If it should prove that Mr. Osborn is the original person who has ever used this method it will go down in the books as ‘The Osborn Demonstration.’”

“How did you happen to fall on that method, Mr. Osborn?” asked the admiral.

“Why, sir, I failed miserably on this question in the December examination and afterward I was determined to get it without referring to the book. One time when I was working at it, wondering why I couldn’t do it, I happened to erect the square on the hypotenuse and somehow drew in the triangles. Then when I looked at the figure I started to add up the areas of the different triangles and the square in the center and it all worked out naturally.”

“It’s an algebraic rather than a geometrical proof, or rather a combination of both,” remarked Professor Scott, “and Mr. Osborn deserves much



credit. And as for the statement that Mr. Osborn cheated by carrying books in the examination with him, why that is as ridiculous as it is false and contemptible."

"That is just my notion," assented the superintendent. "Now, Mr. Osborn, don't worry about this letter and don't talk with anybody about it. There is undoubtedly somebody determined to do you terrible injury, but I think we can take care of you. Keep your eyes wide open, say nothing, not even to your closest friend, and if you learn anything whatever come to me immediately."

Ralph left the superintendent's office in a very happy and comfortable state of mind. He was indeed perplexed at the persistent hidden enmity that had been displayed against him, and for which he could imagine no cause, but he felt that he had a powerful friend who would protect him.

The next month, February, Ralph was in the fourth section in mathematics. The regular instructor assigned to this section was sick so that the head of the department, Professor Scott, took the section. He displayed much interest in Ralph's work; this was apparent to all, and inspired by this Ralph devoted himself to preparing his recitations with a zest he had never felt before. He worked enough on his rhetoric and French to get satisfactory marks in these subjects, but in most of his study hours and much of his leisure after drill and on Saturdays and Sundays he devoted himself



to his algebra. Before going to recitations he had always studied the principles carefully and worked out most, if not all of the problems.

At the end of February the monthly examinations were held.

“How did you do, Os?” asked Creelton, after they had returned to their rooms.

“I feel I hammered it hard. How did you do, Creel?”

“Oh, I biffed it. I’ve good recitation marks and hope to stand number one this month. I’d like to cook Himski and Bollup this month.”

“I hope you did well,” said Ralph heartily. “I suppose you fellows in the first section will all stay there, but I hope I may pull up into the second.”

“That would be a good rise for you, Os; I hope you will. You’ve been working hard at math this month and will probably land in the third section if you don’t make the second.”

While Ralph, Creelton, Bollup and Streeter were returning together from drill a few days later, Bollup said: “Hello, there’s a crowd at our bulletin-board; I guess our math marks are posted.”

They all ran up to the board, Bollup leading. As soon as he had looked at the bulletin-board he gave a yell and cried:

“Jumping Jehoshaphat! Ralph Osborn! Just look at those marks. By the tall American green-eyed prophet, you made a 4.0 on every daily reci-



tation in the month, and to make matters worse, knocked a cold 4.0 on the exam!"

Ralph looked with staring eyes. He had the sensation of the man who has won the capital prize in a lottery. Many were the exclamations of surprise from his classmates when they saw what Ralph had done. Most of the fourth section had risen in class rank, and much credit was given to Professor Scott's illuminating instruction by the young men who had been in his section; and now all of these declared they had known that Osborn had been doing excellent work and they were not at all surprised he had landed first in the class. But Ralph in his secret heart felt that Professor Scott had been very generous to him in his daily marks.

"And only a month ago I was in danger of being bilged," remarked Ralph to Creelton when they entered their room.

Creelton did not answer, but slammed things around in a very angry way.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Ralph in surprise.

"Do you think I like being cooked by everybody?" snapped Creelton. "You and Bollup and Himski all came out ahead of me; I stood number seven; I ought to have stood one."

"If you can only make a 3.32 on such an easy exam you've no right to stand even number seven," returned Ralph with spirit. "As you didn't de-



liver the goods and other people did, I fail to agree that you should have stood number one or any number higher than the one given you.”

“You talk mighty big for a man whom I saved from bilging in French last term,” retorted Creelton.

“You offered to help me; I didn’t ask it. And you did help me a great deal and I thanked you then and I thank you now. But that has nothing whatever to do with the matter we’re talking about.”

“Great heavens! Will you shut up? I wish I had never seen you. Oh, I can’t stand it!” And Creelton burst into tears, and dropping heavily into a chair by the study table, he flung his head down on his arms and sobbed convulsively.

“Why, Creel, don’t feel badly, old fellow; I’m awfully sorry,” and Ralph, much touched as well as astonished, went to Creelton and tried to comfort him, but to no avail. Then, much perplexed, he left the room and went off to see Bollup. Later when he returned, Creelton, now entirely over his sad feelings, said: “Os, please excuse and forgive my words. I cannot tell you how disappointed I was; I had counted so much on standing number one; and getting class rank of seven was a bitter blow to me; I just gave way to my feelings.”

“Don’t speak of it—it’s all right; let’s talk of something else,” returned Ralph. “It seems glorious to stand number one, but I’ll never keep it. You may get it next month; cheer up, Creel.”



## CHAPTER XI

### THIRD CLASSMAN OSBORN

“**H**OW the time has passed, Os ; we’ve finished our an exams, and it seems as if it were only yesterday when we were worrying about our semi-ans.”

“ You mean when I was worrying, Bollup,” replied Ralph Osborn. “ You never got out of the first section in math and have stood well up in French and rhetoric, while four months ago I was worrying about bilging in math.”

“ Wasn’t that remarkable? And now you’re the math fiend of the class ! How in the world was it that you did so poorly the first three months ? ”

“ I didn’t know how to study for one thing. Another thing the lessons were long and I was more afraid of French and rhetoric and slighted math. I put in all of my time on learning principles and rules and didn’t try to work out probs till I got to the section room, and then I always took too long. I know better now. But these three months have gone quickly, haven’t they ? And we’ll be third classmen in ten days ; won’t that be glorious ? ”

“ You bet, Os, and we’ll teach some of the



plebes who enter how to stand on their heads, sing songs, climb on top of wardrobes, dance jigs and so forth. We'll know how to teach them all right, won't we, old chap?"

"Not I, Bollup," replied Ralph, determinedly.

"Why not? Good gracious, man! Aren't you going to have a little fun and give the newcomer a few points on naval discipline, rocks, shoals, and hazards? We had our share of it and none of us is the worse for it; all plebes need a little good running and the new ones will feel slighted if they don't get some; and besides the upper classmen will expect us to do it. That's part of the Academy training; if we don't start the new plebes right they'll be too cheeky and fresh to live with. We've got to do it, old man, and you'll have to do your share." Bollup spoke earnestly.

"Your ideas are all right, Bollup, but I'm not going to do any running whatever," remarked Ralph quietly.

"Why not, Os; are you afraid of being spotted?"

"Just so. I wouldn't dare to."

"It seems to me you're not worrying about the rest of your classmates," said Bollup with a sneer.

"You forget about your watch being stolen and then found on my watch-chain."

"Well, what on earth has that got to do with your doing a little running?" cried Bollup in evident surprise.



“A great deal. There’s somebody here, I have never been able to imagine who, that wants to get me into trouble. If I should run anybody I’d be sure to be reported for hazing, and that would mean certain dismissal. I’m going to walk a straight line and never so much as speak to a plebe.”

“By George! That watch affair was a most remarkable thing. I don’t blame you, Os. And you have no notion whatever who might have done it?”

“Not the slightest. It must have been a corridor boy or a midshipman; that’s as close as I can get to it.”

“I don’t blame you. Hello! Here’s Creel. Say, Creel, how did you come out on the exams?”

“Pretty well, I think. But I guess Himski will stand number one in the class for the year. But if Os keeps up his record in math I bet he’ll give him a close run for it next year. Say, fellows, we’re going to start the new plebes right, aren’t we?”

“Well, I should hope so, all of us except Os.”

“What’s the matter, Os? Aren’t you going to do your duty by them?”

“Not I, Creel; I’ll talk to you about that later.”

The time between the events of the last chapter and the above conversation had simply flown by for the midshipmen of Ralph’s class. For Ralph



it had been an uneventful time. Each day had its hard work of studies, recitations and drills, and the end of his first year was now upon him. The second term was most satisfactory to him. He had developed a remarkable ability of quickly solving mathematical problems and in this subject he was now easily first in his class. Sometimes, with great regret, he thought of his watch; and whenever he thought about it he was always tremendously puzzled. He could not even imagine a solution to the mystery, but no further acts of hostility had developed against him by his unknown foe. Ralph did not worry about this unknown enemy but sometimes he wondered. The only man he could imagine who would harbor ill feelings against him was Short, but the latter was far away and Ralph had never heard of him since his dismissal.

Ralph's average for the two terms in mathematics was 3.30, which gave him class rank of 17 in that subject. In rhetoric he was number 61, and in French number 73. His final rank in his class was 41. But in the other remaining years mathematics would become more and more important and Ralph had a feeling that by the time he graduated he would have high class rank.

Graduation happened on a bright June morning. The battalion was marched to the tune of: "Ain't I glad to get out of the Wilderness," to the chapel where the ceremonies were held. And



each midshipman felt with joy he was getting out of the wilderness. At the Naval Academy, this tune has for many years been sacredly kept for that one day, and all midshipmen love it. Ralph and his classmates emerged after the graduation as third classmen, feeling far more important with their promotion than did the young men who had just been graduated. They immediately sat in the seats and walked in parts of the grounds that, as fourth classmen, they had been debarred from. And they enjoyed the great boon of addressing the now second and first classmen by name without the prefix of "mister." And these young men were delighted to be "plebes" no longer, but "youngsters," as third classmen are called at Annapolis.

On this night occurred the beautiful graduation ball. Ralph went but proved to be a wall-flower. He did not know any young ladies and would not have dared to dance even if he had, but he enjoyed the beautiful scene. "But I'll go next year and dance too," he remarked to his roommate, as they stood in a crowd of midshipmen, watching the dancers.

The next morning the midshipmen embarked aboard different ships for the summer practice cruise. Several ships had been detailed for this purpose, and Ralph with Bollup, Creelton, Himski and others of his class, was assigned to the monitor *Puritan*.



This was Saturday morning. On the night before not all midshipmen had been at the graduation ball, or at least had not spent the whole evening there, for shortly after ten o'clock a midshipman might have been seen to enter the Maryland Hotel. He did not stop at the desk to make inquiries but immediately ran up-stairs, then down the long corridor, and then knocked at the door of a room.

"Come in," was heard from the inside, and the midshipman entered.

"Hello, Short!" he cried out. "Gracious, man, what a mustache you are wearing; I wouldn't have known you. I'm glad to see you."

"I doubt that. And don't call me Short; I've registered here as Johnson, so call me Tom. I've just got here and I'm going to leave by the midnight special. I don't care to have anybody who knew me a year ago know I've been in town."

"I suppose not; not if you're still on that lay of hurting Osborn."

"Of course I'm still on that lay," said Short in sudden passion, "and I'll continue on that lay until that fellow gets just as nasty a turn as he did me. When that account is squared I'll forget him. I've come down for the particular reason of telling you I'm not satisfied with the way you've handled your part of the job. I've come to tell you that you've got to take a brace."

"None could have done it better, Short. If it



hadn't been that he voluntarily took the watch out to show it he never could have explained away his possession of it. I wrote you all about that. I did my part well."

"Yes, but I planned it," growled the other; "and it is only success that proves a thing nowadays."

"You only planned part of it; you didn't know anything about his uncle sending him the watch as a present, nor of the letter."

"Neither did you. That should have made things easier for you. I believe you're welching, that's my opinion; and look here, if you are, and I don't get Osborn, why I'll get you good and hard. And you'd better believe I mean business."

Short spoke savagely, his temper strongly aroused.

"Now look here, Short," interposed the other, "I've not welched, and you ought to know it. But I'll admit I'm sick of my job and I'm going to ask you to let me out of it."

"Why are you sick of it?" inquired Short in a sneering tone.

"For one reason because I like him. He's a fine, generous, good fellow and he looks upon me as one of his best friends. I've not a thing against him; he's never done me a single ill turn and I've no reason to dislike him. This thing is on my mind all the time and I'm sick of the job. Now



I want you to let me out of it. I'll repay you the money you've advanced to me ——"

"I thought you were a welcher," cut in Short contemptuously, "and I know what you've done is not from any love of me; you're my man, bought and paid for; do you understand that? And if you fail me I'll send you to jail, just as sure as I'm sitting here."

"Sh, Tom, don't talk so loud; some one may hear."

"They'll hear a good deal about you before long if you don't stand up to your job. Now look here; I'll be a good boss but you've got to do what I tell you to do. You're my man, now don't forget that. I suppose I'm a villain; I don't care anything about that. I don't want any physical harm to come to Osborn; that isn't what I'm after. But he had me dismissed in disgrace and I intend that he shall have a dose of the same medicine; you've got to do the work, that's all there is about it."

"It's might dirty work, Tom," said the other bitterly.

"Not a bit dirtier than when you deliberately stole two hundred dollars from me. And you've taken my money right along without any kicking; it's too late for you to get tender about the work you're doing."

The other turned pale and looked troubled. His voice shook as he replied: "Well, Tom, there's no use whatever of trying to put Osborn in the



soup while the present superintendent and commandant are here. They know somebody is after Osborn—I wrote you all about that. After the letter I sent in signed ‘Indignant Fourth Classman’ Osborn was called to the superintendent’s office. What occurred there none of us know; he has kept mum about it, and of course I couldn’t afford to be inquisitive. Then after that came the superintendent’s order directing the person who signed that letter to report to him; you see there’s no use for us to put up any job on him now. We’d simply defeat our own ends, that’s all. You’d better drop it for the time, Tom.”

“Perhaps you’re right; later on it would come harder to him than now. But that fellow must be dismissed. Look here, can’t you get him on hazing?”

“I could easily if he would haze, but he knows the man that tried to have him accused of stealing and of cheating would report him if he hazed; I’ve heard him say so and he’s not going to do any.”

“I’m not particular about having him go for hazing because that isn’t considered dishonorable, though that would be better than having him graduate. There’s no chance of his bilging in his studies?”

“Not the slightest; he’s a regular math fiend.”

“How about the cruise? Couldn’t you arrange for something to happen there?”



“Look here, Tom, I’m not going to do anything that will fall back on top of me. If I can fix him to your satisfaction and not to be suspected I will. Now if that doesn’t suit you, you had better call for a policeman and have me put in jail. That’s all I’ve got to say.”

“If you don’t do what I tell you to do I most certainly shall put you in jail, depend on that. I won’t force you as to time, and if you can’t do anything while the present superintendent and commandant are here, because of their interest in Osborn, I won’t force you. You must make and take your time. Here’s a couple of hundred dollars ——”

“I won’t take any more money from you!” vehemently exclaimed the midshipman.

“Oh, drop that kind of talk. Take the money and go. That’s all; we understand each other. If you welch you are going to be jammed and will be kicked out of the Academy in the same way your friend Thomas G. Short was.”

The midshipman stood irresolute. His eyes glittered; he approached the table where the roll of bills lay; then suddenly grabbing the money, he bolted out of the room.

Short gave a low, harsh laugh as his visitor left. “He’ll stay bought,” he muttered, as he packed his grip preparing to leave.



## CHAPTER XII

### CHIEF WATER TENDER HESTER

“**A**LL hands up anchor! Turn out everybody, lash and carry! Bear a hand, show a leg there, out you go!” were the rude cries aboard the *Puritan* at a little after five o'clock Monday morning. The *Puritan* was getting under way and left early, her captain wanting to take advantage of the high tide that existed at that hour. The midshipmen had slung their hammocks in a confined space inside the superstructure, and first classmen were turning them out. They bawled and yelled; Ralph Osborn was sleeping soundly at that hour and didn't fully comprehend what it was all about until one of the first classmen stooping directly under Ralph's hammock, having noticed that the occupant had made no move toward turning out, suddenly raised himself and Ralph was instantly spilled out of his hammock. He lit feet first, and now wide awake started to lash his hammock. Everything was in confusion on the deck, for a number had been turned out in this same unceremonious fashion.

Cries of: “Bear a hand, get your hammocks on deck,” hastened him and soon his hammock was neatly lashed and was in its netting. For two



hours after that, as far as Ralph was concerned, nothing whatever happened. The old monitor steamed out the narrow-dredged channel leading from the Severn River to Chesapeake Bay. On the bridge were the captain and several other officers navigating the ship, and forward an officer in charge of the anchors walked up and down.

Ralph longed for the good old days of the previous summer when he would have been busily engaged hauling on different ropes; but now, longing to do something, and there being nothing whatever for him to do, he walked about listlessly.

“If they won't let us work why didn't they let us sleep? What was the good of dumping us out in that style?” he complained to Bollup.

“Custom, Os, custom. When a navy ship gets under way everybody has a station and must be there, no matter whether he has anything to do or not. Same thing happens when a ship comes to anchor. Everything in the Navy is run by regulation or custom. Why, there was an old regulation years ago that required a ship to let go her anchor if she went aground. Well, a lieutenant named Percival one time was officer of the deck of a ship that went aground. ‘Let go both anchors!’ he shouted. ‘Can't do it, sir,’ yelled back the boatswain's mate on the forecastle; ‘they're not bent to the chains.’

“‘Bother the difference,’ shouted back Percival. ‘Let 'em go, I say; if we lose the ship, it'll be



logged we went ashore according to the rules, regulations and customs of the service,' and the anchors were dropped, though they were not attached to the chain cables. And so, Os, we were turned out not for any useful exercise, but just because it is the custom for everybody to be up when the ship gets under way."

"Stuff," remarked Ralph disdainfully. "Do you believe that yarn?"

"Of course I do. Anderson of the first class just told me, Captain Waddell told him, Admiral Farragut told Waddell just before he said, when they were running by the forts at New Orleans, 'Damn the torpedoes, go ahead,' and years before that Lieutenant Percival told Admiral ——"

"Hold on there, Bollup, Admiral Farragut said that at Mobile Bay, not at New Orleans. How in the world did you ever pass your history entrance exam? and as for that yarn about Percival, pshaw, I don't believe it ever happened. Hello, there is the bugle call for breakfast. Goodness, I'm glad we're going to get something to eat."

After breakfast the midshipmen were divided into different sections for instruction. The first prescribed lesson in seamanship was: "How many anchors are there aboard? Tell the difference between bower, sheet, steam and kedge anchors. Tell what each anchor aboard weighs. Name the different parts of an anchor. How secure an anchor for sea; how secure for letting go?"



The prescribed lesson in steam engineering was: "What kind of boilers and engines are installed aboard this ship? What pipes and valves does the steam pass through in going from the boilers to the engines? What valves do you open and shut to pump water into a boiler?"

In electricity the lesson was: "Tell what you find on the switchboard, and the use of each."

In gunnery: "Go into the turret, mention the different mechanisms you find, and tell how and for what purpose each is used." These were for the third classmen. The first classmen had more advanced lessons, and were also given responsible duties with the navigator and chief engineer, and as officer of the deck.

"We'll be busy this cruise," remarked Ralph to Creelton, as the third classmen were copying their prescribed lessons in the various subjects from the bulletin-boards. "We work at our seamanship from eight-thirty until nine-thirty then study, and then at our gunnery from eleven until noon. Then from one until two we are in the engine and fire rooms, and from two until three in the dynamo room. Officers are to go around with us and explain things and answer questions, and we put things down in our note-books. Then each night we have to hand in our note-books with the answers to the prescribed lessons written out. By gracious! But this will keep us busy, and the officers, too. But we ought to learn a lot."



The lessons were changed each day, and at different times the instruction periods were changed to practical drills; and whenever the ship was at anchor the midshipmen were always exercised at rowing and sailing. Whenever the *Puritan* was under way the midshipmen at all times were to be seen going about the different parts of the ship, asking questions of enlisted men and officers, jotting down notes and making sketches. Much knowledge was absorbed of the different mechanisms in the ship and their manipulation; all were being fitted to familiarity with them, which after long years of experience makes the competent officer.

In a few days the *Puritan* was anchored off the ship-building works at Newport News. Here parties of midshipmen were sent ashore on tours of inspection under charge of different officers.

Before starting ashore on Thursday morning, Ralph Osborn noticed a group of enlisted men on the quarter-deck. These men had made requests for extra leave, more than had been allowed them by the executive officer. The latter was Lieutenant-Commander Graham who was considered to be a very efficient officer but one especially severe with the enlisted men.

“You men can’t have forty-eight hours’ liberty,” Ralph heard him say. “We leave Saturday morning for the North and I’ll not have anybody out of the ship later than six o’clock to-morrow



evening. Those of you who are on the first conduct grade and want that may give in your names to the ship's writer. That's all you'll get and you needn't ask for anything more. And if any of you are not on the first conduct grade you needn't ask for that. Now clear out, all of you."

All of the men but one touched their caps and moved forward. This one saluted and in a voice full of suppressed emotion said: "Sir, I request special permission to speak to you. My wife lives in this town and she is sick with typhoid fever. I haven't had any liberty, I'm classed—but I've just received word she is very bad; could you, sir, could you let me go over to see her for just a couple of hours? I'll promise you to be back on time, sir!"

The speaker was a tall, neatly-dressed man, about thirty years old. He was smooth shaven, and his face was what would be called a strong one; strong for good, or perhaps for evil if led in a wrong way. Such a face betokened an impulsive, warm-hearted character. To Ralph the anguish of his face, and the trembling of his voice were most appealing.

"Poor fellow! I do hope Mr. Graham will let him go," he observed to Creelton.

Lieutenant-Commander Graham looked fixedly at the man before him. There was no hope of kindness in his cold gray eyes. "Your name is Collins, isn't it?"



“ Yes, sir.”

“ Let me see. Three weeks ago at Annapolis, while you were on the second conduct grade and not entitled to liberty, you brought a telegram to the mast which said: ‘ Mother very low; come at once,’ did you not?”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ And the captain let you go for three days and you took six.”

“ Yes, sir, my mother lingered, my wife was taken sick then, I couldn’t leave; I telegraphed the captain for an extension but didn’t get it. I was sorry to break my liberty, sir, but when a man’s mother dies ——” and Collins’ voice broke.

“ Oh, yes, I know all about that, and in many years’ service I’ve invariably noticed that whenever an enlisted man comes to the mast with a telegram that his mother is dead he’s never on the first conduct grade; he’s always on the second, third or fourth grade. No, you can’t go. You were put in the fourth conduct grade for three months by my special advice to the captain. I’ve no use for liberty breakers, and you’re not going to work me, not a bit of it. No, you can’t go ashore, not for a minute. I advise you to tell your wife she’d better get sick only when you’re on the first conduct grade.”

Collins turned pale and his lips twitched.

“ Go forward and get to your work,” ordered Mr. Graham roughly.



“Sir, I request permission to see the captain.”

“I am commanding officer. Captain Waddell is in Washington.”

“Sir, I beg of you ——”

“That will do ; go forward.”

Ralph was thunderstruck as well as deeply grieved at what he had just seen and heard. “I’m so sorry for that poor fellow,” he said to Creelton ; “I do wish Mr. Graham would let him go.”

As Collins walked forward he was joined by another enlisted man, one of older appearance. He took Collins by the arm and talked earnestly to him. Collins was wild with anger and vehement in his speech but finally cooled down. The older man then walked aft to the officer of the deck and said : “I request permission to speak to the executive officer, sir.”

“You’re late, Hester ; the executive officer has finished with the mast.”

“It’s not nine-thirty yet, sir, and this is a special matter. The executive officer’s posted order says he will see the enlisted men until half-past nine.”

“Very well. I’ll send for him.”

“What a fine-looking enlisted man,” said Ralph Osborn to Creelton. “I’ve seen him in the fire room ; he’s a chief water tender, and he was awfully good about answering my questions ; but he was of course pretty dirty down there. I’d no idea he was such a splendid man in appearance.”

“He’s a good looker, no doubt about that,” agreed



Creelton, "but I didn't have as much luck as you had. I asked him lots of questions but didn't get much out of him. He was polite, but evidently wasn't interested in me."

Hester was indeed a man good to look at. His face indicated strength and character; and the square jaw and determined blue eyes made one feel he would accomplish what he set out to do.

"What is it, Hester?" demanded the executive officer, coming up.

"Sir, I am on the liberty list, and I request special permission to go at one o'clock to-day instead of at five o'clock, when the liberty party goes."

"Granted, if the chief engineer can spare you. Anything else?"

"Yes, sir; I request my liberty be extended till six o'clock to-morrow night with permission to come aboard to-night to sleep."

"Granted, under same conditions."

"Thank you, sir." Hester saluted and walked forward where he was immediately joined by Collins.

Soon after the midshipmen were taken ashore to visit the ship-building works, and Ralph saw wonderful sights. The machine that most impressed him was the "shears," as it was properly called. These shears cut great iron plates over an inch in thickness "as quickly and as easily," Ralph thought, "as I can cut a piece of paper with a pair



of scissors." And then he saw riveting machines, and wonderful hundred-ton steam hammers at work. He returned aboard much impressed.

While he was at his mess-table at supper that evening First Classman Anderson passed and sang out: "Osborn, you have a forecastle anchor watch from eleven till midnight to-night. What's your hammock billet?"

"Twenty-seven; will I be called?"

"The man you relieve will attend to that unless he wants an extra hour's watch. Creelton is your relief; find out where he sleeps, and call him, will you?"

"All right. I guess I'll be sleepy enough at midnight to be anxious to see him."

Ralph turned out at eleven and relieved Streeter.

"There's nothing much to turn over, Os," said Streeter. "The steam launch is secured at the starboard boom; the catamaran is at the port. Anderson is the midshipman officer of the deck and Jenson is the midshipman quartermaster of the watch. Everything's quiet. Report any boat you see coming alongside; the enlisted anchor watch are sleeping on the deck just forward of the executive's office. That's all; I'm sleepy. Good-night."

Ralph walked up and down the forecastle deck on the starboard side. There was nothing for him to do except to keep awake, and it didn't seem at all likely that anything would occur in the hour



he was on watch. It was a still night; the moon was full, the water about the ship perfectly calm. Soon after he was on watch he noticed a small row-boat approaching the ship.

“Boat ahoy!” he called out.

“Liberty man!” was the reply from the boat. The boat came alongside the port gangway, and Hester stepped aboard.

“I’ve come aboard to sleep; I’m on liberty till six to-morrow afternoon, sir,” reported Hester to Midshipman Anderson.

“Very well, Hester,” and the latter walked forward. Nearly half an hour later Ralph saw him at the scuttle-butt drinking a glass of water.

“Why don’t you turn in?” he inquired.

“I’m going to, sir; I had an important message to deliver to an oiler named Collins. I’ve just been to the hospital where his wife is sick. I’ve been there several times to-day and I wanted to tell Collins about her. I’m going to turn in now.”

“How is she?” asked Ralph much interested.

“Pretty sick, I’m afraid, Mr. Osborn,” replied Hester, leaving.

“I must have made an impression on that fine fellow,” reflected Ralph, “for him to have remembered my name. Well, I wish midnight would come; I’m getting sleepy.”

He walked up and down the forecastle; it



seemed a long hour to him. He did not know that just inside the open door of the superstructure a pair of dark, anxious eyes were watching his every move. Finally, at five minutes of twelve, Ralph left the forecastle to wake up Creelton.

At that instant a man quickly ran out on the deck, jumped up on the lower boom from which the catamaran, a square ended boat used by the men who paint the ship's side, was tied, and hauled up the catamaran; he slid into this, and with feverish hands untied the boat's painter, cast it off and commenced to scull rapidly away.

Ralph had called Creelton and came out of the midshipmen's sleeping quarters to the port side of the ship's side. His eyes immediately lit upon the boat, and in the bright moonlight he could see the vigorous work of the man sculling. He looked at the port boom and saw the catamaran was missing, and he immediately knew that some one was running away with it. Though he did not have much time to think he realized that this was happening during his watch and he might be held responsible for not having prevented it, and that his reputation might suffer badly.

"Boat ahoy!" he shouted and then running aft to the quarter-deck, called out at the top of his voice: "A man is running away with the catamaran, sir."

Quick as a report from a gun came snappy



orders from the watchful officer of the deck, Midshipman Anderson.

“ Quartermaster, break out the anchor watch on the double. Osborn, help me lower this dinghy ; quick, man, quick.”



## CHAPTER XIII

### OILER COLLINS JUMPS SHIP

“**L**OWER your forward fall, lively! Now unhook. Jump in! Pile in, you anchor watch men; in you go, Jenson; shove off and get that catamaran.”

“Out oars, give way together,” snapped out Jenson who was in the stern of the dinghy to the four men at the oars. “Osborn, you stand up in the bow with a boat-hook. Give way hard, men, bend your backs. Stroke! Stroke! Stroke! Stroke!” called out Jenson.

“There he is, dead ahead, half-way to the shore,” cried out Ralph excitedly.

“Lift her, men, lift her up. Stroke! Stroke! Stroke! Harder! Harder!”

The dinghy was rapidly overhauling the catamaran. In the catamaran could be seen the figure of a man standing up, working furiously at his sculling oar. The bright full moon, low down in the sky and behind his back, cast his wavering shadow in the water in a long, undulating, snake-like movement. But though he had a good start there was no hope for him in this fierce chase, and when he was a hundred



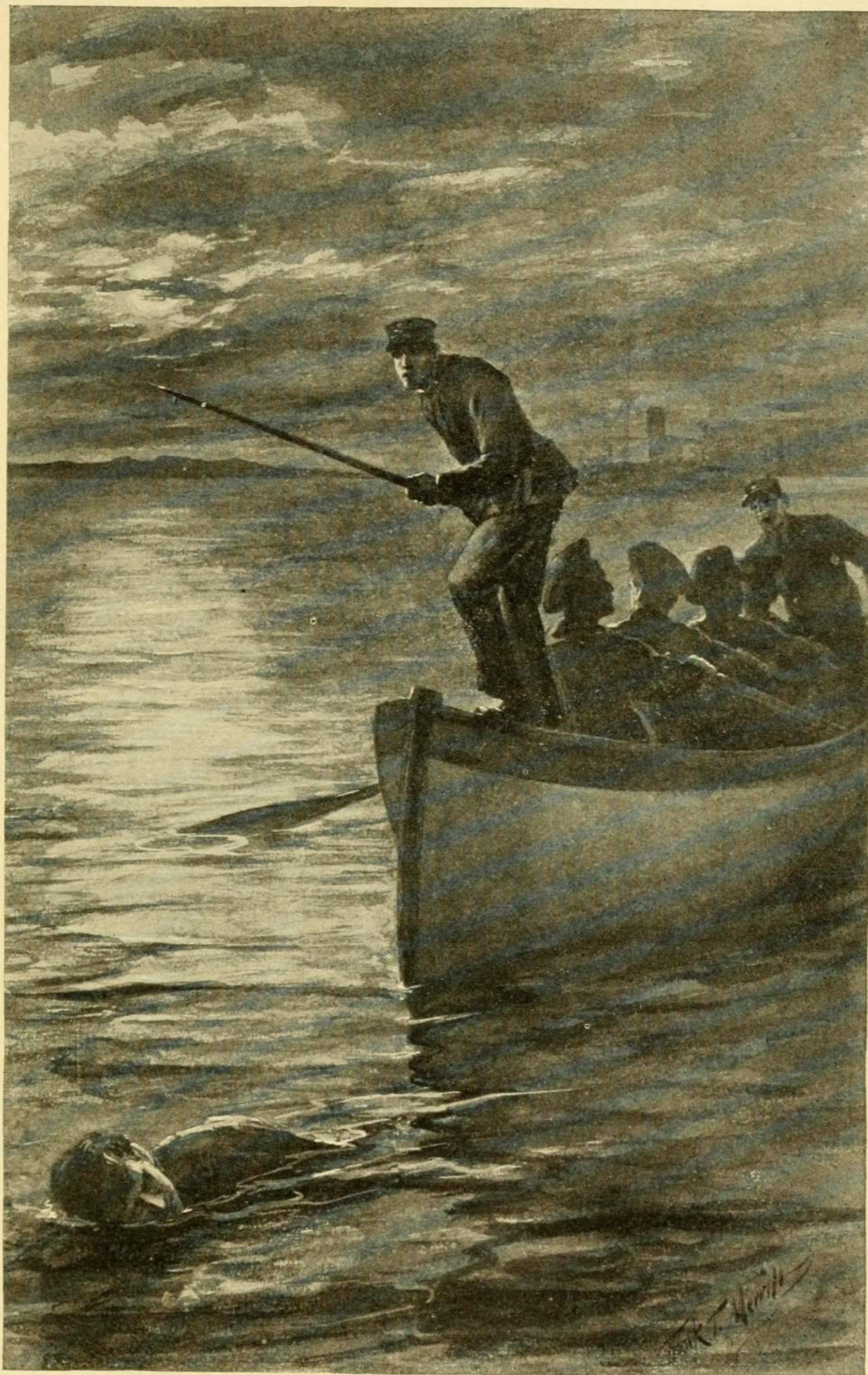
yards from the shore the dinghy was almost on top of him and would be up to him in a second. He gave one quick glance to the shore, and then with a despairing, agonizing cry of : “ My God, my God,” he threw down his oar and leaped into the black water about him.

“ Starboard your helm,” called out Ralph, as he stood in the bow of the dinghy, with the boat-hook in his two hands. A second later he saw the man just ahead and on the port bow of the dinghy, swimming frantically. He plunged the boat-hook down inside the collar of the swimmer’s shirt and then gave the boat-hook a quick turn. “ I’ve got him,” he cried. “ Now help get him aboard.” The man, completely vanquished, made no resistance, and was quickly hauled aboard.

“ Come aft, Osborn, and sit beside this fellow, and if he makes the slightest movement, nab him ; don’t let him jump. Number one port oar, get hold of the painter of the catamaran and pass it aft. We’ll tow the catamaran back ; and there’s the oar, pick that up.”

Ralph recognized the man to be Collins, the oiler. The latter sat in the dinghy’s stern, with his head in his hands, vainly endeavoring to control hopeless, convulsive sobs that shook him. Ralph looked at him with mixed feelings ; first he was elated that he had done his duty well ; but also his heart was touched by the





He saw the man just ahead, and on the port bow, swimming frantically







utter dejection and hopeless misery of the dripping figure beside him.

In a few moments the dinghy was alongside the *Puritan's* gangway. Awaiting was Lieutenant-Commander Graham.

"Have you got him?" he called out. "Yes, I see you have, and you have the catamaran. Well done. Oh, I see, it's Collins, is it? I'm not surprised. Master-at-arms, see that Collins gets well rubbed down, put him in dry clothing, and then tie him up in double irons; we'll attend to his case to-morrow. Mr. Anderson, you did very well. Mr. Jenson, you were up to your job, too. And who was the midshipman on anchor watch who reported Collins when he jumped ship?"

"Third Classman Osborn, sir. He also went in the dinghy and hooked Collins in the water. Collins jumped overboard from the catamaran."

"You are beginning well, Mr. Osborn. Keep it up, young man."

Ralph tingled with pleasure at this praise from his dreaded executive officer, yet with it he felt great pity for Collins. "Poor fellow," he reflected, "I suppose he was made desperate by his wife being sick; I'm awfully sorry for him."

Ralph now turned in. The next day "mast" was held by Captain Waddell, who had returned in the morning. A number of enlisted men were lined up before the captain, charged with various offenses.



“Salute,” ordered the master-at-arms, as the captain and Mr. Graham approached.

“You have quite a mast this morning, Graham,” remarked the captain.

“Yes, sir; the ordinary sailorman can’t stand a privilege without abusing it.”

“I don’t agree to that at all,” replied the captain, rather sharply; “three-fourths of our ship’s company are on the first class conduct grade and many of them are special first class, have not been reported for anything for six months and more; and we have a chief water tender, Hester, who is serving his sixth enlistment and has a record any officer might be proud of; he has never had a report against him in all of this time and has a perfect record in efficiency.”

“Yes, sir; Hester is the best enlisted man I have ever known. He can get anything from me that an executive officer can grant. The first case this morning, sir, is Harper, ordinary seaman, twenty-four hours over liberty.”

“What have you to say, Harper?” asked the captain.

Harper, a tousle-headed, mottle-faced, shambling young man stepped to the front, hat in hand and said:

“Well, captain, it was this way; I’ll tell you all about it, sir. I was comin’ back from liberty, on time, sir, and I stopped in the saloon for a few drinks before my boat shoved off. They must



have put some dope in my liquor, sir, for I went to sleep, and ——”

“Fourth class,” interrupted Captain Waddell. “Next.”

“Smith, P. B. Two hours late from liberty.”

“How did that happen, Smith? This is your first report.”

“I went to my home, sir, outside of Norfolk; my train was late, and I couldn't catch the boat. I took the next boat, and when I got here I immediately hired a small boat and came off; I did the best I could, sir.”

“Statement accepted. Next.”

“Collins, sir, jumped ship last night, stole the catamaran, and would have got ashore but for some very alert midshipmen. He ought to get a court, sir.”

“What have you to say, Collins?”

“I received word that my wife, who is in Newport News, was very sick, sir. The executive officer wouldn't let me go ashore.”

“It was his mother three weeks ago,” interrupted Mr. Graham; “you gave him liberty, when he was classed, to go to see a sick mother. He broke that liberty by a week. It will probably be his grandmother next time. You ought to give him a court, sir.”

“Mr. Graham, let me settle this, please.”

The executive officer turned red, but made no further comments. The captain then said: “Col-



lins, nothing can justify you in stealing a boat and leaving as you did. Your personal troubles cannot justify your violation of regulations and destruction of discipline. Mr. Graham, confine Collins for ten days in double irons."

"How about my wife, sir; she may be dying?" asked Collins anxiously.

"Mr. Graham, send a master-at-arms ashore immediately to make full inquiries about the condition of Collins' wife and her needs. Collins, if I learn you have a wife ashore who is critically ill, I'll send you to her."

Mr. Graham's lip curled. "If," he murmured contemptuously, "if that Collins has a wife anywhere I'd be surprised."

The captain had turned away and did not hear his executive's remarks, but Collins did.

"Mr. Graham," said the latter, firmly but respectfully, "I wish to inform you, sir, that I'm a self-respecting American; I tell the truth, sir; I always tell the truth."

"Of course," sneered Mr. Graham. "Master-at-arms, take Collins down below forward, put handcuffs on his wrists and leg irons on his ankles, and keep him there for ten days. Put a watch over him."

"Yes, sir; come along, Harry."

Three hours later Captain Waddell directed that Collins be brought before him.

"Collins," he said, "I am glad to tell you your



wife is in no danger at present, though she is very sick. She needs a little cash and I will let you draw fifteen dollars for her on a special money requisition; if she gets worse I'll give you leave from Gardiner's Bay; we leave for there to-night."

"Thank you, captain."

The *Puritan* left that evening for the North, traveling at a slow speed. She was a huge monitor displacing nearly seven thousand tons. The second day out she ran into quite a gale, making conditions aboard most uncomfortable for everybody. Hundreds of tons of water boiled over her low deck and smashed against the forward turret, from there sending great columns of foam and spray over the turret, sometimes even deluging the bridge above. It was a fearful, awe-inspiring sight to the midshipmen. The ship rolled from side to side, not easily, but with a quick, uncomfortable jerk, throwing people off their feet and sending unsecured articles spinning about the deck. "It's glorious, isn't it?" exclaimed Ralph, holding on to a rail on top of the superstructure deck, exulting in the fact he was not seasick. At the same instant an extra quick, heavy jerk caused him to lose his hold, and he was slammed hard down on the deck. Even the miserably seasick Bollup laughed heartily as Ralph ruefully staggered to his feet, clutching an awning stanchion for support.

The machinery was behaving badly and the coal



was running short ; she carried only three hundred tons, and the officers were concerned and worried ; but in a couple of days the *Puritan* reached Gardiner's Bay at the eastern end of Long Island without mishap, and was anchored alongside a collier. As the midshipmen could do nothing while the ship was being coaled, they were all sent ashore on a picnic and had a glorious time rambling over Gardiner's Island.

While Ralph, Bollup, Creelton and Himski were wandering through a piece of woods they almost walked on top of a small deer. This was up and off like a shot from a gun. It was but a small incident, but was of enthusiastic interest to the young men. It was the first wild deer any of them had ever seen.

They returned aboard tired and contented ; the ship had been coaled and washed down, and everything was now clean about her. When Ralph got aboard he was greeted with an order that did not please him. "Osborn, you have a fore-castle watch from three to four o'clock to-morrow morning," he was told.

"Pshaw," said Ralph. "I hoped to have a good night's sleep to-night, but I guess I can stand it."

He relieved Streeter at three in the morning.

"Hello, Os," said Streeter ; "by Jove, I'm glad to see you. Good-bye. I'm going to turn in now."



“Hold on,” said Ralph; “what have you to turn over?”

“Nothing. Everything is quiet. Both booms are alongside, the steam launch is moored astern, the catamaran is alongside the port bow; her painter is made fast to a cleat on deck. Bill Jones is on watch.”

Streeter left and Ralph commenced his lonely vigil. He took a look at the anchor chain and at the catamaran, and then paced up and down the starboard side of the forecastle deck. It was a beautiful, calm, starlight night. The moon was not visible. Ralph was sleepy and would have preferred his hammock, but after a while he rather enjoyed the feeling that all but a very few were asleep; at half-past three the quartermaster came forward and struck the bell seven times. “Half an hour more,” said Ralph; “I wouldn’t mind it if it were an hour more.” On one of his tramps forward and back, he suddenly stopped, abreast of the turret. From out of the forward hatch, in the deep gloom, he saw the figure of a man appear and then lie on the deck. It lay still for a moment and then quickly crept over toward the port side forward, and instantly was over the side. “Somebody is after the catamaran. Stop!” Ralph shouted. He rushed over to where the catamaran was secured. Here the ship’s deck was only two feet above the water,—a monitor’s deck is very low. In the catamaran Ralph saw a man unloos-



ing the painter from the cleat on the deck, a foot from the side where it had been secured. Ralph was now bending over the chain railing. The painter of the catamaran was now untied and the man was in the act of shoving off from the *Puritan's* side. Ralph leaned far over to get a grip on the man. He was full of excitement, too full for the moment to call for help. But he was determined to prevent the man from escaping. He leaned over the chain railing for a grip and instantly felt himself in the grasp of a man whose physical strength must have been prodigious. Both arms were seized; he was whirled up and over the chain and came down with a sickening crash, head first into the catamaran. He lay there stunned and helpless. The catamaran was now twenty feet from the *Puritan* and was being rapidly carried away by the tide. The man in the catamaran looked anxiously at the ship and at Ralph huddled in the bottom of the boat. "I can't put him aboard. I'll have to take him with me, but I don't intend he shall give me away," he reflected. He then rapidly whipped off his neckerchief from around his neck and fastened it over Ralph's face, gagging him. He then took the catamaran painter and bound Ralph's arms to his side and wound the end tightly around his legs. Ralph was securely tied and gagged. The catamaran had by this time drifted far from the *Puritan*; and the man in her looked back from time to time at the



lights of the ship, but everything was perfectly still aboard, and he knew that Ralph's cry had not been heard and that the boat had not been noticed as it had drifted by. He then picked up an oar and sculled vigorously toward the shore.



## CHAPTER XIV

### RALPH IS KIDNAPPED

**A**FTER his terrific head-on fall into the catamaran, Ralph lay momentarily stunned. He recovered consciousness as the gag was being passed over his mouth, but was utterly weak and bewildered, not comprehending at first what had happened to him. The next instant he felt his arms tightly bound to his side, and then his legs were firmly bound together. He lay helpless, but started to gather his wits together, and soon realized what had happened. The man in the catamaran was now sculling rapidly. Ralph opened his eyes, and in the dim dawn now breaking he recognized the man to be the oiler, Collins. The latter now stopped sculling, pulled his oar in the boat, and came toward Ralph. He bent down toward Ralph's head, giving the midshipman a feeling of helpless terror. "What is this villain going to do to me now?" thought the young man to himself. But to Ralph's surprise and comfort the "villain" now bathed his injured head with cold water; he then pulled off his heavy overshirt and making a pillow of it, put it under Ralph's head. The midshipman's terror now completely left him and was replaced by a great curiosity;



this man was not like the villains he had read about.

“I hope you’re not hurt bad,” Collins said; “you came down awfully hard, head first.”

Ralph struggled to make a reply, but was effectually prevented by the neckerchief tightly bound over his mouth.

Collins now removed the neckerchief, saying roughly, “We’re a long ways off from the ship, but if you do any yelling I’ll brain you with this oar.” Then recognizing his prisoner, he said, “Oh, so it’s you, is it? The efficient midshipman who made a reputation by preventing a poor enlisted man from going to see his sick wife! That was a nice trick; I hope you’re proud of yourself, Osborn.”

Ralph sat up. “You’ll call me Mr. Osborn, when you speak to me, Collins.”

“Will I, my pretty boy? I’ll call you Mr. Osborn when you call me Mr. Collins,” he added sneeringly. “I’m glad it is you; I’m only sorry you didn’t get a worse bump. But I can make it worse at any time with this good oar.”

“I don’t believe you’ll hit me with the oar, Collins,” said Ralph quietly.

“Don’t you? Well you’d better not kick up any fuss then.” Collins spoke savagely. He now commenced to scull again, and by daylight had rounded a point of land and was now entirely hidden from the ship.



Ralph said nothing, wondering what the outcome of this adventure would be. In Collins' face he saw mingled emotions of worry and anguish. But in it he saw no expression that frightened him, helpless as he was. The catamaran was now driven to a stretch of sand and hauled up on the beach. Collins looked at Ralph and said abruptly, "Get up."

"I will if you'll untie this rope that's around my arms and legs."

"What am I going to do with you?" asked Collins moodily.

"For your own sake, the best thing you can do with me is to scull back to the ship."

"Do you think I'm a fool?" snarled Collins.

"It looks that way to me."

"Yes, you'd like to have me take you back to the ship, wouldn't you? You'd get a lot of glory out of that, but what would I get, do you think? I'd get some more double irons, for safe-keeping, the log would say," he added contemptuously, "and then I'd get a general court martial and be sent to prison for several years. And for what? Just because I did what any man in my place would do; if you had a wife, sick, perhaps dying in a strange town, wouldn't you try to see her no matter if you did break some artificial regulations? Tell me as a man, wouldn't your duty to your sick wife come before anything else?"

"It certainly would," replied Ralph softly.



“What did I do, and how was I treated?” cried Collins. “I went to the executive officer and told him about it and asked for a couple of hours, and got treated like a dog and called a liar. Then I did what any decent man would do, I tried to go without permission and was chased and treated like an escaping criminal; and you were one of the chasers and fished me out of the water with a boat-hook. And then I was put in irons; me, a decent, self-respecting American!”

Collins boiled over with rage when recounting his wrongs.

“I heard you at the mast, Collins; I felt awfully sorry for you when the executive officer would not let you go.”

“It looked like you felt sorry for me when you pulled me out with a boat-hook.”

“That was not personal; I didn’t know who it was and it wouldn’t have made any difference who it was. I had to do my duty. It was the same this morning when you ran across the deck and got into the catamaran. But I have been and am real sorry for you, Collins. Now what are you going to do?”

“That’s none of your business, Osborn; whatever I’m going to do you can’t stop me. I’ve got you fixed, that’s certain. And I’m going where one man can’t put another in double irons unless he’s committed a crime. I’ve finished with the Navy where a man is treated like a criminal for



trying to see a sick wife. You're going to be an officer and you think it's all right to put an enlisted man in irons and treat him as if he were a thief. You think an officer is a different being from an enlisted man. You've never had irons on your hands and legs; you don't know the awful despair that comes over one, the terrible, hopeless feeling. You have no regard for an enlisted man's honor; you laugh at the idea of his having any. Just let me tell you that I am as proud of the life I've lived as any officer is of his life. I've always worked hard and supported my mother and my wife. I've never lied, nor stolen. And I've never touched a drop of liquor in my life. You think enlisted men are a lot of brutes and haven't feelings. I tell you that man Hester is as good a man and as fine a gentleman as any officer in the Navy, even if he does wear a blue shirt."

"I knew it, I felt certain of it," cried Ralph.

"Knew what?" asked Collins mystified.

"I knew that you were a good man. But, Collins, I'm afraid you are a very foolish one and are steering yourself into a lot of trouble."

"What do you mean, Mr. Osborn?"

"Now what have you done? You've broken arrest, which is, I imagine, a serious breach of naval discipline. But to make matters worse you've deserted, and stolen a boat. Then, to cap the climax, you assaulted a midshipman on special duty and kidnapped him. If you really



were the villain these things would make you out to be you might complete the job and murder me and try to hide the traces of your crime. But you see all this fails because you're not really a villain; but you've got yourself tangled up in an awful mess, and now you don't know what to do. And you've got me on your hands also."

"Mr. Osborn, if you'll promise to wait until noon and give me a chance to get away I'll come up that rope that's about you. I've no desire to harm you."

"Of course you haven't, Collins; but I'm not going to make you any promise; what you would try to do is to get to the mainland and then beat your way to Newport News; and what do you suppose would happen then? Before you ever saw your wife you would be arrested; you would be tried by general court martial for desertion, assaulting and kidnapping a midshipman on duty and so forth; by all of these things you have made yourself out to be a desperate criminal. You would be convicted and sent to prison for ten, perhaps fifteen years. And what would become of the poor wife, Collins? Are you proving yourself a good husband to her by doing such things as these? Just think of it all, Collins!"

"My God, Mr. Osborn, what can I do? I've gone too far now."

"The first thing you can do, Collins, is to unbind the rope around me."



Without a second's delay, with a pale, anxious face, Collins unbound Ralph's arms and legs. Ralph stood up and stretched himself. His heart was full of sympathy for the distracted man before him.

"What next, Mr. Osborn?" he humbly asked.

"What next?" repeated Ralph, in a burst of good feeling. "Why, the next thing that's going to happen is that Oiler Collins and Midshipman Osborn are going to shake hands and be good friends and are going to help one another whenever they can."

"What, Mr. Osborn, would you shake hands with a man who has treated you so badly as I have?"

"Indeed I will, Collins. There. Now I hope to convince you before long that officers are not as hard and unfeeling as you think. Your impulses run away with you, Collins, and I hope and believe the captain will think those impulses are not unpardonable." And Ralph seated himself in the boat.

"How's your head, Mr. Osborn?"

"Bumpy, but I'm feeling quite contented all the same. Oh, thank you, Collins; that's good of you."

Collins was now bathing Ralph's head with the cool water, and tied his neckerchief about the bruised part.

"What shall I do now, Mr. Osborn?" asked Collins. "I'll do whatever you tell me to do."



Ralph looked up into his face and said, "Collins, you will do what you think you ought to do; I'm not going to give you any order or suggestion, except to tell you I'm getting hungry."

Collins pushed the boat into the water with alacrity, and commenced to scull it around the point of land. The tide had changed and was now with the catamaran; and at half-past seven the boat was alongside the *Puritan*.



## CHAPTER XV

### RALPH BREAKFASTS WITH HIS CAPTAIN

“YOU did good work in bringing him back, Mr. Osborn,” was the greeting Ralph received from Captain Waddell, as he stepped aboard the *Puritan*.

“He brought me back, captain ; I hope he’ll receive credit for that.”

“Make your report, sir,” ordered the captain crisply.

“I had the fore-castle anchor watch from three to four o’clock this morning, sir. Some time after seven bells were struck I noticed a man creeping on the deck from the forward hatch ; I rushed over to stop him and he jumped into the catamaran. I bent over the railing and tried to grab him but went head first over the rail into the catamaran. I didn’t know anything for a few minutes, and after I came to Collins bathed my head and then sculled away to the shore. We talked it over for a while and then Collins decided to come back. He felt terribly worried first about his sick wife and then about what he’d just done. Oh, captain, he’s a good man ; he’s full of good feelings and good intentions. He was carried away by his troubles. He did the best he could to undo his



wrong act; I hope, I hope, sir, it won't go too hard for him."

Ralph's eyes were full of sympathy and appeal. Captain Waddell regarded him keenly. "How did you come by that bruise on your head, Mr. Osborn?"

"That was where I landed when I went into the catamaran, sir."

"Did Collins strike you?"

"No, sir."

"Did you make any resistance or cry for help?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?" asked the captain sharply.

"Why, sir, I was knocked senseless at first."

"And then?"

"Why, sir,—I—I—I was not in a position to."

"Did Collins assault you, or abuse you in any way?"

"Captain, I hope you won't require me to answer that. He did not injure me; he was beside himself, and after he got to thinking he came back of his own accord."

"You'll have to tell everything, Mr. Osborn; this is a most serious affair. But I'll ask Collins a few questions first. Collins, what have you to say?" he demanded sternly of the pale, anxious, enlisted man.

"Mr. Osborn has not told it all, sir. I got rid of my irons and got into the catamaran. Mr. Osborn grabbed me, but I gave him a quick jerk and



he landed in the catamaran. While he was unconscious I gagged him with my neckerchief and passed the boat's painter around his arms and legs so that he couldn't give an alarm or make any resistance. Then I sculled the boat ashore. I didn't know what to do, sir; I was wild. I have always tried before this to do what was right, and it seemed to me I was suddenly becoming a bad, desperate character. I took the gag off Mr. Osborn's mouth and he talked to me and made me feel I was my own worst enemy. My grief and anxiety about my wife and the awful feeling of having irons on, as if I were a criminal, caused me to give way to impulses; Mr. Osborn made me feel that there was some good in me in spite of the way I had used him. Then he made me feel that the officers were really friends, not enemies of the enlisted men. Well, sir, I knew I had done an awful thing, but Mr. Osborn brought me to believe that the best thing I could do was to come back to the ship, that that would undo part of the wrong I had done. Oh, sir, I am not a desperate character. I have always tried to be a good man, but of late it has seemed to me I hadn't a friend—and then my mother's death and my wife's illness—I'm only an enlisted man, sir, but I have the same feelings——” and here Collins broke down completely and was shaken with convulsive sobs.

“Mr. Osborn, I again congratulate you. You have done far more than if you had overpowered



Collins and brought him bound aboard ship. You have not only prevented him from completing a most serious offense but I believe you have saved a good man," here Captain Waddell glanced kindly at the contrite Collins, "not only to the Navy, but to himself and to his family, which is far more important. By the way, Mr. Osborn, years ago I had a friend of your name, Ralph Osborn, in Toledo. Are you related to him?"

"He was my father, sir. He gave me a letter of introduction to you."

"You should have presented it, but we'll talk about that later. Now, Graham," to the executive officer, "what is your recommendation about Collins?"

"Captain, when he came to the mast at Newport News he was in the fourth conduct class and asked for special liberty. At the time I was aggravated and didn't believe him and treated him harshly. I have since learned he had told the truth about his mother and wife. My unnecessary harshness undoubtedly drove him to jumping ship at Newport News and led to the occurrence this morning. Sir, I would recommend extreme clemency. He has certainly proved there is some good in him. He could be severely punished and made permanently bad. But I believe he has good impulses and I would be glad to show him that naval officers are the enemies only of those enlisted men who are bad characters."



“May I say a word, sir, about Collins?” asked an enlisted man, stepping before the captain and Mr. Graham. It was Chief Water Tender Hester; he had stood near during the conversation above recorded and had heard it all.

Captain Waddell looked earnestly and fixedly at Hester. Then a strange expression came into his eyes.

“What is your name?” he asked.

“Hester, sir, chief water tender.”

“Go to my office, Hester; I’ll see you alone about Collins.”

The captain walked aft to his office. “This is a queer proceeding,” muttered Mr. Graham, looking the surprise he felt. Then he turned kindly to Collins, and said: “What is the last news you have had of your wife?”

“She is very sick, sir; the crisis is to occur in two or three days.”

“I hope she’ll come out all right, Collins; I am sorry I was so hard on you at Newport News.”

“Thank you, sir, and for your kind words a few minutes ago. I know I was very wrong but I hope I’ll have the chance to redeem myself.”

“I hope so.” Mr. Graham looked around, wondering that the captain should have thought it necessary to have talked in private with Hester. Presently the captain and Hester came forward, and the former said to Collins: “Collins, you



yielded to wild impulses but you were under a great grief and strain, and you did what you could to undo your wrong act. I don't excuse you for that, but I shall suspend action; and further, in view of all of the circumstances and the executive's recommendation, I shall remit the remaining days of your confinement and restore you to duty. Mr. Graham, you'll see that's carried out."

"Yes, sir."

"Now, Collins, the officers of a ship have the happiness and comfort of the enlisted men under them at heart. And we want and must have their hearty good-will and coöperation in their work aboard. I have the greatest sympathy for you in the trouble you have had and I believe you will prove yourself a valuable man."

Collins looked up with startled eyes. He could hardly believe he was hearing aright.

"And, Collins," continued the captain, "I'm going to give you a week's leave to go see your wife, and if necessary, at the end of the week you may apply for an extension."

Collins was stunned with sudden happiness.

"A week's leave!" he gasped. "Oh, captain, I don't deserve it."

"When you get back you'll have a chance to prove you will hereafter. That's all, Collins; I hope you'll find your wife better."

"Oh, thank you, captain; if I don't act



right after this I'll prove myself a miserable ingrate."

Collins was torn with conflicting emotions of gratitude and happiness. He could hardly believe in his good fortune. He went forward and shifted into clean clothes and soon left the ship.

It is likely that Ralph was even happier over the outcome than was Collins. His warm sympathies were all aroused; he was delighted beyond measure in the good that had come to Collins, and more than that he had been actively instrumental in doing a great service to a fellow man. All sorts of happy feelings crowded themselves into Ralph's heart; and he was pleased to learn that these austere officers, ordinarily so sharp and so severe, were really filled with the milk of human kindness. In addition to this came gratified personal pride; he, a third class-man, had been praised on the quarter-deck of a great war-vessel by its captain!

"Mr. Osborn, you have done your duty very well," remarked Captain Waddell to him in the midst of these thoughts. "You saved a sailor-man from the crime of desertion and subsequent imprisonment, and I've no doubt Collins will prove himself worthy. But you've done something else which as a midshipman you may feel is a great misfortune; you've lost your breakfast; the midshipmen's tables are cleared up——"



“Oh, I can stand that, sir,” interrupted Ralph.

“You won’t have to; now go to your quarters and wash up and have the surgeon examine that bump on your head and then come up and have breakfast with me. Hurry along, now; I’m getting hungry and I’ll give you twenty minutes.”

Ralph was ready in fifteen; the bruise on his head was not serious and he felt much refreshed by the bath he took. But he was worried and ill at ease as he approached the captain’s cabin, and his appetite momentarily abandoned him. He was in great awe of Captain Waddell and the idea of breakfasting with him made Ralph uncomfortable in mind. But this did not last, for as soon as he entered the cabin the captain immediately put him at ease.

“You ought to be hungry, Mr. Osborn; a midshipman can always be depended upon at all hours to be hungry, but you’ve been up since three this morning and have had an exciting time. So I’ll expect you to enjoy your breakfast. Now try that melon; it looks like a good one. And there’ll be coffee and bacon and toast and eggs after the melon—a regular navy breakfast. Now tell me about your father, my old friend; I haven’t heard of him for years.”

“Father is dead, sir,” replied Ralph soberly; “he was killed in a street-car accident just a little more than a year ago.”



“Indeed! I hadn’t heard of it. I’m awfully sorry. What a pity!”

Captain Waddell asked many questions and went into Ralph’s life at the Academy. He was much interested in the watch episode and in the anonymous letter the superintendent had received. “It’s evident that there’s some one there determined to injure you. This means, Mr. Osborn, that you must be doubly particular in everything that you do. If you are the young man I take you to be you will have no occasion to worry over this unknown foe. And being forewarned gives you an additional chance to protect yourself. As the superintendent and commandant know of this state of affairs, your unknown foe, should he continue in his efforts against you, will really have a hard time to injure you. It shouldn’t be possible for him to do so provided you live a good life and are mindful of the regulations. And one thing more, Mr. Osborn; should a serious trouble come to you where you will need a friend, I want you to write me frankly; it would be a great pleasure to me if at any time I could be of service to the son of my old friend.”

Many months later, when charged with a most serious offense which he could not deny because he was guilty and for which he was court-martialed and dismissed from the naval service, Ralph Osborn remembered these words of Captain Waddell.



## CHAPTER XVI

### A BOILER EXPLOSION

“HELLO, Collins; glad to see you back,” greeted Lieutenant-Commander Graham, as Collins came aboard the *Puritan* a week later. “How is your wife?”

“She’s all right, sir; she’s recovering. The doctors say all danger is passed and there’s nothing now to fear.”

“Good! I’m glad to hear it,” returned Mr. Graham heartily.

Collins saw he was marked in the “liberty book” as having returned “on time, C and S,” and then went forward, a very grateful man.

“You bet I was on time C and S,” he remarked to Hester, a few moments later. “If I hadn’t been on time clean and sober I’d have deserved thirty days double irons on bread and water in the brig. Now, Hester, how am I to make it up to young Mr. Osborn for all he has done for me? Just think what that fine young midshipman saved me from and of how good the captain and executive officer were to me. How am I to prove I appreciate it all, Hester?”

“Don’t worry about that, Collins. As far as the officers are concerned you need only to do



your work well and obey the regulations. Now I think you can do something for Mr. Osborn. The midshipmen, you know, have lessons every day about boilers and engines. They have practical work to do in tracing up steam and water pipes, in pumping a boiler, in firing, and cleaning fires, and they get marked on the way they do these several things. Each midshipman is ambitious to stand as high as he can and it is a great honor to stand first. Mr. Osborn doesn't know much, of course, but he is quick and ambitious, and quite handy with a shovel for a beginner. Now, Collins, I think you could do a great deal for him. You could show him the mechanism of pumps and valves and lots of other things. He's down in the fire room now bothering how to pump up a boiler. Suppose you start right in. He's interested in you and will be glad to see you."

"Indeed I'll be happy to help him if I only can," cried Collins enthusiastically. "I'll shift into dungarees and look him up right away."

"Humph," said an old-time boatswain's mate who stood near. "If I'm ever in double irons and want a week's leave I'll jump the irons, knock down and kidnap the officer on watch, steal a boat and skip; two hours later I'll come back, say I'm sorry; the captain will fall on my neck and weep and then send me off on a pleasure trip."

"You old growler!" said Hester smiling. "Let



me see, didn't I see you try to force Collins into borrowing twenty-five dollars from you when he went? And here you are pretending to grumble at his good fortune."

"There's too much mollycoddling these days," insisted the kind-hearted old faultfinder. "When I first went to sea in the old *Lackawanna* in eighteen hundred and ——" but Hester, laughing at the old man, ran away to the fire room where he found Collins and Ralph Osborn and several other midshipmen. Ralph and Collins had greeted each other warmly. It seemed curious to the midshipmen standing about but that a few days before this fine-looking enlisted man had really committed the act of a desperate criminal and had treated with great violence the midshipman to whom he expressed such heartfelt gratitude.

"What is your lesson in engineering to-day, Mr. Osborn?" inquired Collins.

"It's the worst we've had yet; we are required to get into the double bottom and draw a longitudinal intercostal staple-shaped angle iron."

"Whew!" exclaimed Collins. "Those words are too big for me. I can show you an angle iron that is staple shaped, but longitudinal and intercostal! That's too much for me. Can you help us out, Hester?"

"That's easy; longitudinal simply means fore and



aft. And intercostal simply means between the thwartship frames. Come down here, I'll show you one ; it won't take you five minutes to sketch it."

The angle iron didn't prove to be nearly so formidable in appearance as its formidable name had threatened it would be. Collins opened a door leading down into the double bottom of the ship, under the fire room floor, and the midshipmen crowded after him into it. Lights were brought in with them, and crouching in cramped positions, with note-books in hand, the midshipmen sketched that innocent, unoffending piece officially and pompously designated as an intercostal staple-shaped angle iron. After leaving the double bottom Collins said : " What else have you in to-day's lesson, Mr. Osborn ? "

" Oh, we've got to sketch the inside mechanism of a direct acting quadruplex pump. Gee whilkens, what a lot of fierce names there are down here ! "

" I can help you in that ; I've got a quadruplex in my cleaning station. Come into the engine room with me ; here's a direct acting quadruplex pump ; it's really quite simple. I'll get a wrench and come up the bolts and take off the water bonnet ; you'll understand it perfectly in a minute." Then approaching an oldish-appearing man in officer's uniform who was in the engine room, he said : " Mr. Simpkins, I'd like permission to take the



bonnet off the water end of the auxiliary pump. The midshipmen wish to understand how the pump works; it is their lesson to-day and ——”

“No, you can't take off the bonnet of that pump,” whined the officer addressed. “The midshipmen have been bothering me all day long about that pump; I ain't a-going to let it be done. If I did everything the midshipmen wanted me to do these engines would be torn apart all day long. I just ain't a-going to do it.”

“That old whiner is the warrant machinist on duty,” whispered Bollup to Ralph. “I've been to him a dozen times to-day and all I ever got out of him is a whine. Say, Os, I'm going to look at a pipe I've been tracing underneath the engine room floor plates; I'll be up to look at the pump later,” and Bollup opened up a trap-door and slid down into the engine room bilge, which was about four feet below the engine room floor on which they were standing.

“But, Mr. Simpkins,” Collins was saying, “these midshipmen are required to learn how the pump works and if you prevent them from having a pump taken apart you may be hauled up about it. I'll promise to have the bonnet back before supper.”

“All right,” whined Mr. Simpkins; “but you get it back or I'll put you on the report.”

“I'll do it, sir. But, Mr. Simpkins, may I have a little alcohol? I've got some painting to do and



I'd like a little more alcohol in the paint, and besides I'd like to use some on these bolt heads to cut the rust, and ——”

“No, you mayn't. I know what you'd do with it; you'd drink it ——”

“I never drink, sir, and you know I need it, sir. You told me to get this job done to-night.”

“Well, I'll get you some myself, but I'll not trust you with it. I'll keep it in my possession; they'll never steal alcohol from me; I'm too smart for them.” And as was his wont, Mr. Simpkins, first refusing and then invariably yielding, went whining to the engineers' store-room and brought back with him a one gallon can of alcohol, and placed it on the floor plates between his feet, snarling and talking volubly. In the meantime Collins was rapidly unscrewing the nuts that held the bonnet of the pump.

“They'll never steal any alcohol from me,” cried Mr. Simpkins. “I know all of their tricks; I was an enlisted man; I'd never trust an enlisted man with alcohol, no sir. I know what they'd do with it ——” And as he was rambling on in tearful tones Ralph's attention was struck by seeing the trap-door just behind Mr. Simpkins slowly open, and Bollup's cheerful, grinning face next appeared. The latter listened a moment to Simpkins' sad talk, and then, deftly reaching out a hand, quickly took the can of alcohol, and immediately disappearing with it, quickly



and quietly lowered the trap-door over him. At the same instant Mr. Simpkins looked down between his feet and saw the can was missing. He instantly gave a shout. "Where's my alcohol?" he cried. He was petrified with astonishment. Back of him was a bulkhead; there was no one there, and no one could have passed him. Mr. Simpkins did not observe the neat-fitting trap-door and was utterly confounded. Ralph was so convulsed with laughter that he could not speak. Mr. Simpkins' attention was drawn to this and he cried: "What are you laughing at, you midshipman? I'll tell the chief engineer about your laughing——"

While he was thus talking, Bollup, watching his chance, opened the trap-door and peering out saw Mr. Simpkins' back was toward him, his feet wide apart. Bollup quickly replaced the alcohol can between Mr. Simpkins' feet. This was too much for Ralph. He gave a burst of laughter and ran into the fire room.

Mr. Simpkins started to walk away, blustering at the top of his voice, and in stepping off one of his feet collided with the can. He looked down, grabbed the can, and ran out of the engine room with it. Just what he thought he never expressed, but it was noticed that whenever thereafter he served out any alcohol the can was always tightly hugged between his two arms.

The joke was too good to keep. The midship-



men all knew about it that night. Collins, who had seen it, told Hester. Hester told a warrant machinist, Cockrell; Cockrell told Lieutenant Stroud, the chief engineer, and the latter told the wardroom officers and the captain. Everybody was much amused but no one attempted to learn who the midshipman was who had so successfully mystified Mr. Simpkins.

The *Puritan* remained several weeks in Long Island Sound, using Gardiner's Bay as headquarters. Trips were made to Newport and New London; the midshipmen were kept busy with their lessons and duties, and all made appreciable progress in ship knowledge. But in engineering Ralph Osborn distanced all of his classmates. With the devoted Collins always anxious to serve him, and besides being much interested, there was every reason why Ralph should learn. Before the end of the summer he knew how to get a boiler ready for steam and he opened the proper valves and started the pumps with perfect confidence. He spent some of his spare time in the engine and fire rooms with Collins, and that Ralph was to stand first in his class in engineering was a foregone conclusion.

Ralph also did well with his deck studies. Occasionally he had a chance to steer the ship when under way; he could row and sail a boat like a veteran and frequently took the chains and heaved the lead for soundings.



In the middle of August the *Puritan* made a run to Newport where the midshipmen were taken ashore to the smokeless powder factory. Here the methods of manufacture of the explosive were explained to the young men. On the return trip Ralph was detailed to fire room duty, and he had made such progress that Chief Water Tender Hester actually permitted him to fire two furnaces. Ralph was delighted. He opened his furnace doors and threw in many shovelfuls of coal, manfully facing the blast of intense heat from the white hot fire that seemed to shrivel the flesh of his face. It must be admitted that Hester took an occasional look at Ralph's two fires and did some of the firing himself. After an hour of this work, while firing, Ralph crouched low and looked into one of his furnaces.

"Why, what's that?" said Ralph suddenly, noticing a little lump about the size of his fist projecting downward from the top of the furnace. As he looked he imagined he saw it grow larger. Then he called out: "Hester, take a look at this furnace, will you? What's that lump in there? I'm sure it wasn't there when I first came ——"

Hester came over and took a look and then gave a terrible shout: "Haul fires from boiler C! Here, Jenkins and Smith, haul fires, quick! Turner, jump on top of the boilers and shut boiler C's steam stop-valve!"



Hester snapped out his orders at the top of his voice and then ran over to an iron wheel which worked a drum around which was an iron chain, and rapidly turned it. In the meantime the firemen present obeyed Hester's orders; they rushed to the boiler Ralph had been firing and instantly, with tremendous rapidity, hauled all of the burning coal from the furnaces to the fire room floor. The burning coal, at an intense white heat, was hauled recklessly into the fire room.

"Boiler C is shut off," shouted Turner from the top of the boiler.

"All right, we've got her; the safety-valve is open and the fires are hauled," cried Hester.

Ralph stood to one side wondering what it was all about, and then the chief engineer, Mr. Stroud, rushed in. "What's the matter, Hester?" he cried. "What are you blowing off steam for?"

"Take a look at this furnace, chief," replied Hester.

"By George, the furnace crown came down on you, didn't it? We would have had an explosion here in a few minutes if you hadn't been so prompt. Is the boiler disconnected?"

"Yes, sir; everything is all right now."

"What fireman noticed it, Hester? I'll recommend him for promotion."

"The fireman that reported it happened to be this midshipman, sir; his name is Osborn."

"By Jove, Mr. Osborn, your report has saved



us from a boiler explosion. I'll tell the captain. Those furnaces are twenty-five years old and are badly laminated; a blister formed and acted as a non-heat conductor, so the iron got red hot and the furnace caved in from the boiler pressure. We'll cut out the blister to-morrow and rivet on a hard patch."

This was very interesting to Ralph. His report was really an accident and was made principally through curiosity. Mr. Stroud soon left and Ralph went over to the safety-valve wheel that Hester had operated. This was on the side of the fire room between the back ends of two of the boilers. While looking at this he was startled by a terrific cry of: "Furnace crown in boiler E coming down!" Then followed penetrating shouts from Hester. "Haul fires, disconnect, open the safety-valve!"

Ralph turned to go into the open part of the fire room and then heard a fearful yell of: "Run, everybody! Drop everything! Get out of the fire room, everybody!"

Ralph started to run, but tripped and fell head-long, striking the floor plates with great force. While he was struggling to get up he was conscious that the fire room was suddenly filled with hot steam.

One of the furnace crowns of boiler E had come down so rapidly that there was no time to save the boiler. Hester closed the great iron door be-



tween the engine and fire room, and then cracked it open. No steam came into the engine room.

“It’s not a bad break,” said Hester. “Hello, where is Mr. Osborn? He was in there. Did any of you see Mr. Osborn come out?”

“I saw him go behind the boiler to the safety-valve wheel,” said Turner.

Collins, with white face, stood beside Hester. He immediately said to a man beside him: “Quick, give me your shirt.” The man tore it off and Collins plunged it in a bucket of water. “Now tie it around my head,” he cried. “Now throw some water over me.” Instantly a bucket was thrown over him. The whole incident took but a matter of a few seconds. Hester looked at Collins keenly. “This is mine, Hester; I’m going after Mr. Osborn. Open the door.”

“All right, Collins. Get down on your knees and crawl. He’s between boiler E and F. You’ll get him.”

Collins, with his head protected, trousers tied around his ankles, and hands wrapped with wet cloths, disappeared through the doorway into that scalding hell of steam. Inch by inch he groped his way along but still moved rapidly toward the place Ralph had last been seen, and in a few seconds met the bewildered scalded midshipman who had by this time got to his feet. Ralph was aware that an accident had happened but was blinded and scalded. He hesitated helplessly,



and then felt a strong arm grab him ; Collins now rose to his feet, and dragging Ralph after him, ran forward to where there was a ladder leading to an open door out of the fire room into the fire men's wash room. Collins pushed Ralph up the ladder and immediately followed him, and then both were rushed to the sick quarters.

In the meantime Hester had had himself wrapped head and foot in wet bags and cloths and went into the fire room, first to the safety-valve of boiler E which he opened, and then to the top of the boiler where he shut the valve, disconnecting that boiler from the other seven boilers. Then in rushed the chief engineer, without any protection ; he was greeted by a blast of steam from the boiler which struck him on the head and knocked him down. Fortunately he was near the door and was hauled out by his feet.

Ralph had run to the sick quarters without assistance. His face, hands and part of his body smarted painfully but he had no idea that he had been badly injured. Intense suffering came in the next few days ; his cruise of course came to an abrupt end, and he was transferred to the Newport Naval Hospital where he remained till the end of September, losing all of his September leave.

Collins and Hester both received medals of honor with highly commendatory letters from the Secretary of the Navy. Neither were more than slightly burned.



Severe as was the accident, Ralph was fortunate in several respects. First, the hole in the furnace crown through which the steam had escaped was very small. Then Ralph was at some distance and was not struck directly; and also the fire room was large and spacious. So Ralph had much reason to be thankful he had escaped with his life. He and the chief engineer were the only two who were seriously injured.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This accident happened as described in the *Puritan's* fire room. An officer was scalded and rescued; two enlisted men went into the fire room swathed in wet clothes, performed rescue work and secured as related the injured boiler; they received medals of honor from the Navy Department.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THIRD CLASSMEN ELECT CLASS OFFICERS

**M**ANY times during the long weeks that Ralph Osborn spent in the hospital did the young man's heart well up with gratitude for Collins' devoted bravery. "I never could have gotten out," he said over and over again. He wrote to Collins a letter full of feeling, though the words looked cold and lifeless to him. It was as follows :

"DEAR COLLINS :—

"Thank you, more than my pen can express. I lie here and wonder, day after day, that any man could be so brave ; and I shall be grateful to you all my life. I have read of heroes, but I can imagine no greater act of heroism than was yours. I am proud and grateful to call you my friend. I am happy I was saved and oh, so happy it was you who saved me. You will be glad to know I am almost well and will be ready to leave here in three weeks."

Ralph heard from Collins as follows :

"DEAR MR. OSBORN :—

"I am so pleased to know you are recovering so nicely. I am indeed happy that I was able to



do something for you. I have been rewarded far beyond my merits, have a medal of honor, and am rated chief water tender, and everybody has been so kind. I shall never forget you saved me from myself, that but for you I would be a criminal; I am so thankful I had the chance of showing my appreciation.

“ With sincere regards,

“ Respectfully yours,

“ HENRY COLLINS.”

A glow of warm feeling filled Ralph's heart as he read this letter; it was indeed pleasing to believe he had been helpful to Collins, had influenced him to his own good; but that the direct result of his influence upon Collins should have saved his own life was a remarkable reward, for Ralph had no idea that he would ever have left that fire room alive had it not been for Collins.

The days in the hospital were long; September days came and Ralph, though mending rapidly, was still kept in bed; he grew very restive, thinking of his classmates enjoying their month's vacation, and as he grew better daily he became impatient. Finally he was discharged from the hospital and was sent to Annapolis, arriving there September 28th; two days later the midshipmen were all back, and enthusiastic were the greetings Ralph received from his classmates and other midshipmen he knew, and it did seem so good to him to be once more with these friends.

Though Ralph was restored to health he was



ordered to be excused from drills, and directed to take part in no violent physical exercise. This was a disappointment, as he intended to go into athletics, and the idea of trying for the football squad was very attractive to him.

Ralph plunged into his studies with great zest; he determined to do better in French and felt confident that hard work in mathematics would keep him high up in the class in that branch. The first term took up the study of conic sections, and Ralph reveled in these subjects, and at the end of October his class standing in this all-important department was number one. Himski was number two, Bollup number three and Creelton number four.

"Confound it, Os," remarked Bollup as they were standing around the bulletin, "I worked hard last month in math and made as good recitations as you did, but you knocked a 4 on the exam. Now what chance has a fellow if you're going to do that right along? Let up on it, old chap, won't you?" The kindly twinkle in Bollup's eye didn't look as if he felt badly that Ralph had beaten him. "Say, Os," he continued, "we're going to elect class officers next week; you've heard the fellows talking about it, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes; Creelton seems much interested, but I haven't taken very much interest in the subject. It doesn't make a great deal of difference who is elected; they're sure to be good fellows."



“ Yes it does ; the class president is frequently in consultation with the commandant and he ought to be a man who can represent the class feeling. Some good fellows get scared when they get into the commandant’s office. Now we want a man who can talk to the commandant without losing his nerve, and you’re just the man. Several of us have talked this over and we’re going to run you for it.”

“ That’s awfully kind, old chap, but I’m not at all the man you want, and besides nothing whatever could induce me to accept if I were elected.”

“ Why not ? what’s your reason ? ” asked Bollup in blank surprise.

“ Until this thieving business is cleared up I don’t want any more prominence than I can help.”

“ Pshaw, there isn’t a soul that connects you with that—and people have forgotten about it ; now don’t let that bother you any.”

“ Bollup, I have had repeated things happen that prove beyond a doubt that some one here is determined to injure me. I can’t even imagine who it can be—now that Short is not here. My reason may be a poor one, but all the same I would not accept a class office. But I’m much obliged, all the same, old fellow.”

“ Who do you think would make a good class president ? ” continued Bollup.

“ I’m going to vote for Himski. “ I’m sure he’d be a good one.”



"I believe he would," agreed Bollup. "Now if you don't want it, suppose we electioneer for Himski. He's a fine fellow; there isn't a better man in the class. We'll have a surprise party for him next week. He is working for you, thinks you're sure to be elected president. Now we won't say a word to him and we'll keep him in the dark. It'll be a regular joke." And Bollup laughed heartily at the surprise he conjured in his mind that was to happen to his own roommate.

"By the way, Os, have you heard that both the superintendent and commandant are detached?"

"No; by George, I'm sorry!" And Ralph looked the dismay he felt. "They were my protectors; I have felt safe with them here; are you sure they are going to leave?"

"Yes, their orders have come and I suppose they will leave immediately. The admiral goes to command the Pacific Squadron and the commandant is ordered to command the cruiser *Albany*."

"I am indeed sorry to hear that; I fear that something bad may happen to me, and the new commandant won't know about what has already occurred."

"Don't worry, Os," said Bollup affectionately, laying his arm on Ralph's shoulder; "we'll look out for you, and if anything should happen we'll let the new commandant know what has gone on before."



On a Saturday night, a week later, a meeting of the third class was called in the reading-room for the purpose of electing class officers. The third classmen went to the hall immediately after supper. Bollup elected himself temporary spokesman, and said: "We're here to elect class officers. I move that Himski be made temporary chairman until the ballots are cast."

"Second the motion," called out Ralph. The motion was unanimously carried, and Himski, to his great surprise, took charge of the meeting. "I see my good friend Bollup has caught you unawares," he said. "I imagine if Bollup had nominated the man in the moon you'd have elected him."

"Right you are, old man," called out Streeter, provoking much laughter from the youths present, all of whom were in the mood for fun.

"Nominating speeches for class president are in order," said Himski.

"We don't want any nominating speeches; let's vote," shouted Creelton. "We know whom we want for president, so pass around the ballots."

Himski looked pleased. He had been conducting a vigorous campaign for Ralph and every one had seemingly assented. In fact a very complete secret canvas had been going on for Himski, of which the latter was in entire ignorance. So Himski, thinking that Ralph had been settled on by all for class president, was delighted with what



he believed to be the success of his electioneering. The votes were cast and the ballots were quickly collected and then counted by tellers, of whom Bollup was one.

"I'm ready to announce the result of the election," called out Bollup in a few minutes.

"Order, order," shouted Himski. "Now, Mr. Bollup, we'll go through the form of hearing your report, though I guess we all know who's been elected." And Himski smiled in a superior way, though he was perplexed at the shout of laughter that greeted his words.

"Here it is," cried Bollup. "For class president, Osborn,—one —— Say, Os, did you vote for yourself?"

A look of amazement spread over Himski's face.

"For Himskihumskonski," continued Bollup, "ninety-one —— Look here, Os, you've a chance to do the right thing and move the vote be made unanimous."

A shout of laughter went up.

Himski was stupefied with surprise. "I voted for Os," he said in a feeble, bewildered way; "I thought we were all going to; I had no idea any one was going to vote for me."

All laughed, well pleased with the completeness of the surprise. Himski had the good-will and entire respect of all of his classmates, and after he had been suggested for the class presidency it seemed natural for everybody to vote for him.



“Fellows,” said Himski, his fine features quivering with mingled emotions, “I can’t tell you how much I appreciate the compliment you have paid me; and it is such a surprise. I thank you; but frankly I don’t think I should permit you to do this ——”

“Why not? Why not?” rang out from all parts of the room.

“To begin with, my name, though I am proud of it, is frightfully long and ——”

“Sir,” cried Bollup, “I move that the sentiment of the class is that though each of the five syllables that go to make up our honored president’s name is in itself noble, euphonious and beautiful, yet the name is too long; I move that the class, by Himski’s consent, cuts off the last three syllables.”

“You have already done that,” said Himski smiling.

“Now, classmates,” continued Bollup, “this should be made official. And I also move that the last three syllables of his first name be dropped. His name is ostensibly Jacob, but in reality it is Jacobowbenki ——” Here a roar of laughter burst from the midshipmen, and Bollup sat down.

“I am certainly Himski to everybody at the Academy,” said that young man, “and there’s no need of ever calling me anything else. Now, fellows, I’m going to ask you to reconsider your vote.”



“No, no, you’re the man, Himski. You’ll do,” was cried out by different third classmen.

Streeter was elected vice-president and Warren secretary.

Creelton got up and clamored for recognition, and then said: “Fellows, there’s always a row here about duty. When we’re section leaders marching through the yard, we are supposed to report any talking in our sections and any straggling, or other infractions. And when we are on duty as assistants to midshipmen in charge of floors we are supposed to report any violations we see, whether they are committed by classmates or not. Now I think it would be a fine thing for our class to make a stand, to resolve to do our duty as it is expected of us, to make reports no matter who is the man reported, to ——”

“Oh, choke him off; sit down; give us a rest ——” and all manner of cries good-humoredly assailed Creelton, who was entirely discomfited and sat down without further remark.

Ralph jumped to his feet. “Mr. President,” he called out.

“Mr. Osborn has the floor,” announced Himski.

“Classmates, there isn’t any need of Creelton’s motion. A matter of how duty should be done can hardly be settled by a class. It must come to be done as a matter of education. A third classman does not do his duty ordinarily as well as a first classman, because the latter is better educated



as to what duty in the Navy means. We'll progress in this and other things as we get higher up. This matter of being a crank on duty and making a lot of reports generally ends in bad feeling. If I were to make a motion on this subject I would move that the third class will do the best it can and that it hopes constantly to do better. I've no fear of our class; it will do just as well as its predecessors. But I have the following motion to propose:

“Resolved, should any member of our class know of any midshipman in the Academy lying or doing any dishonorable thing whatsoever, such an offense will be immediately reported to the class or to the authorities.”

“I second Osborn's resolution,” rang Bollup's clear voice. “The honor system has always held at our Academy and our class should put itself on record just as each preceding third class has done.” This resolution was unanimously carried.

Warren then got up and said: “Fellows, I'm sorry to tell you that between three and six o'clock this afternoon my diamond ring was stolen from the drawer of my table where I had left it. I can't imagine who the thief could be, and I don't know, and hate to believe a midshipman could be a thief. I haven't been able to discover any evidence whatever, and ——”

“Sir,” shouted Ralph passionately, “the thief, whoever he may be, has got busy again. That



ring will probably be found in my wardrobe, or in my drawer. Repeated efforts have been made to injure me, to fasten some dishonorable act on me. You all know that. And now that we have a new superintendent and new commandant the thing is started up again. Now I insist you appoint a committee to search my room. I must have protection by my classmates."

Himski utterly refused to entertain this motion, and then walked over to Ralph and said: "Os, we'll do this for you quietly, but not as a class matter."

A few more class affairs were discussed and the meeting then adjourned. Himski, Bollup, Creelton and Ralph then went directly to the latter's room and a most complete search was made, but no ring was found. This relieved Ralph somewhat, but he was still very uneasy in mind as he felt that his hidden mysterious enemy had once more become active.



## CHAPTER XVIII

“PROFESSOR MOEHLER IS A LIAR AND A FOOL”

THE chief event that concerned the Naval Academy at this time was its defeat in football by West Point; if one were to judge the importance of this defeat by the effect produced at Annapolis he would say it was a national calamity. All at Annapolis, officers, midshipmen and even citizens in the old town, were filled with consternation and dismay. During the game, on the bleachers, Ralph saw his eleven heroes, despite incredible effort, relentlessly pushed back, overwhelmed and crushed by the unconquerable West Point team. From the beginning, defeat for the midshipmen was seen to be inevitable, and for two hours many hearts throbbed in painful anguish. The return from Philadelphia was a bitter one for the midshipmen, for West Point had been victorious the previous year; but grim determination was in the heart of every midshipman, and “we’ll beat them next year” was the dogged resolve everywhere heard.

Ralph was now one of the marked men of his class. He maintained his lead in mathematics and was improving in his French and English studies. He took naturally to the study of the



laws of chemistry, and of sound, light and heat, and though he had never studied these subjects before, he immediately took high rank in them, standing number five in his class for the first term.

Ralph took formation, drills and studies easily; inspections no longer worried him. Sometimes he was late at a formation and occasionally his room was reported for “out of order at morning inspection” and like all midshipmen he sometimes received demerits, but never enough in any one month to put him off the first conduct grade.

Three officers took turns in doing duty as officer-in-charge, spending twenty-four hours with the midshipmen. During his tour the officer-in-charge was kept busy carrying out the routine, making inspections, answering questions by midshipmen, and receiving reports. One of these officers, Lieutenant Fellows, afforded the midshipmen great fun by a peculiarity he had of frequently calling things by their wrong names, and mixing up the syllables of a word. It was probably a slight form of aphasia. One time during March, in evening study hours while Ralph and Creelton were having an animated conversation in their room, a sudden rap was heard on their door and in strode Lieutenant Fellows, his sword and white gloves proclaiming he was making an evening inspection.

Ralph and Creelton jumped to their feet, and stood at respectful attention.



“Have this stopping talked,” he ordered.  
“Who’s doing this stopping?”

Ralph wanted to laugh, but managed to say, “I was conversing with my roommate, sir.”

“You are reported for loud stopping during study hours, sir; what is your name?”

“Osborn, sir.”

This was told with great glee to third classmen and thereafter Mr. Fellows was dubbed “Loud Stopping,” though he probably never knew it. Another time in telling some apparently deeply interested midshipmen of a wonderful escape he had from drowning, he said, “And then I sankly gent into the water ——” and he was surprised and perplexed at the spontaneous burst of laughter that greeted his remark. On another occasion he used the expression, “a paint of coat,” meaning to say of course “a coat of paint.” He was a kind-hearted man, pompous in manner and ordinarily altogether too lenient with the midshipmen. Many times after he had made some report against one, the delinquent would talk earnestly to “Loud Stopping” about it, and the latter would erase the report. Then at other times, Mr. Fellows would feel he had been altogether too easy with the young gentlemen and he would become most unexpectedly, tremendously severe. The midshipmen liked him but they constantly laughed at him.

The third class year was passing uneventfully



for Ralph. It was very satisfactory to him because he was so successful in his studies. There was now additional zest in his work because he was aiming to, and stood good chance of standing first in his class. His most formidable competitors were his most intimate friends, Himski, Bollup and Creelton, so the rivalry was a very friendly one. Of all his classmates Ralph liked the jovial, great-hearted Himski most. He always kept on good terms with Creelton but was more drawn to the others.

As time went on Ralph thought less and less of his hidden enemy. Several times during the months that passed some third classman reported the theft of money, or of some valuable article. On each occasion Ralph always insisted on having his room searched, “for my own protection,” he explained to Bollup and Himski when they remonstrated with him, but nothing was ever found. It is likely that consciousness of a secret enemy made Ralph particularly careful about obeying the regulations. He had the feeling he was watched and that any grave misdemeanor would become known to the authorities.

One Saturday in April while walking alone through the grounds he passed a tall, pimply-faced, round-shouldered man about twenty-seven years old, dressed in civilian's clothes. Ralph paid no particular attention to him until the man



suddenly stopped, and in a rasping, snarling voice said: "Why don't you salute me?"

"I didn't know you were entitled to a salute sir," Ralph said. "I never saw you before and will be glad to salute you if you are entitled to a salute," and Ralph saluted as he spoke.

"I am entitled to a salute, and it's your business to know me. I'm Professor Moehler, instructor in mathematics. You midshipmen make a point of never knowing civilian instructors; I've looked that point up; you're required to salute me and you'd better not pretend another time not to know me."

"I haven't pretended, sir; I didn't know you. I had no reason to think you were an instructor."

"I hear what you say but I have my own ideas on that subject. Salute me again."

Ralph's face got red; he hesitated, and then slowly executed a proper naval salute, watching the professor narrowly.

The latter turned to resume his walk, saying, "You'd better not pretend another time, Mister Midshipman, unless you want to get reported for disrespect. That would give you twenty-five demerits."

"One moment, sir," said Ralph, a determined look shooting out of his eyes. "You are correct in saying the regulations require a midshipman to salute an instructor; and the same regulation is just as mandatory in requiring the instructor to re-



turn the salute. I have saluted you twice and you returned neither salute. Further, I consider you hazed me when you directed me to salute you the second time, and you have insinuated I was not speaking the truth when I told you I was not pretending, that I didn't know you. I shall report you to the commandant, sir; he is here to protect midshipmen as well as to direct them and punish them.”

“ Oh, I say, don't do that; I didn't mean anything,” cried Professor Moehler with a troubled face; “ here, I'll salute three times —— ” and he made three grotesque gyrations with his hand, which he helplessly intended for military salutes. “ Look here, mister, don't report me; I'll lose my job if you do ! ”

Mr. Moehler ran after Ralph crestfallen and begging not to be reported, but Ralph was very angry and refused to listen to him. He went direct to his room and made a written report of the incident which resulted in a severe reprimand and warning for the instructor. Mr. Moehler had been at the Academy but a few days when this happened. He had been told that midshipmen looked down upon civilian instructors and objected to saluting them, which was entirely a mistake, and he had announced that he would force them to salute him.

This incident created much talk in the little midshipmen world. After this Mr. Moehler received the most elaborate salutes from midshipmen.



He even noticed that the superintendent and commandant apparently didn't receive as deferential salutes from midshipmen as he did. This bothered him somewhat, but he concluded that naval customs were queer and kept his opinion to himself.

When the sections in mathematics were posted for May, Ralph led his class; this pleased him but he had expected it. While looking at the room number where his section was assigned to recite, he suddenly slapped his hands together and exclaimed: "By George, that's too bad; I've got Moehler as my instructor next month."

"I wish I had," replied Creelton ruefully. "I've tumbled down to the second section. This is the first time I've been out of the first section in math since the plebe semi-an exam."

"I'm sorry for that, old fellow," said Ralph. "You haven't boned much this last month; you'll get back without any trouble if you try."

In May Ralph's class in mathematics had integral calculus. As he believed Mr. Moehler would look at him with no friendly eye he was doubly careful in the preparation of his lessons. As number one man in his class it was to be expected his mark would be excellent, but Moehler gave him high marks grudgingly. For the fourth recitation Ralph had to Mr. Moehler, he was directed to deduce a formula which was in the day's lesson. Ralph, always delighting in original work, arrived



at the formula by a different method than that laid down in the book. Mr. Moehler, busy listening to demonstrations of other midshipmen in the section, did not get to Ralph till near the end of the hour. Then he glanced at the blackboard where Ralph stood, and said, “That’s all wrong, Mr. Osborn.”

“This is right, sir,” replied Ralph. “It will only take me a minute to explain it, if you’ll listen——”

“It’s all wrong; I can see that at a glance—you’ve cooked up the result somehow, but it’s wrong. Rub it out.”

“Sir, this work is right; it isn’t the method used in the book, but I can prove to you it’s right. Now ——”

“Rub it out, I tell you,” thundered Mr. Moehler.

“Will you let me explain it, sir?”

“No, rub it out.”

“May I send for the head of the department to explain it to him?”

“No, you may not; I’m running this. Rub that out. You’ve earned a zero for this morning’s work.”

Moehler was pale with anger and his voice trembled. Ralph hesitated a moment, then slowly rubbed his work out, and without another word left the blackboard and took his seat. The section was soon marched out of the recitation room, and when Ralph reached his own room he hurriedly



wrote the following letter, addressing it to the commandant :

“ SIR :—

“ I have the honor to request your consideration on the following statement.

“ This morning, in my recitation before Instructor Moehler, I was required to deduce a formula which I did by a method not given in the book, but which is correct. Mr. Moehler said this was wrong and refused to listen to my explanation, and informed me he had marked me zero.

“ The demonstration is appended exactly as it appeared on the blackboard. I respectfully request it be sent to the head of the department of mathematics, and that if zero is not the proper worth of this demonstration, my mark of this morning be changed.”

Professor Scott was full of delight at Ralph's original demonstration and of anger toward Mr. Moehler. “ You will mark this paper, sir,” he said to the latter, his own voice trembling with indignation, “ and you will change Mr. Osborn's mark to correspond. And let me tell you, sir, if any further reports of this kind come I shall recommend your discharge. This is as fine a piece of original work as I've ever seen. It deserves a 4 and you marked it 0. Mr. Osborn is number one in his class ; if you have occasion to mark him less than 4.0 in his future recitations you will inform me immediately.”



Mr. Moehler was chagrined to the last degree and correspondingly apologetic, but Professor Scott's anger was not to be soothed. He required the instructor to inform Ralph that his mark was changed to 4.0.

Four days later at the end of an hour's recitation, Ralph, with the rest of his section, at Mr. Moehler's order, marched from the room. As is customary Mr. Moehler followed them out, saw them form and march away. He then went back in the section room.

“Shall I rub out, suh?” inquired the colored man.

“Wait a minute; I'll just see if I've everything marked. What's that?” he suddenly exclaimed in great amazement, and an expression of hot anger crossed his face. “Don't rub out a thing, do you understand? Leave everything just as it is.”

“Yes, suh.”

Mr. Moehler then went to the corridor and calling for an attendant, sent him to Professor Scott with a request for the latter to come to the recitation room immediately.

“What's the matter, Mr. Moehler?” demanded Professor Scott, a moment later; “you look excited.”

“Sir, I dismissed the first section but a couple of moments ago and went into the corridor with them according to your order. I'd like to call



your attention to what I found on Mr. Osborn's blackboard."

Professor Scott quickly glanced at the blackboard indicated, and overwhelming astonishment was depicted on his face. "Incredible!" he exclaimed.

At the upper left-hand corner of the blackboard was the name "Osborn." Below it was the demonstration of a problem and below this, in bold handwriting, was written the sentence:

"Professor Moehler is a liar and a fool."



## CHAPTER XIX

“OSBORN NEVER WROTE IT, SIR”

“WHAT incredible folly!” repeated Professor Scott. “It is hard to credit Mr. Osborn or any midshipman with such unspeakable foolishness. I suppose Mr. Osborn meant it for some midshipman to see and then forgot to rub it out. Too bad! I have made a great mistake in that young man. Well, Mr. Moehler, you remain here in the room. I’ll telephone for the commandant to come immediately. Keep everything just as it is.”

“I will, sir; I’m sorry any midshipman should express such sentiments toward me. I have had trouble with Mr. Osborn on two occasions in each of which I was at fault and was severely reprimanded in consequence, but there was no occasion for Mr. Osborn to write such a thing about me.” Mr. Moehler spoke feelingly.

“Too bad,” again murmured Professor Scott, leaving the room. In a few moments he returned with the commandant.

“I suppose it’s something important, professor,” Commander Thornton said as they entered.

“You will form your own conclusion as to that,



sir; this is the condition of the room when Mr. Moehler called me in. Will you look at the blackboards, sir?"

In a moment the commandant was startled by the scurrilous sentence on Ralph's board.

"Who is Mr. Osborn?" he inquired.

"A third classman, sir; he stands number one in mathematics in his class."

"Did he write that?"

"It looks like his handwriting and it's on his board. Mr. Moehler can tell you the circumstances better than I can."

"Tell me about it, Mr. Moehler."

"Sir, at the end of the recitation hour Mr. Osborn and several of his section had not yet recited and were still standing at their boards when the dismissal alarm rang. I ordered the section to march out when the bell rang, and I followed the last man out and stood in the doorway of my room while they got their caps, formed and marched away. As I entered, the colored man, Carroll, came in with me, and asked me if he should rub out. I told him to wait a moment; the next instant I saw what was written on Mr. Osborn's board, and then I sent for Professor Scott. I think that is all I know about the matter, sir."

"That's enough," rejoined the commandant, sententiously; "enough to dismiss Mr. Osborn," he grimly added. "Let me see; you have



had some trouble with Mr. Osborn, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir, twice and I was in the wrong each time. But I can't feel that Mr. Osborn had occasion to write such a thing on the board." Mr. Moehler showed his indignation and wounded feelings as he spoke.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing could justify Mr. Osborn. He will be dismissed immediately. But we will investigate all of the circumstances. Professor, please telephone to the officer-in-charge and direct him to get the first section in mathematics together and send them here immediately. We will wait here until they come."

Ten minutes later the first section of ten wondering midshipmen marched into Mr. Moehler's room.

"First section all present, sir," reported Ralph.

"Mr. Osborn," commenced the commandant severely, "were you the last midshipman to leave this section room half an hour ago?"

"Yes, sir," replied Ralph, quietly wondering why the commandant should be in the room.

"Could any midshipman have gone to your board without your knowledge?"

"No, sir, none did. The section was all ahead of me as it left the room."

"Then everything on your board when the section was leaving was your own work."

"Yes, sir, everything."



“Be very careful in your answer, Mr. Osborn. Is it possible that any midshipman of your section could, without your knowledge, have written anything on it?”

“It was impossible for any to have done so.”

“Very well, sir. I shall recommend your immediate dismissal from the Naval Academy!”

“My immediate dismissal!” echoed Ralph, in extreme consternation. “Why, sir, what for?”

“Because you wrote an infamous line on your blackboard concerning Mr. Moehler.”

“I did nothing of the kind, sir.”

“Don't lie, Mr. Osborn. You forgot to rub out the infamous words you wrote. Look at your blackboard, sir.”

Ralph turned around; he stared at the damning words in utter astonishment. “Who wrote that?” he burst out.

“You did,” said his accuser.

“I did not, sir! When I left my board those words were not there.”

“I don't believe you,” remarked the commandant coolly.

“You must believe me, sir; I'm telling the truth. Those words were written after I left. I did not write them and I haven't the faintest idea who did.”

“No one else could have written them. You were the last man out except the instructor.”

“Some one else must have gotten in, sir. I



know nothing about it.” Ralph spoke with tremendous earnestness.

“Mr. Moehler,” the commandant asked, “when you walked out of the room where did you go?”

“I stood in the doorway, sir, till the section marched off.”

“Did anybody enter while you stood there?”

“No, sir.”

“Are you certain?”

“Positive, sir. To have got in a person must have crowded by me, and none did.”

“Did you see anybody around?”

“Nobody except Carroll, the colored man who wipes the chalk off the boards. He entered the room just as I did.”

“Is this the colored man you are speaking of?” —indicating a man in the hall.

“Yes, suh. I’se Carroll, suh; I’se bin heah fo’ty yeahs, suh. Doan’ you rem’ber me, Mistah Thornton, doan’ yo’ rem’ber how I used to wait on yo’ in de ole mess hall, and how I used to bring in tobacco fo’ yo’? Doan’ you rem’ber how de commandment done about cotched yo’ smokin’ a fine cigah onct, an’ I jerked it out er yo’ mouf an’ smoked et myself?” Old Carroll chuckled at the recollection. “Golly, but yo’ wuz a fine young gemmen; yo’ is commandment now, but yo’ mus’ be easy on dese young gemmen, Mistah Thornton.”

“Carroll,” the commandant continued, ignoring



the remarks of the old man, "did you see this gentleman, Mr. Moehler, follow the midshipmen out of the section room when the bell rang?"

"Yes, suh, I done see him. Mr. Osborn wuz de last young gemmen out; den, mistah, dis man come to de do'r an' stan' dere. I wants to go in, but Mistah Meal he stan's in de do'rway, an' I has to wait. Den wen Mistah Meal he goes in an' I ask him may I rub out and he tol' me no."

"It's evident nobody could have written that but you, Mr. Osborn. Carroll, did you see anybody enter the room?"

"No, suh, 'cept me an' Mistah Meal."

"It could have been done by none except one of this section and not one could have written it without your knowledge; and you wrote it. It's folly for you to deny it," continued the commandant to Ralph.

"I didn't write it, sir," Ralph cried out in anguish of heart, feeling the world was slipping from his feet, and bewildered at what had happened.

"Well, if you didn't the person who did must be in the closet; Mr. Moehler has not left the room, and the windows are all shut."

The commandant threw open the closet door. The closet was entirely bare, containing nothing but a few hooks. It was an inside dark closet with no connection or exit visible except to the room.



“Give me a match, professor; I want to take a better look.”

Himski, who was one of the midshipmen present, carried the box of matches from the professor to the closet. “Shall I light one?” he asked, and without waiting for a reply, he lit one.

“Nothing here, door or window,” exclaimed the commandant, leaving the closet. Himski remained there several minutes and then came out and handed the match-box to Professor Scott.

The commandant now asked each midshipman in turn several questions. Each denied any knowledge whatever of the matter. Himski was the last to be questioned.

“Do you know anything about this writing?” asked the commandant.

“No, sir.”

“Did you happen to look at Mr. Osborn’s blackboard at any time during the recitation?”

“Yes, sir; after I finished my recitation and took my seat I looked at Mr. Osborn’s board.”

“How long was that before he left it?”

“I was looking at it when he left the board, and for a second or so after he left it. In fact, Mr. Moehler may remember he reproved me for not getting up promptly.”

“Then you saw Mr. Osborn’s board after he left it?”

“I did, sir.”



“And you saw this line on his board when he left it?” queried the commandant, confidently.

Ralph listened with painful eagerness for Himski's next words. He felt his heart throbbing violently. He was dismayed and confounded, and conscious as he was of his innocence, yet he felt the force of the overwhelming evidence piled up against him.

Himski spoke deliberately and impressively. “When Mr. Osborn left his board I was looking at it, and when he left the words concerning Mr. Moehler were not on his board.”

A feeling of great relief shot through Ralph.

“That is ridiculous, Mr.— What's your name?”

“Himskihumskonski, sir.”

“Perfectly ridiculous, Mr. Himski—ahem—I didn't catch all of your name.”

“Everybody calls me Himski, sir; the name is too long.”

“You don't know what you're talking about, Mr. Himski.” Commander Thornton spoke angrily. “I place no credence at all in what you say.”

“Professor,” asked Himski, quietly, “have you a master or pass-key to all the doors in this building? I think I may throw some light on this subject.”

“Yes, here is one; I always carry it with me.”

Without asking to be excused Himski was off



on a run and instantly disappeared around the corridor. He was back in a very few minutes.

The commandant was pursuing his questions but nothing further was developed.

“Well, sir,” he demanded sharply, as Himski came in the room, “do you still persist in your ridiculous statement?”

“My statement was entirely correct, sir.”

“I don’t believe it and I shall recommend Mr. Osborn for dismissal.”

“I can prove he’s innocent, sir; prove it to your complete satisfaction, captain, if you will only give me the chance. It will take only a moment.”

There was eagerness and excitement in Himski’s dark, intelligent eyes as he spoke, and all were impressed, even the commandant.

“I’ll give you the chance,” the latter said skeptically; “go ahead and prove it, Mr. Himski.”

“Very well, sir.” Himski spoke rapidly. “Send each midshipman to his board and then let everybody leave by Mr. Moehler’s order, just as if the alarm for dismissal had sounded. Then remain in the corridor just as long as Mr. Moehler did when he dismissed the section, and let him spend as much time with Carroll as he did before.”

“Hold on, this is idiotic!” called out the commandant, but Himski seemingly did not hear for he ran out of the room.



“This is foolish, professor,” said the commandant.

“We’d better give Mr. Osborn the chance, sir.”

“I request it, sir,” Ralph said, “though I’ve no idea of what Mr. Himski is about to do.”

“Very well. Dismiss your section, sir.”

“Section rise, march out,” ordered Ralph. The midshipmen marched out to the corridor and got their caps. “Fall in,” cried Ralph. “Section forward, march.” He halted it a few steps down the corridor.

The commandant, Professor Scott and Mr. Moehler followed the section out and watched it march off. They then turned leisurely, and entered the room, the commandant feeling rather silly at taking part in this apparently useless performance. He then looked at Ralph’s board, and utter amazement possessed him. He and his two companions were astounded; they were speechless with astonishment. For there, on Ralph’s board, under the words, “Moehler is a liar and a fool,” was written:

“Osborn never wrote it, sir.”



## CHAPTER XX

### HIMSKI SAVES RALPH

THE commandant rushed to the closet and threw open the door. It was absolutely empty. He looked at the windows; all were shut. Professor Scott and Mr. Moehler were mystified beyond expression.

“Well!” ejaculated Commander Thornton, “this beats me. The explanation will be simple when Mr. Himski makes it, but I’m willing to believe now that Mr. Osborn may not have written that line against you, Mr. Moehler. He certainly didn’t write the words under it.”

“Mr. Himski!” called out the commandant in a loud voice.

“Here, sir,” replied Himski, entering the room.

“Did you write that on Mr. Osborn’s blackboard?”

“I wrote the bottom line, sir, not the one above it.”

“Of course, that’s what I mean. But will you please tell me how you got into the room to do it? The windows were shut and locked and you certainly didn’t come through the doorway.”

“I got in exactly as did the person who wrote



the line about Mr. Moehler, and it wasn't Mr. Osborn, because I saw his board after he left it, sir. If you will remain here a moment, sir, I will show you how I did it."

Himski left the room and in a couple of minutes the door of the closet opened and he stepped into the recitation room, holding the closet door open.

The commandant, Professor Scott and Mr. Moehler crowded into it. They saw that what had been the ceiling of the closet was in reality a trap-door, which was now raised, and in the closet was a ladder leading to it.

"How did you discover all this, Mr. Himski?" asked the commandant sharply.

"When I went into the closet with you, sir, I noticed some marks on the white wall which could have been made by a ladder leaning against it. I looked up, threw up a burning match, and observed there was a crack all around the ceiling and it suddenly occurred to me that the ceiling was a trap-door. I knew Osborn hadn't written those words and I was certain the only way that the man who did could have got into the room was by the closet. So then I got professor's pass-key and opened the door leading to the garret. I found the trap-door and a ladder beside it. By the garret door I found this piece of wax; some one had been taking an impression of the lock. You know the rest, sir. It was easy to tiptoe



into the room from the closet without making a noise, write on the board and get back to the closet without being discovered."

"By George, Mr. Himski, I have much to thank you for. There must be some scoundrel here who wants to get Mr. Osborn into trouble!"

"There is, sir, but that's a long story; I will tell you about that when you have time to listen to me."

"Mr. Himski is right about that, captain," broke in Professor Scott, who until now had kept silent. "I know something about that myself, and the former superintendent and your predecessor also knew about it."

"You have saved me from doing an act of unconscious but cruel injustice, Mr. Himski, and you have saved a classmate from a terrible wrong. It is certain that but for what you have done Mr. Osborn must have been dismissed. I will hear about your story later but now I must see that section. They are in the hall; send them here."

In a moment Ralph had marched his section in the room.

"Gentlemen," began Commander Thornton, "Mr. Osborn did not write those words concerning Mr. Moehler. The remarks I addressed to him are entirely withdrawn. Mr. Osborn, I ask your pardon." The commandant paused and looked at Ralph.



“I’m so glad you don’t believe I wrote it, captain,” said Ralph huskily.

“Gentlemen, this is a most serious matter and will be investigated. You are each directed to discuss this matter with no one, not even among yourselves. You will all be held to a strict accountability should this order be violated. Fall out, Mr. Osborn; second section leader will take charge and march the section back to quarters.”

With great kindness the commandant now explained the situation to Ralph, and the party went to the garret and saw how the whole thing had been accomplished.

“Now, Mr. Osborn,” Commander Thornton said, “I want you to write out a complete statement of everything that has happened to you since you entered the Academy, and describe any trouble you have had with any one. We will sift this thing to the bottom; and be assured that you will receive full protection from me. The very fact that we know that such a wicked thing could be planned to get you into such trouble will protect you. It means you must be doubly careful in everything you do.”

“Thank you, sir,” cried Ralph, overjoyed that he had such a powerful friend. “I will be careful, sir. These attacks have come several times but I have never been able to imagine who wants to harm me.”



“We’ll go into that later, Mr. Osborn. Now don’t worry about it. We’ll see that no harm comes to you; and we’ll use every effort to find out who the perpetrator of this act was.”

Ralph returned to his room in a very sober, thoughtful state of mind. That such deadly, determined hostility from an unknown source should be manifested toward him was terrifying.

The fact that he could not imagine who was his enemy was maddening. The blows had been so unexpected and had been aimed with such keen intelligence and with such inveterate hate that fear took possession of Ralph’s mind. He knew of no way to guard himself from such a terrible foe. That he was under the commandant’s special protection was comforting, yet his mind dwelt upon the hatred that had so relentlessly pursued him. For a while he was morose and worried and looked upon everybody except Himski with suspicion.

When he reached his room he commenced his statement to the commandant and worked feverishly at it. He gave it to Commander Thornton the next day. In writing it he was entirely undisturbed, for his roommate, Creelton, was in the hospital with rheumatism. He had been there for several days.

Some days later Himski was directed to report to the commandant.

“Mr. Himski,” he commenced,—“you must



excuse me for not pronouncing your entire name ; it's a little bit too much for me."

" Yes, sir, it seems to be for everybody. Every one calls me Himski, sir ; I'm now more used to that than my entire name," declared Himski.

" Well, we have had a complete investigation ; of course you know of part of it. I am referring to that writing that appeared on Mr. Osborn's blackboard."

" Yes, sir."

" It's too bad ; nothing whatever has been learned and we are entirely in the dark. The only person that Mr. Osborn ever had any trouble with, except Mr. Moehler, and of course he is out of it, was with a Mr. Short who was a midshipman for a few days. Did you know about that ? "

" Yes, sir."

" However, that was a long time ago and Mr. Short has disappeared. He left Annapolis, and from what we have been able to learn, he has not been here since. Now here is Mr. Osborn's letter, and here is also the record of all the evidence that was given before the investigating board. And also there are some papers written by my predecessor and an anonymous letter signed : ' Indignant Fourth Classman.' The investigating board's report exonerates Mr. Osborn and all of the members of his section, but doesn't indicate any opinion as to who the culprit may be. So we are



just where we started from and are at sea completely. Now it has occurred to me that you might help; your perspicacity in showing how the section room was entered from the closet has so impressed me that as a last resource I am going to give you this record and these letters and ask you to study them carefully; if you can find any clue as to who the guilty party may be I want you to report the fact to me."

"Very well, sir," and Himski took the papers and withdrew.

Himski was back in the commandant's office a few days later with the papers.

"Have you come to any conclusion?" he was asked.

"Yes, sir, but I hesitate to give it."

"Why?"

"Because I may be entirely wrong, sir; I may do a classmate an awful injury."

"I understand that," admitted Commander Thornton, aglow with interest, "but we must pursue every circumstance to wherever it may lead us. I want you to tell me frankly just what you suspect. This matter will be entirely confidential between you and me. If your suspicions are wrong no harm will be done."

"Well, sir, I have hunted for a motive. No one could desire such injury toward Mr. Osborn except by a strong motive of revenge. Before Mr. Osborn came to the Academy he never experi-



enced the enmity of anybody. That is certain, and since he has been a midshipman there have been repeated efforts from an unknown source to get him into serious trouble, to defame and disgrace him.”

“ Yes, yes I know,” cut in the commandant impatiently.

“ He never has had trouble except with that man Short ; Mr. Osborn caused Short to be dismissed with ignominy, and I have come to the conclusion that Short was the real author of the dastardly attempts against Mr. Osborn.”

“ I could believe that if Mr. Short had remained at Annapolis ; but if he were the author then he must have had a tool in the Academy.”

“ Yes, sir. After coming to this conclusion I have endeavored to learn everything I could about Short. I knew him, of course ; when preparing for entrance here he rented a furnished house and had four candidates live with him as his guests. Two of these failed to pass the entrance examination ; one entered but failed last year, so there now remains at the Academy but one midshipman who was once one of Short’s guests. Also I learned out in town, Saturday, that Short was seen to enter the Maryland Hotel the night of the June ball, last year. The livery-stable keeper saw him and recognized him. And a strange coincidence happened. After I left the livery-stable last Saturday afternoon which is near the railway sta-



tion, I passed a man who was in a great hurry. He had just alighted from a carriage and was about to go into the station. This man was Short, I'm certain of it. He wore a heavy mustache but I know it was Short. I said, 'Hello, Short!' And he said: 'You've made a mistake, mister.' This proves that Short was in town a few days after the last attempt was made against Mr. Osborn, and I connect him with that attempt."

"But no civilian could have gone about that building, in the corridors and through the garret without being stopped."

"No, sir," and Himski hesitated.

"What is your idea, Mr. Himski?"

The latter spoke very slowly, saying: "But a midshipman could have without question, sir."

"By Jove, we're coming to something. Go on," and the commandant's manner was now excited.

"I hate to go on, sir; I may be injuring an innocent man."

"Who was Short's fourth guest, Mr. Himski; the one who is now in the Academy?"

"Creelton, sir. Mr. Osborn's roommate."

"Is that possible? But Mr. Creelton must have returned with his own section after recitation. The man who went through that closet could not have marched back with his own section."

"Mr. Creelton was in sick quarters with



rheumatism in one leg ; he had to go to all recitations but did not march in a section. He went to and from the hospital, as is customary, alone, merely reporting his leaving and returning."

"So Mr. Creelton could have done it without attracting attention?"

"Yes, sir."

The commandant was silent for a while, and then said: "You may be right, Mr. Himski, but these are small grounds on which to accuse a man."

"Yes, sir."

"Now don't talk of this matter to any one but come to me if you learn anything that increases or lessens your suspicion. How is Mr. Creelton thought of in his class?"

"He is rather popular, sir ; he spends a lot of money, and is tremendously generous with it ; he stands high in his studies. The fellows think well of him ; on the whole, though, he hasn't any very intimate friends."

"Have you any suggestion to make?"

"Yes, sir ; Mr. Osborn is worrying himself sick ; he looks upon everybody with suspicion and I don't blame him. I suggest he be ordered to room with me. If Creelton should be the man he will be protected against him, and anyway I think the effect upon Osborn will be good if he rooms with me. He is depending a good deal on me at present."



“ I’ll have that done, Mr. Himski. But it’s difficult for me to conceive the hold Mr. Short could have on any midshipman to compel such dastardly acts to be done.”



## CHAPTER XXI

“CREELTON, I BELIEVE YOU ARE THE MAN ”

SEVERAL days after this last unsuccessful attempt was made to injure Ralph Osborn, at about eight o'clock one evening a window in the second story of sick quarters, the midshipmen's hospital (which was a separate building situated at a little distance from main quarters) was cautiously opened, and a head slowly appeared ; the owner of it looked up and down, evidently satisfying himself no one was about, and then his entire body emerged from the window, and in a moment he was on the veranda just outside. He stepped quickly across the veranda and immediately climbed down one of the supporting columns and was soon in the grounds without having been seen by anybody. He walked quickly and easily toward the other part of the yard, keeping in the shadow of trees and avoiding the walks ; but in crossing Maryland Avenue he espied an officer approaching him. The young man immediately adopted an aggravated limp.

“Halt ! ” called out the officer, well knowing it was study hours, and that no midshipman had a right to be out of his quarters at that time.



“Are you coming from sick quarters?” he demanded.

“Yes, sir,” replied the midshipman, the tones of his voice not expressing the terror he felt.

“Very well,” replied the officer, returning the midshipman’s salute and passing on.

The midshipman limped away for a short distance and then straightening up, hurried on. In a few moments he had gained a thick clump of bushy trees near the band stand where he was lost in complete darkness.

“You’re here at last, are you, Creelton?” said a low voice from amidst the trees.

“Where are you, Short? I can’t see anything.”

“Over here. Well, you’ve failed again, have you?”

“Don’t talk so loud, Short; some one may hear you.”

“I’ll talk as loud as I please. Don’t you tell me what or what not to do, you miserable failure!”

“I’ve had enough of that kind of talk, Short; you can pipe that down from now on.”

“Oh, you have, have you? Perhaps after a little jail experience you will wish you hadn’t been so lippy to me.”

The other in sudden temper jumped upon him, and shook him violently. The weak, dissipated Short was but a child in the hands of the athletic Creelton. His teeth chattered in fear of what might be coming.



“Don't hurt me,” he gasped. “I didn't mean anything.”

“You're a hound,” growled Creelton; “now, Short, just understand one thing: if you ever threaten me again, or say jail to me, I'll beat you into a pulp; I've had all of that kind of talk from you I'm going to stand.”

“What will you do if I use your confession against you? Have you thought of that?”

“Yes, I have; I don't doubt it would dismiss me but I'd make a clean breast of everything. You have that letter, have you? Well, I have all of yours; everything I have stolen has been at your instigation; your letters will prove that; if you try to use that written confession of mine you will start a blast against your name that will fill columns in every paper in the country. If I go to jail I'll take good pains to see that you are my companion there.”

“Creelton, you wouldn't treat me that way after all the money I've given you, would you?”

“Not if you're decent. But I'll tell you frankly I'm done. I'll take no more risks; I'll never do another thing against Osborn. I'm glad the last attempt failed. But it didn't fail through any fault of mine; I did my part perfectly, and I was almost caught. I'm done, Short, entirely done,” and Creelton heaved a sigh of relief.

“Why did it fail, Creelton?”

“I don't know. I've been at sick quarters and



we got rumors, very indifferent ones, about what happened; Scott and the commandant were in the room, and the commandant told Osborn he would be dismissed; then Himski wanted to prove something and the section was marched out and halted; in a few minutes the commandant came up and said it was all a mistake and apologized to Osborn. That's what I heard and I can't afford to ask too many questions. I'm glad it did fail. You'd better give it up, Short.”

“I never will,” snapped out Short. “I've one last plan which I've thought up. It will work if I have fair luck and it will dismiss him but not in disgrace. But there'd be no use in trying it now; I'll wait a year till this blows over. Will you help me?”

“Not a bit of it. I'm through. And don't imagine you can ever hold that confession over my head; if you ever try to do anything with it it will hurt you worse than it will me.”

“Look here, Creelton, I'll pay you well if you'll help me.”

“What is your plan?”

“Will you help me?”

“I will not.”

“Then I won't tell you. Creelton, I want to make a trade; I'll trade your confession for my letters which you have.”

“I'll do that when I graduate, not before.”

“Why not now?”



“Just because I won’t. You’d better take good care of my confession; if it gets out, your letters get out too.”

“I’ll give you five hundred dollars and your confession for them. Won’t you let me have them?”

“I will not.”

“Why not?”

“Just because you want them so badly, to keep you straight. I’ll trade when I graduate.”

“You’ll be friendly, won’t you, Creelton?” asked the miserable Short, anxiously.

“That depends on you.”

“Here’s fifty dollars, Creelton; take it.”

“I don’t want your money; I won’t take it.”

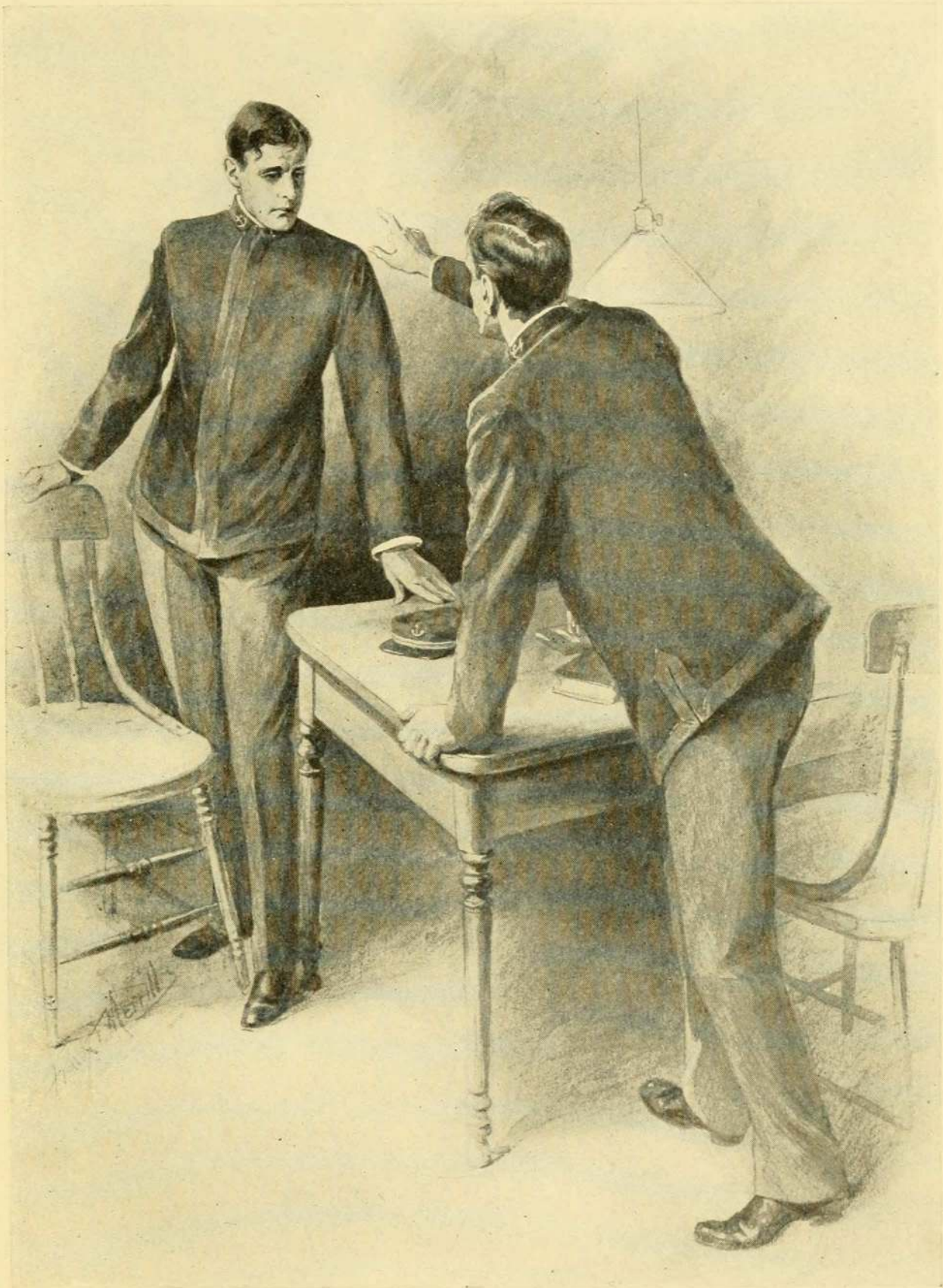
“Oh, yes you do; I’ve lots more, millions. Creelton, let’s be friendly even if you won’t help me against Osborn. I want you to spend your September leave with me; I’ve just bought a beautiful steam yacht; we can have a fine time cruising about in September. What do you say?”

“That will be glorious, Short,” cried Creelton enthusiastically; “I’ll be glad to. But look here, if it were known I was cruising with you everybody would imagine you and I had put up those jobs on Osborn.”

“Oh, you’ll be Mr. Smith till we get away to sea or foreign ports. We’ll fix that all right.”

From now on a most amicable conversation ensued, and Creelton was fired with delight at the





“ You may be the man ”







idea of a yachting trip. They separated after ninety-three, Creelton getting back to sick quarters without his absence being known and Short going out to the hotel.

The next day Creelton was discharged from the sick list and returned to his quarters. He greeted Ralph effusively. The latter looked worried and said but little.

“What’s the matter, Os?” queried Creelton. “You don’t seem pleased to see me.”

“Creelton, there’s only one midshipman in this whole Academy that I trust,” replied Ralph, looking fixedly at him. “I have an enemy here; I believe it is a classmate. I feel I am apt to be stabbed in the back at any moment. I have had too many serious things happen to me to permit me to be easy in my mind; I am haunted by fear every moment. The thought that is in my mind at this moment is,” and here Ralph’s eyes seemed to look Creelton through and through, “you may be the man.”

Creelton’s breath came in quick gasps; he felt as though something within him had ceased to exist, that animation and feeling had stopped for a moment, and then had suddenly burst the barrier in a great rush of throbbing and beating. “Oh, don’t say that, Os; you can’t think that of me,” he blurted out in his confusion.

“You may be the man,” repeated Ralph, almost oracularly, his eyes never leaving Creelton’s



blanched face, with a strange wondering feeling in his heart that he would not be surprised if Creelton were his mysterious, unknown foe.

Before Creelton could make any reply, a tap was heard at the door and the midshipman in charge of the floor entered.

“Osborn and Creelton, report to the officer-in-charge immediately,” he ordered and then disappeared.

They went at once to the office where Lieutenant Fellows was in charge; Bollup was already there.

“Ordered to report to you, sir,” said Ralph.

“Ah, yes. Mr. Osborn, you are to shift room-mates; you are to room with Mr. Himski,—move your things after drill to-day.”

“Very well, sir; but may I ask who has ordered the change?”

“The commandant has. And, Mr. Bollup, you are to room with Mr. Streeter; change after drill. Mr. Creelton, you are to move into a smaller room, to number 169.”

“Very well, sir; but can you tell me why this change is made?” asked Creelton.

“It’s the commandant’s order; you may see him if you desire.”

As they left the office, Ralph said to Creelton in a low voice, with his eyes full of meaning: “Creelton, I believe that you are the man, and I believe the commandant knows it.”



“I’m not; don’t you dare say that,” stammered Creelton.

“I believe you’re the man,” repeated Ralph, walking away.

He went directly to Himski’s room and found him there alone.

“Himski, I’m going to room with you,” he cried, “and I’m so glad. I’ve become suspicious of everybody but you and those people in the section with me; I’ve about worried myself sick. But now I feel I know who my enemy is; I’ve no proof but I feel it in my bones. I believe it’s Creelton. Isn’t that awful? I was suspecting everybody pretty much and I suddenly told Creelton I believed it was he. I’d been thinking that of almost everybody I had looked at lately; but somehow, I can’t tell why, when I said that to Creelton, the conviction suddenly came over me that he was the one who has done all of these terrible things against me. It was an instinctive feeling with me, something that surged up in my heart. It’s an awful thing to accuse a man of; the more I have thought of it the stronger I believe it.”

“What did he say when you accused him of it?” asked Himski eagerly.

“Oh, I don’t know; he denied it, of course, and seemed scared. He sort of stammered. But say, Himski, do you know why I am ordered to room with you?”



“ Yes, Os. I have been studying this remarkable hatred that has followed you so relentlessly. Such a thing must have a cause, and your discovery of Short’s villainy and his consequent expulsion must have been the cause. So I studied up Short’s record and came to the conclusion that Short’s hatred of you must be the incentive. And then I came across the fact that when Short was here as a candidate Creelton lived with him as his guest. So I have imagined that Short and Creelton have been in constant communication, and that Creelton was the active agent of Short. I told this to the commandant and suggested you room with me; I wanted to get you away from Creelton.”

“ By gracious, Himski, you are what I call a real friend. You have done more for me than anybody else could have. Thank you ever so much. I’m certain it’s Creelton. Isn’t it awful to think a man can be so horrible? ”

“ Go slow, Os; we may be mistaken. It’s the commandant’s orders that neither of us is to speak to any one of my suspicions, and of course of your own. We must have some proof, and it may come later if he is the guilty one. You must treat him just as you always have.”

“ I’ll not do so,” cried Ralph, his eyes blazing with anger; “ I’ll punch his head the first time I see him.”

“ No, you won’t, not if you’re sensible; wait till



we can prove him guilty ; it would be foolish now. We might defeat all chances of detecting him.”

Ralph thought for a few moments, and then said : “ All right ; I’ll leave him alone, but I’ll never speak to him. I’ll not be the same to him as I have been.”

“ Very well, Os ; but be careful not to talk to any one.”

“ I won’t, but I’m glad I’m going to room with you. I’ll bring in my things after drill.”

Ralph returned to his room where he found Creelton with a flushed, worried face.

“ Os, you can’t have meant what you said,” he commenced.

“ Every word of it, Creelton,” returned Ralph. “ I believe this whole business is the work of you and Short, that you are Short’s tool. That’s my opinion, Mr. Creelton ; you can go to the commandant about it if you wish ; but I’ll never speak to you again.”

Creelton listened to Ralph with dry mouth and parched lips ; his feet seemed to give way, he staggered to the table, and then helplessly fell into his chair. His breath came quickly and he seemed dazed, for he made no effort to reply to Ralph. His staring eyes, full of apprehension, seemed starting from their sockets. He had the appearance of a thoroughly frightened man ; one whose guilt had suddenly been discovered.

After Ralph was settled with Himski it seemed



to him that he had never been so free from worry since his entrance at Annapolis. He was firm in the belief that Creelton was the secret enemy who had so shamefully attacked him, and now, knowing in his heart that it was Creelton, he no longer worried about it. A secret enemy may be feared while a known one disdained. And this was the effect upon Ralph. A heavy, anxious load seemed immediately lifted from his mind. He kept entirely aloof from Creelton and cut him utterly. Neither he nor Creelton told anybody of the cause of the trouble between them. When questioned Creelton said it was a misunderstanding; Ralph said he could not discuss it.

Toward Creelton Ralph had but one thought; that it was a monstrous idea that a man so vicious and criminal, as Ralph believed Creelton to be, could remain a midshipman; he wanted to have Creelton's room searched and proposed other means to determine the question of his guilt. Creelton's room was searched, at his own request, by Himski, but no evidence was found against him. From this time on Creelton roomed alone and gradually withdrew from the set he had formally been most intimate with. But he was a bright young man mentally, and in his studies stood near the head of his class.



## CHAPTER XXII

### RALPH AT BOLLUP'S HOME

“**H**OW did you come out in your exams to-day, Os?” asked Himski at the end of May, when the annual examinations were held.

“Pretty well, old chap; how did you?”

“I guess I made three fifty, but if you admit doing ‘pretty well’ it means you made a four. It’s wonderful how you knock exams, Os.”

Ralph laughed happily. “I admit I enjoy my studies,” he said; “it now seems so easy to make big marks. But you’ll stand number one for the year, Himski; I’m up in math<sup>1</sup> and skinny,<sup>2</sup> but way down in French. You’re one in that and I’m number thirty; you’ll head the class in the general average for the year.”

“Perhaps, but everything is math next year and you’ll surely stand first. And I’ll be glad to see you, too. But look out for Bollup; he’s doing very well in everything.”

“He is indeed, and he’s a double-riveted, copper-bottomed, bevel-edged, all round good fellow. Nothing could please me more than to see good fortune come to Bollup. But did you see the

<sup>1</sup>Math,—slang for mathematics.

<sup>2</sup>Skinny,—slang for physics and chemistry.



marks old Moehler gave me for the month? He gave me a four every day; he isn't such a bad fellow after all, is he?"

Himski laughed. "I wouldn't think so if he gave me a four for the month," he replied. "Moehler is all right; he just had to get acquainted with the place, that's all. Say, Os, why do you go to the gymnasium every night?"

"Oh, I'm practicing boxing; I'm doing some heavy weight slugging. If I should get into an argument with Creelton I'd probably lose my temper, and we'd get into a fight, and I want to be able to take care of myself."

"You needn't worry. If Creelton is the man we suspect he is, he'll never fight. But we'll have a fine time here during the summer while the other classes are on leave, won't we?"

"Yes, but I imagine it will be hot. We are to work in the different shops every morning and have boat sailing every afternoon."

The end of Ralph's third class year was soon at hand. It is ever a joyous time at Annapolis; for each year at this time it blossoms into happiness. Graduation came and left Ralph a second classman, and he was immediately conscious of added dignity. The old tune "Ain't I glad to get out of the Wilderness" once more rang in his ears. "And in two more years, Himski," he said to his roommate, "that tune will be played for you and for me."



Himski stood first in his class for the year, Bollup second, Ralph third, and Creelton fourth. There were now seventy midshipmen left in the class, some having been dropped, or "bilged," as midshipmen say, for being unsatisfactory in studies.

Ralph's class remained at Annapolis during the summer. The mornings were spent in the shops, at machine work, blacksmithing and boiler work. Here, in grimy working clothes, each midshipman was given tools and required to perform different tasks. At the end of August Ralph could turn out quite a respectable piece of work from a lathe, a shaper or planer; could weld pieces of wrought iron, and was quite an all around machinist. The afternoons were generally spent in different seamanship drills, boat sailing taking up most of the time.

September first soon came and all midshipmen except fourth classmen were given a month's leave. Ralph left at once for Toledo, but in spite of cordial greetings from many friends, with his dear father not there, Toledo no longer seemed home to him; and so in the middle of September he joyfully accepted an invitation from Bollup to spend the remainder of his leave at the latter's home in Virginia.

On his arrival at the little country station, he was most enthusiastically received by Bollup who was waiting for him in a buggy.

"Hurrah for you," called out Bollup as soon as



he caught sight of him. "By George, but I'm glad to see you. Hop in, old man; we've got a short drive and then we'll be home and a real old Virginia supper will be ready for us."

Happy friendship beamed all over Bollup's handsome face, and Ralph felt he was once more with his own kind. The short drive proved to be over three miles in length on a hot, dusty road, through a country where no houses except negro shanties were to be seen. But the happy young men did not mind this, having much to talk about. Finally Bollup turned to the left down a lane, and was soon in a grove of beautiful cedar trees, whose overtowering branches completely embowered the lane they were in. "Our place commences here," said Bollup with satisfied pride. "How do you like it?"

"Like it? I love it," cried Ralph; "it's beautiful. Aren't these woods gorgeous? But where's your house?"

"Oh, half a mile down; we won't see it till we are close to it. Here's where I was brought up, Os; it's the dearest spot on earth to me. And here's where my grandfather and his grandfather's grandfathers for two hundred years back, lived and died. There! You can see the house now; we are just coming in view of it."

"No wonder it is the dearest place on earth to you, Bollup. What a beautiful place to live in!"

The house was built of brick on the simple



colonial lines, with great thick walls and wings on each side. It was the typical old Southern homestead. The lawns were large and beautifully kept and surrounded by heavy woods. At the back was the beautiful James River.

Bollup's father and mother, and his two sisters, Gladys and Dorothy, were awaiting them, and gave Ralph a real heartfelt Virginia welcome.

"I'm glad to meet you, sir," said Colonel Bollup, a Virginian of obsolescent type. "Tom's friends are my friends, sir, and I bid you welcome to our home, sir. This is Mrs. Bollup, Tom's mother, and these young ladies are his sisters. Now, sir, you will probably want to remove the dust of travel and wash up a bit, and, Tom, suppose you go and pick some mint; select only the small, tender, upper branches; we'll introduce Mr. Osborn to a real mint julep, something basely imitated all over the land, sir, all over the land, but never successfully."

Kindly greetings were showered on Ralph by Mrs. Bollup; she was glad to meet one of her boy's friends. Ralph liked them all immediately; he was instantly attracted by the frank, blue-eyed, beautiful Gladys who was about eighteen years old; she was tall and slender and good to look at. Dorothy was six years younger and was evidently much interested in her brother's friend.

Ralph was led into a cool, spacious room. Great content entered his heart as he looked out on the



broad James. "I wish I could always live in a place like this," he reflected. "How beautiful such a life would be!"

He was soon down-stairs, thoroughly refreshed, and there awaiting him was the family. "Here, sir," said Colonel Bollup, "here is the real mint julep I was talking about."

"Thank you, sir," said Ralph, "but I had resolved not to drink anything until after I graduate; I am not lacking in appreciation, sir, but I hope you will excuse me."

"Of course Colonel Bollup will excuse you," said Mrs. Bollup; "you are just right, Mr. Osborn, and I wish Tom would follow your example. Tom, you've already had one julep to-day; you ought not to drink another."

"Pshaw, a julep will never hurt him," said Colonel Bollup. "All right, Mr. Osborn, I'm sorry you won't join us," and in fact he was quite disappointed; "but here's good luck to you, sir," and he drank his julep and then took the one Ralph had declined and drank that with much apparent enjoyment; and young Tom Bollup drank his julep in a manner that showed that a julep was nothing strange or new to him.

With the Bollups Ralph was ushered into a kind of life he had never known. The nearest neighbor lived three miles away, and the Bollup family were sufficient unto themselves. The estate covered more than a thousand acres though but little



of it was now cultivated. In the morning there were pleasant drives and in the late afternoon delightful walks along the beautiful James River. An easy comradeship soon sprang up between Ralph and Gladys Bollup, and they frequently wandered away by themselves.

"Oh, Mr. Osborn," said Gladys, late one afternoon, while they were idly resting, "I'm so glad you didn't take that mint julep; Tom takes them all the time, and papa encourages him to. Sometimes I worry for fear he may take too much; if he should you will try to influence him, won't you?" And Gladys looked at Ralph with a mute appeal in her tender blue eyes that made him feel it would be a great happiness for him if he could do anything for this dear girl.

"Indeed you needn't worry, Miss Gladys," he said. "Tom never took a drink at the Academy the two years he has been there; he is one of my two best friends; you may be sure there's nothing on earth I wouldn't do for him if I could. Don't worry over the juleps; he'll forget about them. But how you must love it here! I could not imagine a more beautiful home. There is your grand old house, with its beautiful, attractive grounds, the beautiful lawns, the majestic old trees situated on this glorious river. I should think you would never want to leave it."

"I'm always glad to get back, but it gets lonely after a time; I'm going to a school in Staunton



during the winters; we have lots of good times there, but the old place does look friendly when I come back to it. But it's getting late and supper will be waiting, so let's go back to the house."

After supper the family gathered on the porch, as usual, chatting till bedtime.

"That Lambo has been seen around here again," remarked Colonel Bollup.

"I hope the scoundrel is caught," exclaimed Tom. "I'd like to pull on a rope that would swing him off the earth."

"How you do talk, Tom," said Gladys. "You know you wouldn't do anything of the kind."

"Who is Lambo?" asked Ralph.

"He's a very bad, desperate negro," said the colonel; "he has served several penitentiary sentences, and a year ago set a house on fire, robbed and nearly killed Mr. Osgood who lives five miles from us. He then disappeared and everybody hoped he would never be seen again. But some of the colored folks say he is back and I suppose we will soon hear of some new act of violence by him."

"I do hope not," said Mrs. Bollup. "By the way, Gladys, our cook tells me that Aunt Sarah is sick; won't you drive over to-morrow and take her a basket of things she would like?"

"May I go too, mother?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes, indeed; I'll have James get the horses ready early so you can start at nine o'clock."



And then Mrs. Bollup explained to Ralph that "Aunt Sarah" was an old colored woman, now living in a little cabin several miles distant, who had served the Bollup family when the colonel was a boy.

"It looks as if we are going to have rainy weather," remarked the colonel; "you had better use the closed carriage to-morrow."

The next morning was threatening in appearance, so the horses were hitched to a very ancient closed carriage and the young girls drove off at nine o'clock.

"Say, Os," remarked Tom, "suppose you and I go to see Aunt Sarah; we can take a short cut through the woods. I don't think it's going to rain; we'll get there by the time the girls do. Aunt Sarah is a real character, one of the old slavery days servants; there aren't many of her kind left now."

"I'll be glad to go," Ralph replied.

"All right; just pick up a ball club in the hall; there are lots of snakes in the woods."

Both young men picked up baseball bats, and started joyously on their tramp through the woods.

It was still and dark through the woods; no sunlight pierced through the heavy lowering clouds overhead, and the thick, intertwined branches, almost keeping out the daylight, made it seem as if it were nearly night.



By the time the carriage containing Gladys and Dorothy had arrived near Aunt Sarah's cabin it was raining heavily. The cabin was a little distance off the road.

"We're here, Miss Gladys; but it's rainin' powerful bad," said the faithful James, stopping the horses and turning around to talk to the two girls through an opening behind his coachman's seat. "It's rainin' too bad fo' you to walk in it; yo'll spile dem nice close of yourn. Yo' lem me take de basket; I'll tell Aunt Sarah you'se heah but can't come out."

"All right, James, take the basket; will the horses stand without hitching?"

"I won't promise they'll stand, Miss Gladys; dey may lie down. Dey shorly am de tiridist horses I ever seen." And James, laughing at his joke, took the basket and soon disappeared down a little lane at the end of which was Aunt Sarah's cabin.

An instant later, to her horror, Gladys saw a negro with an evil, vicious face, come out of the woods on the other side of the road. She instinctively knew him to be that desperate Lambo. Gladys and Dorothy screamed in terror as he approached the carriage, realizing they were in danger. Lambo gave them little more than a passing glance but quickly jumped on the box, and seizing the reins, lashed the horses savagely. A moment later shouts were heard. Lambo turned



around quickly, took a pistol from his pocket, discharged it, and whipped up his horses to a run. He then turned around, and with the smoking pistol in his hand said: "I know you; you're the Bollup girls. I've a score to settle with your father and I can see my way to do it. If you're quiet I'll let you out further down; but if you're not I'll shoot you as I have just shot your brother."

The two girls clasped each other in terror. They were too frightened to speak. Terror-stricken, they looked with blanched faces at the ugly, horrible creature as he spoke. A dread that their brother Tom had been shot possessed them, and they knew not what terrible treatment they might receive at the hands of the desperate negro.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### RALPH SAVES BOLLUP FROM DISMISSAL

“**T**HERE’S the carriage ; it’s stopping,” said Bollup to Ralph, as the two lads emerged from the woods. “Let’s hurry ; we’ll get in it and out of this rain.” And Bollup started on a run. Ralph was behind and to his left. It was at this moment that Lambo had jumped to the carriage seat. Bollup yelled at him ; Lambo turned half around and perceiving Bollup shouted back at him defiantly and fired his pistol at him, driving rapidly at the same time. The desperate negro did not see Ralph, nor did he know, when he had turned around and was threatening the two girls inside, that hanging on the rear axle of the old carriage was a determined, broad-shouldered youth with an ominous looking baseball bat clutched along the axle. Ralph was soon standing on the axle, and peering over the top of the carriage at this lawless negro, who was now lashing his horses into a dead run. Ralph quickly scrambled on top of the carriage, bat in hand. The noise attracted the negro who turned around and saw a determined, powerful avenger raising a club with both hands high over his head. With a howl of rage and fright he started to aim his pistol at Ralph, but in the same



instant the club came down with deadening force on the negro's head, sending the pistol off at the same time. Lambo rolled off the carriage in a heap; his skull was cracked, and the bullet from his own pistol had gone through his heart. Without concerning himself with Lambo's fate Ralph clambered to the driver's seat, reached down and gathered up the reins, and soon had the old horses slowed to a trot. Looking back he saw, some distance behind, Bollup and a negro, evidently James, bending over a man's body lying face down in the road. He then stopped the horses and assured the girls: "You're safe, girls; everything is all right. Tom is beckoning me to come back; I'm going to turn the horses around."

He turned around and started back. At a little distance Bollup came running up. "Bully for you, Os," he cried; "the scoundrel is dead," he added lowering his voice; "let me get in, and drive quickly by where he is lying; I don't want the girls to see him."

Ralph stopped long enough for Bollup to jump inside, and then drove off rapidly, and in half an hour the carriage was back at Hampden Grove. It was raining furiously now, not a propitious time for conversation, nor did Ralph attempt any through the aperture to the brother and sisters in the carriage. He was utterly drenched, and when the horses stopped in front of the house, he jumped to the ground and said: "I'll get you an umbrella



and then will change into dry clothes." He dashed into the house and returned in a moment with two umbrellas which he handed to Bollup who was assisting the two girls out of the carriage, and then Ralph bounded up to his room.

Bollup rushed in a few moments later. "You killed him, Os," he cried; "how did you get his pistol?"

"I didn't have his pistol; I hit him with the ball club just as he fired at me," explained Ralph.

"He killed himself then," said Bollup. "By George, old man, I can't express my feelings. When I saw that villain drive off with my sisters, and saw you climbing up on top of the carriage I was wild with fear and anxiety. I was afraid he would shoot you. The very happiest instant of my life seemed to last ages and ages; it was when you were bringing the club down on the rascal's head. By gracious, but that was well done! And I'm thankful the fellow did his own dirty work. I'm glad he spared some white man the duty of killing him. Come down quickly; father is wild to see you. Mother is pretty much upset, but you'll find you own Hampden Grove and all that's in it."

When Ralph went down-stairs, Mrs. Bollup came to him, and said: "My dear boy——" and then the thought of the danger all of her children had just passed through almost overcame her, and tears flowed from her eyes. "My dear Ralph, I



shall always love you," she said, and then bent forward and kissed him.

"What a hero you are, Mr. Osborn," said Dorothy; "I am so glad to know a real hero."

Gladys thanked Ralph quietly, but with a deep sincerity and appreciation that went straight to that young man's heart. There was much excitement in the family, and Ralph received unmeasured praise and admiration for his timely action.

The few remaining days of his September leave drew rapidly to a close. Surrounded by the love and sympathy of this delightful family it had indeed been a happy visit for him. He was "Ralph" to all of them now, and when he and Bollup left for Annapolis, on the last day of September, it was with a full understanding that he would visit them the next year.

Most of Ralph's second class year at the Naval Academy can be briefly told; all but the final catastrophe which caused his expulsion and brought such bitter sorrow to himself and his friends; because the act he committed was so utterly foolish, and of his guilt there was no question.

That Ralph would stand first in his class for this, the third year, was a foregone conclusion. Until near the end of the year it was a happy time for him, full of hard work which was well appreciated. At the end of the first month he led his class in all of the studies; mathematics,



engineering, electricity, seamanship, navigation and gunnery, all yielded to his bright mentality and presented no difficulty to him. He did equally well in recitations and in examinations, and in his outdoor drills he took great zest. He no longer had a hidden enemy to fear; there was not a question in his mind as to who had been guilty of the shameful acts against him, and knowing it was Creelton, he disdained him. He continually felt it was a great pity that that vicious youth could not be exposed and dismissed, but beyond Ralph's and Himski's suspicions there was no tangible evidence to connect Creelton with those crimes.

Creelton had no intention whatever of attempting to injure Ralph further, and he was much relieved that he had successfully defied Short. Creelton feared Ralph and kept away from him. For a while Creelton avoided the temptation to steal, but after he became easy in regard to Ralph he again occasionally gave play to his old thieving habits. He didn't take anything very valuable, but took a delight in stealing stamps and towels and small articles whenever he was certain he would not be detected.

One morning in February Ralph overslept himself; he didn't hear the six o'clock gun or the reveille of the bugle; Himski was on duty in charge of a floor, so he had left Ralph at a quarter before six. As a result Ralph received



ten demerits; and then as ill luck would have it, he was also reported twice that month: once for "visiting during study hours," and also for "room out of order at inspection"; and so for the month of March, Ralph was in the second conduct grade and deprived of many Saturday privileges.

On the last Saturday in March Bollup came to Ralph and said: "Os, I wish you could come out in town with me to-day. I've met a fine lot of fellows that came down from New York in a private car; I'd like to have you know them."

"I'd like to, Tom; bring them in the yard, can't you?"

"They were in here this morning and have asked some people out to see them this afternoon. I don't suppose they'll come in the yard again. I'm awfully sorry you're on the second conduct grade. Well, so long; I'll see you at supper."

Several hours later Bollup joined Ralph as the latter was waiting for the call to supper formation. Bollup was flushed in face, talked loudly, and laughed boisterously at nothing. Ralph was startled and dismayed. He knew what the trouble was; he had once or twice, though not to the same extent, seen symptoms of the same thing after Bollup had taken mint juleps at Hampden Grove. But where as there they might be harmless, at the Naval Academy drink-



ing them or any kind of liquor would cause a midshipman to be dismissed.

And so Ralph watched Bollup with keen anxiety, hoping no notice would be taken of his condition.

“I’m having a bully time, Os, Os, Os, Os, you good old Os, the bulliest time a midshipman ever had, had, had. And I’m going out to dinner with my chums. I’ve permission to fall out after formation.”

The bugle call now sounded for formation and all midshipmen fell into ranks, and all talking stopped. Fear gripped Ralph’s heart; he did not know what might happen to Bollup, and he himself was powerless to avert the evil.

After supper he hung around Maryland Avenue gate, questioning different midshipmen returning from liberty if they had seen or heard anything of Bollup.

“Why, yes,” at last said a third classman, “I heard Bollup had been taken sick, and was left at the Maryland Hotel by some New York friends of his who have just left town,” and the third classman smiled knowingly at Ralph.

Ralph was now desperate. Bollup was probably unable to take care of himself; perhaps he was in a deep sleep. He would be reported at ten o’clock taps inspection for being out of his room and it was absolutely certain that discovery of his condition would result. This meant but one thing



—Bollup's dismissal from the Academy. And in Ralph's mind rose a picture of the grief and shame that would assail the dear family in Hampden Grove, and of the blasting of his best friend's career. It was now nearly nine o'clock. These thoughts crowded through Ralph's mind, and willing to sacrifice almost anything for Bollup, he shot through the gate and ran down Maryland Avenue.

"Hold on, Osborn, you're on the second conduct grade; you can't go out," called out the midshipman officer of the day at the gate. But Ralph heeded him not and ran on. He well knew he would be reported for "absenting himself from academic limits without authority"; "but I can better take fifty demerits and a month's restriction than have Bollup bilged," he said to himself. At the corner of Prince George Street he met the man he most wanted to see, his roommate Himski. In a few excited sentences he explained the state of affairs to him, and both hurried to the hotel. Ralph here learned the number of the room Bollup was in, and after ordering a closed carriage found Bollup who was in a very sad condition. Himski and Ralph in the meantime had decided upon a plan and lost no time. They hustled their insensible classmate into the carriage and quickly drove to Boucher's boat house. Here they hired a rowboat, deposited Bollup in it, and then each took a pair of oars, the boatman steering, and



vigorously pulled around the city front to the Academy sea-wall.

They hurried Bollup, half supporting him, over the grounds and got into main quarters and into his room unperceived; undressed him and put him to bed, finishing this at "warning bell," five minutes before ten. Himski and Ralph then rushed to their own room.

"You have certainly saved Bollup from dismissal, Os," remarked Himski, after taps inspection had been made. "He would have been reported absent from quarters to-night, an investigation would have followed and nothing could have saved him. By the way, you had to take French leave, didn't you? I hope you're not spotted for that, old chap."

"But I am, Himski; Coleman was on duty at the gate and called to me as I went through. He'll report me all right. But I could better take fifty demerits and restriction than have good old Bollup bilge."

"Certainly, I would have done the same thing; a man must sacrifice something for his friends."

"Look here, Himski," said Ralph after a pause, "I'll be reported to-morrow; now if Bollup knows I'm being punished for helping him he will immediately report himself to try to have my punishment lightened. He'll do that regardless of what it might mean to himself; he's just that kind of a fellow. Now he doesn't know what's hap-



pened, no one else does; suppose we keep this matter entirely to ourselves; if he should find out why I'm reported our good work will all go for naught. Let's keep mum."

"You're right, Os. Poor old Bollup! I hope he'll take a brace; he'll be full of remorse tomorrow."

The next day Bollup had an aching head and an ashamed soul. He had no recollection of what had happened after eight o'clock of the night before. He was then engaging in a mad, reckless frolic with his friends in their private car. After that things were mixed up and confused, and his mind was entirely bewildered as to just what had happened. It seemed to him he had taken a rapid journey, that he had been on the water, and that his two best friends had been with him. He had not the faintest recollection of how he had got to his bed, and as his roommate Streeter was in sick quarters, he had no one to tell him.

The next morning Himski and Ralph greeted him naturally as if nothing had happened. It was on Bollup's tongue to ask some questions but he didn't know what to ask, and was so full of genuine heartfelt remorse that he hated to bring the subject up; and so he made no inquiries, and for many months was in ignorance of just what had been done for him.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### RALPH HAS A JOKE PLAYED ON HIM BY A CANDIDATE

THE next day was Sunday, one of those beautiful early spring days for which Annapolis is justly noted. The trees were coming into full bud, and soft, balmy airs made one regret there were rules and regulations to be governed by, when one's heart longed for the fresh woods. As usual this Sunday morning was a busy one for Ralph. After breakfast he had to prepare his room for the commandant's inspection, and later came that officer's inspection of all midshipmen in battalion formation. And when this had finished the battalion marched to chapel. It must be admitted that on this morning Ralph Osborn paid but little heed to the beloved chaplain's words, or to the singing or prayers. He was uneasy in mind and feared the scene he knew he had soon to face in the commandant's office.

Directly after the service had finished and the midshipmen were dismissed, Ralph was ordered to report to the commandant's office.

"Mr. Osborn," said the commandant, "I have received a report against you for leaving academic



limits without permission. Is this report correct, sir?"

"Yes, sir," replied Ralph.

"Then all I can say, sir, is that I am more than astonished. I am chagrined. We are trying to inculcate in midshipmen's minds a sense of duty and responsibility, and here you, a second classman, nearly a first classman, and to make matters worse, number one man in your class, deliberately defy the regulations and commit one of the most serious breaches of discipline. I am chagrined because I had depended on you as one of the strong men in your class for the good. A man to lead and influence others. In fact I had bragged about you. You are helping to make this place a failure, sir; you can have no appreciation of what the government is doing for you. I am disappointed in you, sir."

With burning face, but saying nothing, Ralph listened to the commandant's scathing reprimand.

"Well, you will be punished, of course. You will receive fifty demerits and will be restricted to the academic limits until June first. But your punishment will be more than this. There is no question whatever but that you would have been next year appointed cadet lieutenant-commander of the battalion. I am glad we know how utterly you defy the regulations, disappointed as I am in you. I assure you that when cadet officers are selected from your class next Sep-



tember your name will not be considered. That will do, sir."

Ralph was glad it was over and that he knew the worst. He had sacrificed more than he had thought about; that the commandant had already in his mind selected Ralph for the highest cadet office was a pleasing thought, and he bitterly regretted that Bollup's conduct had cost him this; yet not for a minute was he sorry he had saved Bollup, even at this great sacrifice.

"What did the commandant say?" asked Himski eagerly, when Ralph had reached his room.

"He knocked me hard," Ralph replied; "gave me fifty demerits and two months' restriction. But look here, Himski, he said I would have been the next four striper;<sup>1</sup> what do you think of that? But now he has promised me a clean sleeve."<sup>2</sup>

"Too bad," said Himski. "I had spotted you for our next four striper. But I hope you are not sorry," he added.

"I'm sorry I had to do it," replied Ralph, "not sorry that I did it."

"Of course, that's the right spirit."

Ralph's classmates were much surprised the next day when his name figured on the conduct report for "Frenching," and much curiosity was displayed about the matter. But he refused to discuss it with

<sup>1</sup> Cadet rank is indicated by stripes on the sleeve.

<sup>2</sup> Indicates a first classman without cadet rank.



anybody, much to Bollup's astonishment. The latter was much puzzled; in his mind he connected Ralph's offense with his own disgraceful conduct and tried by every means to learn the cause of Ralph's act, but with no success.

Ralph didn't mind his restriction. It simply meant that he couldn't go out in the town of Annapolis nor call at officers' houses, and neither of these deprivations proved much of a punishment. He was able to attend the baseball games and shell races on Saturday afternoons, and didn't mind the restriction a bit.

His great ambition was to stand first in his class, and as each month's marks were posted it was certain he would be number one by a large margin; it now looked likely that for the second class year Bollup would stand number two, Himski number three, and Creelton number four.

With no untoward incidents this second class year drew to a close. Studies and examinations had finished, and, as was expected, Ralph led his class. This gave him much satisfaction which was augmented by the pleasure his nearest competitors, Bollup and Himski, expressed when the result became known. Midshipmen were already speculating as to who the next four striper and other senior cadet officers of the next October would be: but in all of the lists prepared Ralph's name had no place. Though first in his class it was certain he would be a clean sleever. Some-



times this was a matter of regret to him, but he always put this thought aside, thinking of the great good he had done Bollup.

Most midshipmen believed that the next four striper would be Bollup or Himski. Both had high class rank and attractive personalities; but the appointments of cadet officers would not be made until the completion of the summer cruise.

It was now the first of June, the beginning of the last week of the scholastic year. The week was spent in drills before the Annual Board of Visitors, and all the Academy was on exhibition.

On the first of the week, Mr. Thomas G. Short, of New York, Saratoga and other places, arrived at Annapolis. His coming was very unostentatious; he signed the hotel register as Goodwin and then went to his room. He avoided all other guests, had his meals served in his room, and was not recognized by anybody. At about eight o'clock of this Monday evening, Creelton, who had evidently been apprised of Short's coming, was admitted into the latter's room. An effusive greeting occurred, and enthusiastic references were made of incidents that happened the previous September when Creelton had been Short's guest on a yachting trip.

"We'll have the same trip again this next September, old boy," said Short.

"Bully," cried Creelton in delight; "I had a glorious time last September. You're awfully



good to me, Short. Hello, what have you got a midshipman's uniform on for?"

Short had thrown off his outer garments and quickly drew on a pair of dark navy blue trousers, and then put on a jacket.

"I had these made at Wright and Duvel's, on Broadway; they fit me pretty well, don't they?" Short now tried on a cap, and then put it on his trunk, and put on a pair of white lisle thread gloves.

"I should say so," ejaculated Creelton in great surprise. "But how in the world can you have any use for midshipmen's clothes, Tom?"

"Oh, I just thought I'd have a little fun, that's all. I'm going to walk around in the dark and imagine I'm a midshipman. Bill, suppose you try on this cit's suit; I want to see how it will fit you."

"What for?"

"Oh, just for fun. It won't hurt you just to try it on."

Creelton was very curious as to what Short was up to, but feeling no harm could result from his trying on this suit of clothes he threw off his uniform, and was soon in the suit Short had handed him.

"What a beautiful suit of clothes," he exclaimed. "The cloth is grand. And, Short, it fits me just as if it had been made for me; it's a perfect fit." And Creelton turned round and



round in front of the glass, casting delighted eyes at his own image in the mirror.

“It ought to be,” said Short. “I had your measure, you know, and ordered that suit made to fit you. I gave Wright and Duvel sixty dollars for it.”

“Short, this is lovely of you. I’ll have a lot of fun inside of this suit next September.”

“Try on this neck scarf,” said Short, handing Creelton a gorgeous four-in-hand tie. The latter eagerly put it on, spending some time in adjusting it. Then Short handed Creelton a hat which fitted him nicely, and then, to his great surprise, stood in front of him and working quickly, affixed to Creelton’s upper lip and chin a thick mustache and goatee. With a pair of heavy gold-rimmed spectacles, Creelton’s disguise was indeed complete.

The latter uttered exclamations of delight as he surveyed himself in the glass. “Why, Short,” he exclaimed, “I wouldn’t be afraid to walk right before the commandant in this get up; no one would ever know me. I’d just as lief go anywhere. What fun it would be!”

“Come on then,” said Short. Grabbing the midshipman’s cap from his open trunk he threw open the door, and in a moment both young men were in the hotel corridor and soon in the street.

“What a lark,” laughed Creelton, hugely enjoying himself. “Where shall we go, Tom?”



“ Anywhere, I don’t care. Who are those midshipmen coming along, ahead of us ? ”

“ It’s too dark to see ; they’re evidently out for a saunter.”

“ I’ll turn my head as they pass. I don’t care to take any chances of being recognized,” remarked Short, doing so as the two midshipmen passed them.

“ Did you see who they were ? ” asked Creelton impressively.

“ No. Why, do I know them ? ”

“ They were your particular friends, Osborn and Bollup. They looked right at me, and didn’t know me from Adam.” And Creelton chuckled.

“ Let’s see where they go,” said Short, and turning around they followed slowly after Ralph and Bollup.

It was Ralph’s first day of freedom, for that morning his two months of restriction had been completed ; and in the evening having liberty, he and Bollup wandered about the streets of the ancient city.

“ I wonder who that swell is,” remarked Ralph, as Creelton and Short passed them.

“ I never saw him before ; probably some out-of-town stranger here for June week.”

“ Who was the midshipman with him, did you notice ? ”

“ No ; I was too busy looking at the swell.”



They now lazily turned into the grounds about the state capitol building, and soon sat down on an iron bench and talked about the coming cruise, and the delightful September leave that was to follow, which Ralph was to spend at Hampden Grove.

Some distance away Creelton and Short were observing them. Then Short said: "Bill, I want a little fun. When I once thought I was going to spend four years in this uniform I conjured up lots of fun in thinking how I might haze plebes after I had been made a third classman. Now you fellows sometimes run candidates a little, don't you?"

"You bet we do, and the candidates like it."

"Well, can't you steer me against some candidate who I can have a little fun with?"

"Yes, indeed. I know one who'd rather be hazed than have a dish of ice cream. He'll do anything anybody who has a uniform on tells him to do."

"Good; he'll think I'm a midshipman in this rig. Is he apt to be far from here?"

"No, we passed him on Maryland Avenue; he was in a bookstore looking at some magazines."

"All right, let's go and fix him. I'm out for fun to-night."

Fifteen or twenty minutes later three young men entered the capitol grounds. One was in midshipman uniform, one was stylishly dressed,



wore spectacles, mustache and goatee. The third was of a class that swarms into Annapolis at certain times of the year, in other words a candidate.

"That's the fellow," said the young man in uniform to the candidate; "he's on the bench over there; there are two of them. I want you to play the joke on the one nearest this end; do you see who I mean?"

"Yes, sir, I've seen him before; he's number one man in the second class, sir."

"That's right. Now you know just what to say and what to do?"

"Indeed I do, sir, and I promise you I'll do my part in the joke."

"All right, it's just a joke; he played one on me and I want to get even with him. He'll laugh over it just as much as you do, but if you do it right I'll be the best friend you ever had at the Naval Academy after you get in. What is your name?"

"Frank Chappell, sir. I'll play this joke well, depend upon me, sir."

"All right, go ahead; we'll be with you in a few minutes and join in the laugh and I'll explain I was running you; that will make it all right with the man you play the joke on."

"Yes, sir; you just watch me and see how well I play it."

Ralph and Bollup still sat on the iron bench



in the state capitol grounds lazily talking over the three years that had passed. Both were about to become first classmen, the great goal of all midshipmen, and they were correspondingly elated.

“Os, you’ve never told me why you Frenched that night two months ago. Why did you do it, old man? You had four stripes cinched up to then, but I’m afraid that spot has killed your chances for anything. Something happened to me that day which would have killed my chances had it become known, but I was luckier than you were. Why did you French, Os?”

Before Ralph had a chance to reply, they were rudely interrupted by an utter stranger, a young man of slender build, about eighteen or nineteen years old, suddenly sitting down on the bench between the two, crowding Ralph over to one side. “You don’t own all of this bench, do you?” he asked Ralph in insolent tones.

Ralph jumped up, angry clear through.

“What do you mean,” he cried, “and who are you?”

“I’m a candidate, old boy,” replied the youth, “and you’re a midshipman. You’ll be standing me on my head in a couple of weeks but you can’t do it now.” With that he deliberately put out his hand and pinched Ralph’s leg so hard that it really hurt him.

Ralph now lost his temper completely and drew



back his fist to strike the insolent candidate, but it went against his grain to strike a man sitting down; and instead he passionately cried: "Get on your head, you bag of cheek; I'll teach you a thing or two before you're much older."

The candidate was on his head in a flash and stayed there till Ralph ordered him to his feet. In the meantime Bollup had watched this episode with much surprise; as the candidate regained his feet Bollup sprang to his and seizing Ralph's arm said: "Come along," and Ralph went with him. He was still very indignant.

"I wish I had punched his face," he grumbled to Bollup; "he needed it."

"You can't afford such luxuries, Os," remarked the other. "I'm sorry you put the man on his head." They now walked toward the Academy both very quiet and Ralph ill at ease. This was actually the only time he had ever hazed anybody and he began to repent having given way to his anger.

That night he told the whole occurrence to Himski. The latter first asked many questions, and then relapsed into deep thoughtfulness.

Two days later after dinner, while Ralph was in his room, the midshipman officer of the day flung open the door, and called out in a loud tone: "Osborn, report to the superintendent immediately."

"I wonder what for?" said Ralph uneasily



to Himski. The latter made no comment and Ralph left the room with a sickening feeling. He saw Bollup was ahead of him, bound in the same direction.



## CHAPTER XXV

### RALPH COURT-MARTIALED FOR HAZING

THE superintendent, who was writing at his desk, looked up as Ralph and Bollup were brought into his office by the marine orderly.

"I am Midshipman Osborn; I have been directed to report to you, sir," said Ralph.

"I am Midshipman Bollup," announced the other.

The superintendent looked keenly at them under his bushy eyebrows, and then said: "I shall read you a letter I received this morning from the Secretary of the Navy."

"The Navy Department is just in receipt of a letter from Annapolis signed by Harry Bucknell, stating that on Monday night, June first, Midshipman Osborn, of the second class, in the presence of his classmate, Midshipman Thomas L. Bollup, hazed a candidate for the Naval Academy named Frank Chappell. You will investigate immediately and report by telephone. If this report is borne out by your investigation, a general court martial will be instantly convened for the trial of the guilty parties."

"What have you to say, Mr. Osborn?" demanded the superintendent looking up.



The blood seemed to congeal in Ralph's veins. His breath came quickly, and overwhelming despair entered his heart. This, then, was the end; his work, his success, his ambitions, his hopes were all for naught, all hopelessly destroyed by a moment of thoughtless folly. He was undeniably guilty of the charge, and a law of Congress required that a midshipman found guilty by court martial of hazing should be dismissed from the Naval Academy.

"What have you to say, Mr. Osborn?" again demanded the superintendent sharply.

Ralph did not, could not reply. He was bereft of speech. A look of appealing helplessness, the expression of a man who has lost his all, was in his face.

"What have you to say, Mr. Bollup?" asked the superintendent.

"Nothing, sir," replied Bollup, with troubled expression.

"Did you see Mr. Osborn haze a candidate last Monday night?"

"Must I answer that question, sir?"

"You must, unless your answer would tend to incriminate you."

"Then I decline to answer, sir."

"On what ground, sir? No charges are made against you."

"Charges may develop against me, sir; I decline to answer on the ground that I might incriminate myself."



“Very well, you are within your rights; now ——”

“Sorr,” interrupted the marine orderly, entering and saluting, “a young gintleman, name o’ Chappell, is here to see the superintindint.”

“Show him in.”

In hopeless despair Ralph recognized the young man who entered as the one he had hazed.

“Are you Mr. Frank Chappell, a candidate?” demanded the superintendent.

“Yes, sir; I was told you wished to see me.” Chappell glanced uneasily at Ralph.

“Do you know who this midshipman is?” inquired the superintendent, indicating Ralph.

“He has been pointed out to me as number one man in the second class, sir.”

“Do you know his name?”

“I have heard it was Osborn, sir.”

“When did you last see him?”

“I caught a glimpse of him the other evening, sir,” replied Chappell in a hesitating way.

“Be very careful in your answers, Mr. Chappell; no candidate is ever admitted as a midshipman whose truthfulness is questioned.”

Mr. Chappell fidgeted nervously, twirling his hat in his hand.

“Did Mr. Osborn stand you on your head Monday night, last?”

“It was just a joke, sir; I met another midshipman a few minutes before who ——”



“Never mind about the other midshipman; answer the question.”

“It was only a joke, sir; the other midshipman ——”

“Never mind the other midshipman; answer my question,” thundered the superintendent.

In a helpless, reluctant way Mr. Chappell replied: “Yes, sir, but I provoked it.”

“That will do, sir. Mr. Osborn, you are under arrest awaiting trial by general court martial. I shall immediately prefer charges by telephone. Return to your quarters and report to the commandant.”

Poor Ralph! Well might he be pitied. He returned to his room stunned with his misfortune. He threw himself on his bed, face to the wall, and lay there dazed. All was over except the public announcement of his dismissal. He lay there for hours, in helpless, hopeless grief, almost in a stupor. The hopes and ambition of his life were killed, and stony despair entered his heart. Not for him was the glorious day outside, nor the companionship of midshipmen, happy that the end of the year had come. The pretty girls that wandered here and there through Lover’s Lane and the shady walks had no interest for the heart-sick youth whose hopes in life were suddenly destroyed.

Himski learned of all the circumstances from Bollup, and that sagacious youth learned of further facts from Mr. Chappell. He went to see the com-



mandant and vainly endeavored to represent his roommate, guilty technically though perhaps he was, in reality the victim of the plot of a wicked person. But he was utterly refused permission to discuss the matter. Getting desperate he grew importunate and made several attempts to see the superintendent, taking Mr. Chappell with him; and finally he was reported by the superintendent for disobedience of orders because of his persistence.

Late the next morning, Ralph received a copy of the charges and specifications on which he was to be tried and was told to be in readiness for trial in twenty-four hours. He received these orders without comment, but with mute hopelessness.

"Os, for heaven's sake get a counsel," implored Himski. "Brace up, man, don't lie down in this way; have some spirit in you, show a little fight."

"It's no use, Himski; I'm guilty and beyond help. I have no defense to make; I have no occasion for a counsel. There's nothing for me to do except to take what's coming to me."

"I'll swear you didn't do it, Os," cried Bollup, impulsively, "and we'll fix up young Chappell; he'll swear the same thing; he's a well meaning young fellow and feels dreadfully."

"You'll do nothing of the kind, Bollup," indignantly exclaimed Ralph; "you're not aware of what you're saying. You must have a contemptible opinion of me if you think I'd allow such a



thing as that. I'm in tough luck but I want no friend of mine to think I'm low down."

"I'm all broken up, Os," said Bollup huskily; "I feel I'd do anything to serve you, even to telling an untruth."

"You'd lie to save me, old man," replied Ralph, much affected, pressing Bollup's hand, "but you'd die before you'd lie to save yourself. No, there's no use; I'm up against it. But I'd like to know what part Creelton had in this, and who the midshipman was that put Mr. Chappell up to this job. It was Short, of course, who planned it. But who was the man with whiskers, and who was the midshipman? By George, Bollup, we passed them ourselves."

"Yes, what a pity we didn't notice who the midshipman was."

"I pointed out Creelton to Mr. Chappell this afternoon, and Chappell is positive it wasn't Creelton."

And so they talked, Bollup commiserating with Ralph, and going over the same ground over and over again.

The court met at one o'clock the next day. Five lieutenant-commanders and four lieutenants, all officers on duty at Annapolis, impressive in their brass buttoned frock coats and swords, with stern demeanor gathered around a long table. A few minutes after they had assembled Ralph was



brought in before them. His heart sank as he glanced at the faces about him ; he knew no other verdict than that of guilty would be forthcoming.

“ Do you desire counsel ? ” he was asked by Lieutenant Colton, who was the judge-advocate of the court and as such the prosecuting officer.

“ Yes, sir ; I would ask for Midshipman Himski-humskonski.”

“ Mr.—ahem, Mr.—would you mind writing that name down ; it’s altogether too much for me, and I must have it correct for the record.”

The sedate members of the court smiled as Lieutenant Colton struggled with the long name.

Himski soon came in and took his place. Ralph had not intended to ask for counsel but his roommate had insisted, and so Ralph asked for him.

“ Do you object to any member present ? ” demanded Lieutenant Colton.

“ I do not,” replied Ralph.

Oaths were now administered to the judge-advocate and to the members ; other necessary formalities were gone through with, and soon the trial commenced in earnest.

“ I’ll read the charge and specification,” announced Lieutenant Colton.

“ *Charge :*

“ Hazing, in violation of the laws of Congress and the articles for the government of the Navy.

“ *Specification :*

“ In that the said Ralph Osborn, a midshipman



of the second class in the Navy, attached to and serving at the Naval Academy at Annapolis, did on or about eight hours post meridian of the first day of June, eighteen hundred and ninety — haze a citizen, Frank Chappell by name, by ordering and compelling the aforesaid Chappell, at the time in the state capitol grounds, in Annapolis, Maryland, to stand upon his head.”

“Midshipman Ralph Osborn,” continued Lieutenant Colton, “you have heard the charge and specification of charge preferred against you; how say you to the specification of the charge, guilty or not guilty?”

Ralph made no reply.

“How say you to the charge, guilty or not guilty?”

Ralph maintained his silence, and after a moment's delay Lieutenant Colton announced: “The accused stands mute.”

“Proceed,” ordered the court's president.

The first witness for the prosecution, and evidently a reluctant one, was young Chappell. He was asked direct questions by Lieutenant Colton, and in vain did Mr. Chappell try to tell of his previous meeting with an unknown midshipman who was accompanied by a be-whiskered and spectacled civilian. He was ruthlessly prevented from referring in any way to what had occurred with the unknown midshipman before Ralph had hazed him. In the cross-examination Himski



in vain endeavored to bring out the fact that he had been acting under the order of another midshipman.

“Why did you sit down between the accused and Midshipman Bollup?” he asked.

“To play a joke, sir,” Mr. Chappell replied. “The other midshipman told me——”

“I object,” snapped out Lieutenant Colton. “I object to bring in any case of hazing except the one here being tried. The court is here to try Midshipman Osborn on a specific charge, not an unknown midshipman who was not present when this offense occurred, and against whom no charges have been made. If the witness has any charges to prefer against any other midshipman let him do so at the proper place, but not before this court, or incidentally in his testimony.”

The court took this view and Mr. Chappell was admonished to confine his testimony to Ralph's actions. Twist and turn as Himski tried he was completely prevented from bringing out any testimony whatever regarding the unknown midshipman. The most he developed was that Chappell had deliberately and intentionally provoked Ralph. But the fact was nevertheless brought out in damning clearness that Ralph had stood Mr. Chappell on his head.

Bollup was the next witness and a most unwilling one, and thus doubly injurious to Ralph. He laid great stress on Ralph's provocation but had to



testify that Ralph had hazed Mr. Chappell. The prosecution had but these two witnesses to call and then rested.

Himski then recalled Mr. Chappell to the stand as a witness for the defense and was so persistent in endeavoring to bring in testimony showing that Mr. Chappell was acting under an unknown midshipman's orders that finally he was severely admonished by the court to abide by its rulings.

"May it please the court," said Himski, rising to his feet, and borrowing the verbiage of the judge-advocate, "I am prepared to prove that the action of the accused was not, in reality or fairness, hazing. I ask for but a chance to prove that Mr. Chappell was but a tool in the hands of a most vicious person, and if the court does not grant me this permission I can but say that it also is but a tool in the consummation of a wicked crime against Midshipman Osborn; I will prove that Mr. Chappell was acting under orders, and thinking it but a joke, deliberately incited and provoked this so-called hazing. Mr. Osborn was, in fact, the injured, the assaulted party; and I can prove by the commandant of midshipmen that Mr. Osborn has been the victim of a relentless enmity that for three years has pursued him with plots so nefarious as to be almost inconceivable."

"May it please the court," said Lieutenant Colton, in sonorous tones, "this court is not ordered to investigate the Naval Academy nor to



go into Mr. Osborn's past troubles, nor to inquire into anything except a certain specified act. I most strenuously object to the accused's counsel bringing into this case any irrelevant matter whatever. The Naval Academy is not on trial, nor is any midshipman except Mr. Osborn. The question before this court is not whether Mr. Osborn is the victim of one plot or a series of plots, not whether he has enemies or has received injuries from them. Nor are his motives on trial. The question before this court is a very simple one; it is to determine whether or no Mr. Osborn stood Mr. Chappell on his head. There is no other question. Nor is this court a proper place for Mr. Osborn to lay his grievances. We may be sure of one thing, gentlemen of the court, and that is that there is a proper place for Mr. Osborn to lay his grievances and to ask for protection, and we may be sure, gentlemen of the court, that full protection and justice will be accorded Mr. Osborn by the authorities. But I most earnestly protest against the introduction of the irrelevant testimony that counsel for the accused is so persistent in trying to inject into this case."

Everybody was sent out of the room while the members deliberated over this point. In a few minutes Ralph, Himski, Lieutenant Colton and Mr. Chappell were all recalled.

"Mr. Him—ah, counsel for the accused, the objection of the judge-advocate is sustained. You



will confine yourself entirely to the matter of the specification."

Himski was thunderstruck and dismayed. His one hope was now destroyed. He had expected to get the whole story of that Monday night's events, believing that if the entire circumstance were known a court of just men would not convict his friend. But it now seemed as if the judge-advocate and the court were actually in league with the villainous Short.

"There's no use, Os," he said sorrowfully. "I can't understand the influence that is working against us."

Ralph, pale and interested in what had gone on, albeit hopeless though he had been through it all, smiled wanly, and said: "Don't take it too hard, old fellow. But I thank God he has given me such a friend as you are to me."

There was an influence working against Ralph though neither he nor Himski knew what it was. At this time of the year the Academy was on exhibition before the whole country, it being "June week," and every day columns were published in the newspapers. Hazing troubles at Annapolis have always been as greatly exaggerated as they have been widely advertised; and this graduating time was the worst time imaginable for a hazing scandal. If hazing had been going on the authorities preferred to know nothing about it; it would work to the great harm of the famous school, and



it was feared that the testimony given in Ralph's trial might lead to many other trials and consequent newspaper scandal. So the court confined itself entirely to the case on trial and excluded, as was its clear right, all outside testimony.

And so Himski failed completely in having any testimony given by Mr. Chappell concerning his encounter with the midshipman and civilian previous to the time Ralph had hazed him.

The trial did not last very late in the afternoon, as Bollup and Mr. Chappell were the only witnesses that appeared before it.

That night in their room Himski for the first time was utterly dejected.

"The injustice of it!" he cried. "Oh, Os, my very heart and soul rebel!"

Ralph, sad and hopeless though he was, now tried to cheer up his friend; neither had the faintest hope for any other verdict than guilty, and Ralph tried to form some plans for the future. "I'll go back to Toledo," he said. "It's an awful blow, my dismissal; there's only one comfort in it all, no dishonor is attached to my name."

"No, Os, nothing but good-will and affection from midshipmen and the respect of officers. But this will hurt Captain Waddell; he took such a keen interest in you."

"Captain Waddell!" exclaimed Ralph. "I hadn't thought of him. He told me to write to him if I ever needed a friend. Here, Himski, let



me have paper and ink ; and find his address for me, will you ? ”

“ He’s in command of the receiving ship at the New York Navy Yard,” said Himski. “ I happened to run across that fact the other day.”

“ Good. He can’t help me—I’m beyond all help, but I’ll write him about everything that has happened to me since I left the *Puritan*.”

Ralph wrote a long letter and poured out his heart to Captain Waddell as he might have to a father. And somehow, when he had posted the letter, he felt easier in mind. Bitter though he was, yet he accepted the inevitable, and that night as he tossed about on his sleepless bed he formed resolutions as to what his future life in Toledo was to be. He felt that as he had done nothing dishonest he would face the people he had known all his life, rather than by going to some other place, tacitly admit he had done something to be ashamed of. “ That’s where Uncle George made his great mistake,” he thought. “ Uncle George,” he mused ; “ I wonder if I shall ever see him and know him.” And with this thought in his mind he dropped into uneasy slumber.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### RALPH IS DISMISSED BY SENTENCE OF GENERAL COURT MARTIAL

FRIDAY, graduation day, dawned beautifully. The sun's rays that beamed through the midshipmen's rooms and that glanced merrily up from the sparkling ripples of the water of Chesapeake Bay seemingly danced their congratulations to the hundreds of happy midshipmen, some of whom were to be graduated that morning; and all of the rest were happy or more correctly, all but one sad hearted young man, because they were to be promoted to a higher class.

At six o'clock the morning gun boomed its reverberating roar, shaking window panes for miles, its echoes dying in the far distance. And immediately in midshipmen quarters were to be heard the hoarse notes of the reveille bugle blasting the last moment of slumber of several hundred midshipmen. And then the Academy awakened from quiet restfulness to uneasy, restless, impatient activity.

"Turn out on this floor, turn out, turn out," were calls that resounded all over the building, and midshipmen of the day's duty ran from room



to room, shouting their cries of, "Turn out," and throwing open the doors of rooms to see the occupants therein were out and their bedding thrown back. Half an hour later came the bugle call for breakfast formation, the signal for midshipmen to fall in ranks. Some, waiting for the call, went leisurely to their appointed places. In the last few seconds of the five minutes allowed before the roll-call, scores of midshipmen, anxious to avoid demerits for being "late at morning roll," ran at breakneck speed trying to beat time, to their respective companies. Then came the final blast of the bugle, and where but a second before noise, confusion and disorder reigned, now a body of several hundred young men, in two unwavering ranks, stood silent, quiet and in complete order. And now came the muster of each company; one heard the stentorian shouts of the cadet lieutenants, the last time each was to officiate as such.

"Third company, left dress! Back in the center, carry it along, up a little on the extreme right! Steady, front!"

Soon the adjutant had reported: "Sir, the battalion is formed."

"Publish the orders, sir," directed the cadet lieutenant-commander.

"Attention to orders," rang out the clear, vibrating voice of the adjutant, and unfolding a paper he carried in his hand, he read as follows:



*“ Navy Department, Washington, D. C.,  
“ June 4.”*

“ SIR :—

“ You are informed that the court before which you were recently on trial found you guilty of hazing and sentenced you to dismissal from the Naval Academy and the naval service. This sentence has been approved. You are therefore dismissed from the naval service. A formal copy of the court martial order in your case is hereby enclosed.

“ Very respectfully,

“ HENRY BROWN,

*“ Rear Admiral, and Acting  
Secretary of the Navy.*

“ MR. RALPH OSBORN,

*“ Late midshipman, second class.”*

Well, it was all over. There was nothing more to be said or done. Poor Ralph! There was a lump in his throat and an utter forlorn sadness in his heart. He was thus rudely torn from the dearest ambition he had ever had; and until this moment he had not known how dear this ambition was. And he was to give up an association with beloved comrades, and to enter fields in which they had no place.

Yes, it was all over; and Ralph thought bitterly of how he had finally reached the summit of his ambition, to lead his class, only to be completely overthrown and have all of his hopes wrecked. “ This is the day the midshipmen get out of the wilderness,” he thought sadly, “ but I never expected to get out in this way.”



After breakfast his classmates crowded around him and expressed their sympathy, and many others of all classes came to him with kind words; for Ralph's frank, kindly nature had made countless friends for him and they left him saying, "Poor Osborn, it's such hard luck; he's such a fine fellow," and like expressions.

The preparations for the great day went busily and merrily on, and Ralph was forgotten for the time. But not by all, for three classmates, Himski, Bollup and Streeter, remained with him, and he felt their warm sympathy. They said but little; their hearts were too full for ordinary talk, but with saddened, deadened spirits, they helped Ralph pack his trunk and get his effects ready to be sent out. Finally they had to leave to put on their full dress uniforms for the graduating ceremonies, and Ralph was left alone. He was dressed in civilian clothes and was looking at his unfamiliar appearance in the mirror when he heard his door thrown open and a voice say: "This is Mr. Osborn's room, sir."

He turned around and saw the white gloved officer of the day usher into his room a gentleman of perhaps fifty years old, gray in beard, red in face, with bushy hair inclined to curl, and kindly blue eyes.

"Why, Captain Waddell!" he cried, at once recognizing his visitor.

"Ralph, my dear boy," said the captain, "I



only received your letter yesterday and I took the midnight train last night." And he shook hands warmly with the young man.

"Why, captain, did you come down to see me, to help me in my trouble?"

"Indeed I did, Ralph, but I don't like the looks of your civilian clothes; what does it mean?"

Ralph silently handed the captain the acting secretary's order dismissing him, and the court martial order of his trial.

"Bad, bad," ejaculated the captain; "how did you happen to do it, Ralph?"

Ralph rapidly related how he had been provoked by Mr. Chappell and how he had lost his temper and had stood Mr. Chappell on his head.

"Who is Mr. Chappell, Ralph?"

"A candidate, sir; he comes up for his entrance examination next week."

"And where did this hazing occur?"

"In Annapolis, in the state capital grounds, sir."

Captain Waddell read the court martial order over again, and then opened his eyes wide, and seemed lost in thought. Then turning to Ralph he said quietly: "What I am saying to you now is in the most absolute confidence; you must promise me you will not talk to any one about what I am going to tell you."

"Yes, sir," said Ralph, wondering what could



be so confidential between an officer of such high rank and himself.

“Ralph, I was assistant in the judge-advocate general’s office for three years and made a deep study of all naval law. I refused the appointment of judge-advocate general, preferring to go to sea. Without undue conceit, judging by the questions that now are occasionally referred to me by the Navy Department, and by the demands continually made upon me by the Naval War College, I judge I am considered an authority on legal questions as they affect the Navy.”

“Yes, sir,” said Ralph, for want of anything better to say.

“Well then. The charges made against you were entirely illegal and never should have been made. The court that tried you were in complete error in finding you guilty; the sentence is ridiculous, and the judge-advocate general made a great mistake in not discovering it. You are just as much a midshipman as you ever were, and I promise you before long you’ll be back in that uniform of yours.” And Captain Waddell thumped the table savagely.

“Captain, captain, what are you saying, what do you mean?” cried Ralph in excitement. “Why is it illegal? Do you mean I may hope for reinstatement?”

“Hope?” said Captain Waddell. “Ralph, I tell you your dismissal is utterly illegal and I



shall have no trouble whatever in having that court martial and all that pertains to it declared void."

This was too much for the lad who had nobly borne up in his grief; he was not prepared for the joy that now overwhelmed him, and he broke down completely with sobbing happiness. Captain Waddell, grim visaged veteran that he was, became affected by Ralph's emotion. Ralph never thought of questioning the captain's statement; it entered into his heart naturally that his friend knew exactly what he was talking about and Ralph had entire belief in his words.

"Now, Ralph," said the captain, "I'm not going to tell you anything more, nor why your sentence is illegal and won't stand. I've told you this much to dispel the woe that had enthralled your soul. You'll go to Washington with me this afternoon and we'll find a boarding-place for you till this matter is settled. I don't want that friend of yours, Short, to know where you are nor what you're doing. You tell me he's a millionaire or supposed to be. It may take six weeks or two months to get the decision reinstating you, and I don't wish anybody to have any idea of what you or I are doing."

Ralph's face fell. "I haven't enough money to pay my board for six weeks, captain," he faltered; "I have barely enough to pay my railway fare to Toledo."

"I saw your Uncle George yesterday," said



Captain Waddell, "and showed him your letter. He is much disturbed about you and gave me two hundred dollars to give to you. Here it is. This is a large amount of money to your uncle, but he is a very generous good man. When you get restored you will receive back pay and can return it to him."

"My Uncle George!" exclaimed Ralph. "Am I never to see or know this good uncle? Can I not go to New York to see him, captain?"

Ralph's heart overflowed with love for this dear uncle whom he had never known, and whose helpful affection was flowing into the channel of his own life.

"Won't you tell me about my Uncle George, Captain Waddell? Can't I see him? Now that my dear father is dead Uncle George is my nearest relation. Why don't I know him better? Why do I hear from him so seldom?"

"All in good time, Ralph. Your uncle is a splendid man; he has my entire respect. But he left for England this morning to be gone several months. You may write to him care of my address; his own is uncertain. But I promise you one thing, your Uncle George and I will be here a year from now to see you graduate at the head of your class."

With that Ralph had to be satisfied, for Captain Waddell did not seem disposed to talk any more about the young man's uncle.



“ Now, Ralph, be at the train at four o'clock. I'm stopping with the superintendent and am to be present at the graduation ceremonies. I want you to write out for me a complete history of what you know of that Short and of all of these mishappenings that have occurred to you at different times, and write a full and complete account of that alleged hazing. At Washington I will get a copy of the record of the proceedings of your court. Good-bye; I'll see you at four o'clock.”

After Captain Waddell had departed Ralph wondered why his court martial and his dismissal were illegal; he had not the slightest notion and soon dismissed that puzzle from his mind, but he had not the faintest doubt of what the captain had told him.

So he danced about the room in a state of happy exhilaration, attending to sending his luggage off, and then he went to the Maryland Hotel where he wrote the account asked for by Captain Waddell and a letter eloquent with love and affection to his Uncle George; he then had a late lunch and afterward went to the Maryland Avenue gate where he had agreed to meet Himski and Bollup and Streeter at three o'clock, to exchange good-byes. Sympathizing deeply with Ralph in his trouble, it was natural that they should be sorrowful and totally unprepared for the rush of happy enthusiastic spirits which Ralph poured over them.



He laughed and rallied them merrily because of their woebegone demeanor.

“What’s the matter with you three chaps?” he cried, as he gave them each a hug. “You look as if you’d been to a funeral instead of a graduation.”

Bollup stared at him in amazement, then got close to Ralph’s mouth with his own nose and sniffed audibly three times. This was too much for Ralph. He burst into peal after peal of laughter; then he drew their heads together and breathed into their faces and said: “There’s nothing there but Maryland Hotel grub. I know what you think, Bollup, but I’ve never taken a drink in my life; but I was never so happy, never so happy.”

There was no doubt that Ralph’s good spirits were perfectly natural and unaffected, and being so they were infectious and soon Himski, Bollup and Streeter bubbled over with happiness and nonsense.

These comrades loved each other, and seeing Ralph so wildly happy the gloom that had so enveloped them was as quickly and as completely dispelled as a northwest wind lifts a thick fog from the Maine coast.

They escorted Ralph to the railway station and good-byes and mutual promises to write were exchanged, and thus Ralph left Annapolis.

And then the amazement returned to the three



friends. "What can have happened to Os?" wondered Himski in deep thoughtfulness. "He's as happy as if he had been reinstated."

"It's something big," remarked Bollup, "and we couldn't get him to say a word about it; but I'm feeling much better, aren't you, Himski?"

"You bet I am, and I've a queer happy feeling that we're going to have old Os back with us, and that he knows it."



## CHAPTER XXVII

### HIMSKI AND COMPANY ARE JOYFULLY ASTONISHED

NINE weeks had passed since the occurrence of the episode related in the last chapter. That graduation day which had made Ralph Osborn's classmates first classmen, and had seen himself dismissed from the Naval Academy was now a thing long passed and was of no further interest. It is the uncertainty of the immediate future that dominates our thoughts and actions, not the pleasant recollections of a recent past. In moments of relaxation we reminisce and talk of those grand old days of the beautiful long ago, not so much of what happened six months ago. And Bollup and I, and you and Himski, all veteran officers, laugh and talk over those exciting incidents of our midshipman days. They always remain fresh in memory, and the beautiful friendships there formed grow more precious each year.

But it is not only older officers that reminisce; midshipmen as well are great at that, only their "long ago" commences when they were fourth classmen.

"Way back in ninety ——, when I was a youngster," commenced Bollup, and then he was surprised



at an amused laugh from Himski. "What's the matter, Himski?" he asked his comrade.

"Oh, I was laughing at that 'way back' of yours, seeing it was but two years ago when you were on your youngster cruise. But go on, Bol, spin us your yarn; what happened in that 'way back' time of only two years ago?"

"Oh, nothing special, but I was just thinking of what good times we used to have with good old Os; and isn't it strange we never hear from him? He was so happy that last time we saw him, one could not have believed he had just been dismissed. Have you any idea what his address is Himski?"

"Not the slightest, but I'm sure Os will write. He had something up his sleeve and I've imagined he has been waiting for it to materialize. Well, our first class cruise is nearly over; it's been a fine cruise and I've only one regret about it and that is that Os isn't with us. Here it is nearly the middle of August and next week we start for Annapolis; and two weeks from now we'll commence our September leave."

These young men were reminiscing on their "long ago." They were making their first class practice cruise aboard the battle-ship *Texas* which was now swinging around her anchor at the mouth of the Thames River, below New London.

It was late Saturday afternoon and the midshipmen, having finished supper, were idling on



the starboard side of the deck, near the starboard twelve-inch gun.

“Who went on liberty to-day?” asked Bollup.

“Billy Bacon, Smith, M., Warren, Taylor and quite a lot of others; why?”

“I guess New London isn't so attractive as it was when we first anchored here. There's some midshipman coming back in a shore boat; don't you see that little rowboat pulling over to the ship? There's a midshipman in blue service uniform in the stern sheets.”

“You're right, Bol; but I imagine it isn't a matter of the town being less attractive; probably the midshipman is broke.”

“If he were broke he wouldn't be hiring a shore boat, would he?” inquired Bollup with convincing disdain. “I tell you the girls of New London aren't what they used to be. Why, when we were youngsters there was the daisiest set of girls here I ever knew.”

The small boat drew near the gangway. In an idle way Himski, shading his eyes from the setting sun, and only half interested, looked at the small boat and its occupants.

Of a sudden he straightened up, and then breathlessly cried out: “Look, Bol, look! Why man, it's Os; he's come back to us.” And forgetting their dignified rank as first classmen Himski and Bollup uttered wild whoops of joy and ran to the quarter-deck like madmen.



Ralph paid the boatman a quarter and then walked up the gangway to the quarter-deck to report.

The officer of the deck happened to be First Classman Creelton. The regular officer of the deck was below at dinner.

"I've come to report to the captain, sir," announced Ralph in a strictly official tone.

"Why, why, what are you doing here?" stammered the utterly bewildered Creelton, while Bollup and Himski, hardly able to control themselves, stood on the side, impatiently waiting for Ralph to finish his reporting.

"That's none of your business, sir," said Ralph savagely; "you will please send in word to the captain that First Classman Osborn, first classman, please, is here to report in obedience to orders from the superintendent."

"The captain is at dinner with some guests, sir," faltered Creelton, "and gave orders that no reports should be sent to him till after eight o'clock."

"Very well; I'll report to him then. And by the way, Mr. Creelton, should you happen to be in correspondence with the friend who took you on a yachting trip last September, you might report to him that I came aboard in your watch. And advise him that if he ever dares to touch me again I have friends that will crush him, him and his crew."

"Hoorah!" screamed Bollup, unable to stand any more of this. "Bully for you, Os," and Ralph found himself seized in the arms of Himski and



Bollup, and the latter two, shouting and yelling like Indians, rushed him forward. Cheer after cheer from forward greeted the ears of the aghast Creelton, who, not knowing what had happened, and fearful of what might have been discovered, was in a paroxysm of fright.

Ralph had never before appreciated how popular he was. He was actually battered with the enthusiastic hugging he received and his arm was nearly wrenched off. And one of the most delighted of all was Plebe Chappell.

Everybody was wild with joy at seeing the unexpected Osborn with them again, and hundreds of questions were shouted at him.

“Tell us all about it, Os; how did you get back? A midshipman bilged for hazing isn't eligible to reinstatement. It's against the laws of Congress. Tell us about it this minute, Os, or I'll bust,” shouted Bollup.

Ralph was indeed happy at the outburst of joy which his sudden reappearance created. “Give me a chance, fellows, and I'll tell you all about it,” he cried. “Here, Himski, get upon that carpenter's bench and read this paper; it explains everything.”

Himski snatched the paper from Ralph's hand and commenced to read as follows:

*“ Navy Department, Washington, D. C.,  
“ August 9, ———.*

“SIR:—

“This Department referred to the Department of Justice certain legal questions concerned



with your dismissal from the naval service by sentence of court martial for the hazing of Mr. Frank Chappell, a citizen in the town of Annapolis.

“The attorney-general has decided that for a naval court to have cognizance of an offense of hazing the hazing must have been on a person in the naval service. That your offense was committed on a civilian and therefore was not within the legal naval meaning, in your case, as defined by act of Congress, of hazing. Your offense was an assault upon a citizen in the city of Annapolis, and for that offense you are amenable to the municipal laws of that city.

“The attorney-general decides that you were not legally subject to trial for hazing; that the charge, trial, finding and sentence were all illegal. The order of your dismissal is therefore and hereby revoked from the time it went into execution, During the time of your absence from the Academy your status is to be considered as that of a midshipman on leave.

“A copy of the attorney-general’s complete opinion is herewith enclosed.

“You will acknowledge the receipt of this letter, and with it will report immediately to the superintendent of the Naval Academy at Annapolis.

“Very respectfully,

“HENRY BROWN,

“*Rear Admiral, and Acting  
Secretary of the Navy.*

“TO MIDSHIPMAN RALPH OSBORN,

“*First Class, Washington, D. C.*”

NOTE.—A midshipman who had been dismissed for hazing a candidate was reinstated by decision of the attorney-general of the United States on the grounds expressed in the above letter.



Admiral Brown might also have included in his list of titles "and brother-in-law and dear friend of Captain Waddell," but as Himski read the letter this additional definition of his place in the world did not appear, though wise ones may have a notion, incorrect of course, that these latter unexpressed titles may have had something to do with the alacrity by which Ralph's case was rushed through the attorney-general's office.

Judging by the cheers that greeted the reading of the letter it may be safely said they all heartily approved of the attorney-general.

Ralph soon went aft and was directed to enter the captain's cabin. Here he expected and was prepared to receive a lecture, but was amazed as well as pleased to be most cordially received.

The captain shook hands with him and told him he was glad to see him, and Ralph enjoyed the short talk he had with him. He left the cabin a little after eight, and with some uneasiness saw that the officer of the deck, who was pacing up and down, was none other than his relentless prosecutor, Lieutenant Colton, the judge-advocate of his court martial.

Ralph started to walk by rapidly, but Lieutenant Colton met him with outstretched hand. "By George, Osborn," he exclaimed, "I can't express the pleasure I experience in seeing you back with us. I never had such disagreeable duty as that of



prosecuting you. I congratulate you; I'm delighted you're back with us."

"Why, Mr. Colton," said Ralph much pleased, "why, I'm surprised; I was afraid you'd be disappointed to see me back."

"Disappointed! Why, my dear boy, I'm really happy that you're back!"

"You certainly acted as if you wanted to have me dismissed," remarked Ralph with some spirit.

"Hum, perhaps I did. But I really wasn't working for that. You see a judge-advocate always has his own reputation at stake; it wasn't that I wanted to see you dismissed, but it was vitally necessary that the government's case against you should be properly presented, that was all."

"Then you really feel friendly to me, Mr. Colton?"

"Indeed I do. My only disappointment is that you'll probably get a clean sleeve for your first class year and you ought to have four stripes."

"Thank you, Mr. Colton; I am so glad the officers are not disappointed that I am back. The captain was awfully kind to me, and when I reported to the superintendent he was like a father. Good-night, sir."

"Good-night, Osborn. Come up to me some time when I have a mid-watch and we'll have a talk."

Ralph quickly settled down to ship's ways.



He was detailed to different duties with the rest of his class just as if he had not missed most of his cruise. But no words of the pen can express the joy he felt at being really a midshipman once more, and of his heartfelt happiness in being with his beloved comrades, Himski and Bollup.

The two weeks aboard the *Texas* passed swiftly and without special incident, and on August 28th all midshipmen were once more assembled at Annapolis and immediately dispersed to their homes; First Classman Osborn was soon on his way to Toledo, his program being to spend two weeks there and three weeks at Hampden Grove with Bollup.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### FIRST CLASS LEAVE AT HAMPDEN GROVE

RALPH'S two weeks in Toledo were crowded with pleasant outings, and forcible were the indignant exclamations of some attractive young ladies when they learned their midshipman was to desert them; for, except at Annapolis, midshipmen are rare. Of course they wormed from him where he was to spend the rest of his September leave.

"With your classmate Bollup!" cried Mary Ainsworth. "Bollup, Bollup, Bollup! Gracious, what a name! And what's his sister's name, Ralph?"

"Gladys," replied Ralph, innocently, whereupon everybody laughed at the trap he had fallen into; Ralph reddened and then joined in with them.

"Well," said Mary Ainsworth scornfully, "I don't wonder she was named Gladys; something should be done for a poor girl born with such an awful name as Bollup; her family evidently tried to strike an average when they gave her her first name."

And so Ralph said his good-byes and in the middle of September was once more at Hampden



Grove. Here nothing could exceed the loving cordiality with which Mrs. Bollup greeted him, the explosive joy of young Bollup, the unrestrained delight of Dorothy; Colonel Bollup soon started to mix up the mint juleps.

“My own recipe, sir; they’re not to be equaled in all Virginia, sir,” and he was much disappointed when Ralph refused, and openly disgusted when young Tom said, “No, thank you, dad.”

However the old gentleman drank all three, not wishing to see such good things wasted, and his good humor soon returned.

“Tom hasn’t taken a single julep this September,” remarked Mrs. Bollup, with evident satisfaction; “I’m awfully glad he doesn’t.”

“Stuff,” snorted the old gentleman; “my juleps would never hurt any one.”

Tom colored and looked uneasy and changed the conversation.

There was yet another of the family who welcomed Ralph to Hampden Grove. She gave him a warm hand clasp, and with radiant face and eloquent eyes said: “I’m so glad you’re with us again, Ralph.” This was all, but it was enough.

Gladys Bollup has already been described. In the year since we have seen her she had grown and developed about as much as is to be expected in a girl of her age. A year ago her eyes had been deep blue, so assuredly they were not light brown or hazel or green now. She then was tall



and slender, and still is. The time is coming when she will have lost her girlish figure, and her hair will be gray, but tell me, Himski, can you not in the bright happy youth of your long ago, recall to mind some girl who is even dearer now than she was then, though to-day gray hair has replaced the golden locks that once, in your mind at least, dazzled even the sun with its glory; has not the same face with the true heart illuminating it grown even more beautiful?

The truthful writer of these pages has not much to say of these two weeks that Ralph spent with the Bollups. Soon Dorothy complained that she didn't see much of Ralph; he was always away with Tom in the mornings and he was forever taking long walks with Gladys in the afternoons and evenings. And in truth Dorothy was right, and she pouted because she wasn't asked to go along, and thought her sister was "real mean."

Ralph and Gladys would wander for miles down the path by the river bank; they strolled through the woods and across fields. They must have had much to talk of, but what it was all about I do not know. But one thing is certain, however interesting their talks may have been, they didn't seem to tell the rest of the family of the subjects that so engrossed them.

As a faithful recorder of the doings of these young people I should pick out some night and record their conversation; and I should tell how



the moon rose, or sank, of how fitful winds moaned and sighed, or of the balmy breezes that floated in from the beautiful majestic waters of the river James. And I should tell of the twinkling stars and of glorious cumulus clouds in the heavens overhead. But this would be imagination, which is not my forte. No doubt the stars twinkled, the winds must have blown, the leaves must have rustled on the tree branches pretty much as they did when you, Himski, went wandering about the woods with some pretty girl. But I cannot speak with exactness of these things however attractive or necessary they may be to a story, simply because they were not recorded at the time. However, we may be sure of one thing, that our friend Ralph had a most happy time at Hampden Grove, and that he and Gladys Bollup were fast friends as indeed he was with all the family.

One afternoon toward the end of Ralph's stay a letter was handed to him. "Hello!" he exclaimed, "here's a letter from Himski." A moment later he gave a joyful shout. "Hurrah for you, Tom!" he cried. "You've got four stripes. Himski has senior three and adjutant. The other three stripers are Warren, Streeter, and, hello! Billy Bacon gets three—now who'd ever suppose Billy would get anything—and Taylor also. Creelton only gets a buzzard—I'm glad of that; I hope he won't be in my division; I'd hate to be in his company on any terms."



Bollup listened with happy eagerness.

"Hooray!" he cried. "Four stripes, by Jiminy, that's glorious. I'll have a bully good battalion this coming year; and Himski is to be my adjutant, is he? Well, isn't that fine? By George, I never was so happy in my life!"

And Bollup looked it. It was indeed an honor that had come to him. "Just watch me next year," he joyfully cried. "I'll get a good feed every Sunday at some officer's house; it will be Mr. Bollup this and Mr. Bollup that from October first till I graduate. The commandant will call me in and invoke my aid to steer the battalion right and I'll help the old boy so long as he doesn't spoil any of my fun. Gee whiz, I'm going to have a good time this last year; you can put that statement down in the ship's log."

"What does four stripes mean, Thomas?" inquired Colonel Bollup with great interest.

"Four stripes?" repeated Bollup. "Why, it means that your hopeful son is cadet lieutenant-commander, the boss of the ranch, the highest thing a midshipman ever gets to be. That's what it means, dad."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the colonel, full of delight; "now in honor of this great event suppose I mix up a real Virginia ——"

"Ralph, what did they give you?" interrupted Gladys. "I'm sure if Tom gets four stripes you ought to get six."



Ralph laughed joyfully. "Thank you, Gladys," he replied; "I got a clean sleeve, which is more than I deserve. I'm happy enough to have that."

"Why, your sleeves are never dirty," remarked Dorothy, thinking she ought to show an intelligent interest in the talk that so absorbed them all; "why, I've heard mamma say you're one of the neatest young men she ever knew."

Bollup and Ralph thought this a great joke and laughed uproariously.

"I'll tell you about it, Dorothy," Ralph said. "You see we have cadet officers at the Academy, whose rank is indicated by the number of stripes on their coat sleeves. And we have petty officers, or non-commissioned officers as they call them in the army, whose rank is shown by eagles, which we call buzzards, on their sleeves. Now the presumably poorest, least deserving of the first class get no rank, are high privates, and they have no mark at all on their sleeves. And I get a clean sleeve, which is really all I deserve. And your brother Tom gets four stripes which makes me very happy," and indeed Ralph looked it.

"Let me see Himski's letter," cried Bollup; "I want to see it myself," and he took it and started to read it aloud.

"Dear Os," he commenced, "the assignments of the cadet officers of our class are announced and Bollup gets the four stripes which for ten thou-



sand reasons should have gone to you, the best all around man in the class and number one to boot. You get a clean sleeve, old man; this goes to prove that the officers who made out the stripe list are as great a set of ninnies as usual."

Bollup stopped and looked up ruefully. "Well," he said, "Himski isn't very complimentary to me, is he?"

"I think Mr. Himski is just right," said Gladys decidedly. "The idea of those officers giving Tom four stripes and Ralph nothing! Why, that's ridiculous. Tom isn't fit to be cadet lieutenant-commander of anything. All he thinks of is having a good time and getting good Sunday dinners and walking around so that people can see what a great man he is. Now my idea of the highest cadet officer, the one in command of all the midshipmen, is that he should be ambitious to have them well drilled and to act right. But Tom! You heard him talk, and he meant just what he said. He'll make a precious fine senior midshipman, won't he?" and Gladys tossed her head indignantly.

"You know a lot about it, don't you?" remarked her brother, sullenly; "you'd better come next year and show me how to run it."

"Tom will do splendidly, Gladys," said Ralph, anxious to defend his friend; "don't you worry. I'm awfully glad he's our four striper; they couldn't have found a better one in our class.



You'll be proud of your brother next June when you come to see him graduate."

"Of course I will, Ralph; but why didn't those officers give you some stripes? you certainly deserve them."

"Oh, I have a bad record. You see I was court-martialed for hazing; that killed my chances."

"That wasn't all, Os," said Tom; "that Frenching you did, at least the fact that you were caught Frenching, had a good deal to do with the clean sleeve they gave you," and a look of great interest came into Bollup's eyes. "Now, Os, we're all here, far away from the Academy, tell me why you Frenched that night; I've been more curious about that than anything that ever happened at Annapolis. You see," Tom continued, turning to Gladys, "Os Frenched one night last spring; that is he went out of the Academy when he had no right to do so; to leave academic limits without authority is one of the most serious breaches of discipline a midshipman can commit. It's nothing against his honor; I Frenched a dozen times last year and never got caught. The wrong in violating regulations is being caught at it. Now this was the only time in his life that Os Frenched and he had the hard luck to get spotted. The queer thing about it is that he has never told a soul why he Frenched that night. Really, it's a mystery. I've always been wild to know the reason; come



now, Os, old boy, let's have it. We'll all keep it secret, won't we?"

"Oh, Ralph, do tell us the secret. I just love secrets," cried Dorothy, her eyes opened wide, thinking she was going to learn something of mighty moment.

"Perhaps Ralph doesn't want to tell," said Gladys, but much interested and hoping nevertheless that Ralph would explain the mystery.

Ralph colored up quickly and was most uncomfortable. "Now, Tom," he said, "this isn't at all kind of you. I'm sorry I can't talk about the matter but I'll just say one thing, I did nothing then that I've since regretted or been ashamed of; and if it did result in a clean sleeve for me, why I'm satisfied. Please don't ask me to say anything more about it."

"Of course we won't, Ralph," said Gladys gently. "I'm sure you had a good reason for doing what you did. But I'm awfully sorry you are not a cadet officer just the same. I'm sure you ought to be."

"Indeed he ought to be," broke in Tom; "everybody in the class knows that, and Himski is dead right about the four stripes. They should have gone to Os by right, and it's a matter of hard luck they didn't. He's got a clean sleeve, but everybody in the class knows he's the best man in it. I'm awfully sorry, Os, indeed I am."

"Thank you very much, all of you, for thinking of me so highly. Indeed I'm happy enough



to have the right to wear the uniform. I never had the faintest notion of getting stripes and I'm not a bit disappointed." Yet all the same, Ralph was secretly very happy with Himski's remark and with the friendly comments of Bollup.

The end of September soon came and the two midshipmen prepared for their return to Annapolis. But before leaving it was decided that Gladys and her mother would be present at the graduation of these two classmates. Gladys was wild with delight at the prospect; she had heard of the glorious times girls have at the Annapolis June week. Dorothy was quite hurt; she didn't see why she should not go with her mother and sister.

Who can tell of the last long walks in the dying sunlight and in the cool evening breezes of Ralph and Gladys? of what they said to each other, of the important thoughts they exchanged? Surely not you or me, Himski; and it wasn't very important either, and must have been forgotten long ago. But on the morning they left Tom turned to his sister and said: "Gladys, I'll try to get you a partner for our class german and for the graduating ball. Partners are scarce those times and girls are plenty, but I hope I'll find you one," to which Gladys instantly replied:

"Don't you bother about getting a partner for me, Tom Bollup; don't you worry a bit about that." And then she colored up and blushed prettily, and it must be confessed that Ralph looked



conscious and suddenly became much interested in some cirrus clouds in the far distance.

Bollup looked from one to the other and then gave a short, merry laugh, and said: "All right, sis, I won't."



## CHAPTER XXIX

“TURN OUT ON THIS FLOOR. TURN OUT,  
TURN OUT”

IT is October first, and once more are exchanged joyous greetings among several hundred young men at Annapolis; fresh from a happy vacation they hurl at one another warm welcomes. It was an enthusiastic breaking up and departure a month ago but it is none the less a joyful, eager return, for the hearts of midshipmen, their interests, their ambitions, are always centered at the Naval Academy. We see the same young faces of our familiar acquaintances, yet in their spirit is detected a difference. There is always evident in the bearing of the senior class a conscious superiority; and even the clean sleeves, little though their own authority be, feel they belong to the governing class and take pride in the thought. In front of the center of the battalion, facing it as it has assembled in ranks, proud of the honor that has come to him and tremendously conscious of the four golden stripes that brilliantly adorn each sleeve, stood Bollup. A few paces before him stands another well-known friend, Himski, in the act of saluting and reporting:—“Sir, the battalion is formed.” In front of each company of midshipmen are stal-



wart, erect young men in whom it is hard to recognize the slouchy gawky plebes of three years before. And in an unimportant place in ranks, with no authority, stands the number one man of his class, Ralph Osborn.

There was no bitterness in Ralph's mind that he should have been so signally left out when the class honors were distributed; he was thankful enough to be in the dark blue uniform, clean though his sleeves were of any ornaments; but it must be admitted that he took much satisfaction in knowing that, though now far down in authority in his class, this would be but temporary; that after graduation and thereafter as long as he was in the Navy he would always have rank in his own class and authority in accordance with his class standing. He would always be the first of his class on the Navy list, would always be the first of his class to be promoted to the higher naval ranks. In but a few months he would be senior to Bollup, Himski and all of the rest. And so Ralph was entirely content.

As battalion commander, Bollup made a noble figure and all of the new cadet officers attacked their responsible duties with genuine desire to excel.

Till toward the end there is but little to tell of Ralph's first class year. Though he did not take part himself, he enjoyed the football games in which the Academy played a successful season.



In Philadelphia from the bleachers he saw Bollup make that wonderful run, dodging, twisting, squirming and diving through eleven West Point players, bringing victory in place of what had seemed certain defeat for Annapolis. Indescribable was the pent-up, agonized joy that surged through Ralph's mind at this moment, and equally so of the craze that swept the midshipmen to a howling, delirious happiness.

This year there happened to Ralph no untoward incident; no more plots were planned against his peace of mind and good reputation. In truth nothing could have induced Creelton to have made further efforts, for if there was one person Creelton feared, it was Ralph. He knew Ralph was certain of his guilt and rejoiced that no tangible evidence of it had been found out. So he had no higher ambition than to leave Ralph entirely alone. But Creelton could not restrain his predilection for stealing. He was a degenerate, of bright mentality to be sure, but utterly unable to control himself. He was keen to take no chances and though at times articles would disappear, he was never detected. Ralph's class became uneasy; that there was a thief in the class was a matter quietly believed by many, and when at times it was discussed in Ralph's presence he would always say: "Creelton's the thief." Except perhaps by Bollup and Himski no one could believe that Creelton was a thief, and Himski



cautioned Ralph to make no such charges for he had no evidence and could not prove them.

It is in the constantly recurring formations and drills that the cadet officers at Annapolis exercise their authority. In these Ralph, being a “clean sleever,” took his place in ranks at formation, shouldered a gun in infantry, manned the drag rope in artillery, and pulled on ropes in seamanship drills. And in it all he was perfectly happy. Though in these drills he was not to be heard shouting orders nor seen proudly carrying a sword in front of a company of midshipmen, yet he had his triumphs, and in these his soul was deeply satisfied; for at the end of each month when the marks for departments were published, the name of Osborn led the first class in seamanship and in navigation, in gunnery, electricity and steam engineering. Before the middle of the first class year it was certain beyond all doubt that Ralph would be graduated at the head of his class on final average, and as such, despite his being a “clean sleever,” he was a marked man.

To Ralph, though he loved him as a brother, Bollup was a great disappointment as cadet lieutenant-commander. The latter was immensely popular with the battalion of midshipmen and with the families of officers stationed at Annapolis. In this high position Bollup had little if any ambition other than to gratify and further his social



pleasures. When at Hampden Grove he had so impulsively told of the good times he anticipated his four stripes would bring him he had expressed his natural characteristics. As the highest ranking midshipman in the Academy it was to have been expected that Bollup would exert all of the penetrating influence of his rank upon the other cadet officers, would constantly have kept them spurred up to a high sense of duty. But Bollup wanted fun more than anything else and as a natural result did not spend much time thinking of his really important responsibilities. It was but natural that the standard of duty which at this epoch existed in the battalion was not of a very high order as midshipmen battalions go.

Ralph at first had great hopes of Bollup as four striper. In his secret heart he felt that he had something to do with the giving of that rank to his winsome friend. He had certainly saved him from a report that would have meant expulsion. Ralph was at first disappointed and then became grieved. He essayed a number of times to talk seriously to Bollup, but the latter at first only laughed good-naturedly at him.

“Look here, Os,” he said, “don’t preach to me; I didn’t ask for these four stripes and I didn’t boot-lick for them either; and I’m going to do just as I please.”

“All the same, you ought to have some regard



for the position you occupy,” argued Ralph; “you’re the first four striper I ever heard of that Frenched.”

“Now, Os, don’t take advantage of your friendship; if I French it’s my own business,” replied Bollup with some temper. “I don’t interfere with you and I should hate to have any coolness come between us. I don’t blame you for being rigid with yourself and with others when you are on duty, but I’m a little too old and have been at the Academy too long to have any one tell me what I ought or ought not to do.”

“Nevertheless, Bollup, hating to interfere, and only interfering because of my friendship and interest, I must again ask you to reflect upon the course you are running. You are four striper, the senior midshipman here, and yet you repeatedly French. If you have no regard for your personal influence then it is up to you to have some for the stripes on your sleeve. And if this reasoning doesn’t touch you then just think what would happen to you if you should get spotted, Tom. I appeal to you first because of your duty, and second for your own interests.”

“Look here, Osborn,” cried Bollup, in sudden anger, “let me tell you that as cadet lieutenant-commander of the battalion I’ll talk duty with my cadet lieutenants, not with a clean sleever; and as for my personal matters, I’ll ask you to attend to your own affairs and leave mine alone.”

“Oh,” said Ralph, stung to the heart, “I thought



I was talking to a friend ; I forgot I was speaking to the cadet lieutenant-commander.”

Bollup walked off in high dudgeon. He had, in fact, become puffed up and conceited with his high cadet rank and foolishly chose to resent the friendly advice of his best friend, one to whom he owed, though he did not know it, the very stripes he wore. This was in the middle of April, six weeks from graduation. In this way a coolness sprang up between Ralph and Bollup. The former was sadly hurt in his feelings, and in the latter's conceit he resented a clean sleever presuming to dictate to his high superior officer. It is seen here that Bollup took naturally to the prerogative of rank.

And so this once warm friendship became strained, and Ralph and Bollup, though they spoke to one another, no longer had those daily meetings and close interchange of thought that once had been so precious to each. Ralph grieved at this but it is not likely that Bollup gave it much thought.

As first classman Ralph took his turn in coming on as midshipman in charge of floor and officer of the day, and when on such duty, had had routine inspection and reports to make. It was natural, in view of the serious trouble and difficulties he had had, that he should have been very rigid in matters of duty. Midshipmen are most reluctant to report classmates for violation of regulations and



generally avoid doing so except when absolutely necessary, but in this respect Ralph was entirely conscientious and at times did report some of his own class. These respected the reasons that animated him and he did not lose popularity because of such occasional reports.

But on one Saturday evening Ralph was on duty at the Maryland Avenue gate. There had been a dance which had closed at eleven o'clock and the midshipmen were allowed one hour after the dance to escort their friends home. It was Ralph's duty to report any midshipman who returned later than midnight and he reported Bollup for being “ten minutes late in returning from hop liberty.”

At this Bollup was much affronted; he received twenty-five demerits and lost many privileges, cadet lieutenant-commander though he was. He became very angry and the next time he passed Ralph he deliberately cut him.

Two weeks later Ralph was on duty as “midshipman in charge of floor”; he was mustered in front of the office of the officer-in-charge and from there went to his post. His station was at his desk, placed where the whole floor was under his eye. After making the routine inspection of rooms required Ralph settled down to study at his desk. Everything on the floor was quiet until half-past nine, then “main quarters” suddenly exploded into life. Hundreds of midshipmen threw aside their books and burst into the corri-



dors, running, laughing and talking, all in high spirits. Most of them were in study jackets, white working trousers, and fencing slippers, an easy lounging dress.

With some surprise Ralph noted that Bollup was not only completely dressed, but it was evident he had just shaved and had on his very newest suit, the gold stripes of the coat shining with a brand new glittering brilliancy. At ten o'clock these bustling, happy young men were all in bed, which fact was not taken for granted but was ascertained by an actual inspection of every room in the building; this was done by cadet officers from each company.

At half-past ten, Ralph, still at his desk, grew impatient. "Why doesn't the officer-in-charge turn us in?" he wondered. The midshipmen on duty are required to remain at their posts until they are relieved by order of the officer-in-charge. At a quarter to eleven a door opened, and a head, which Ralph recognized as belonging to Bollup, looked rapidly up and down the corridor. This occurred again a few minutes later. Eleven o'clock came, and still the midshipmen on duty remained at their posts, probably wondering if they had been forgotten. Shortly after, Ralph called up the officer-in-charge's office by telephone.

"Hello! Is this the officer of the day?"

"Yes. This is Warren. Who are you?"



“Osborn. Say, Warren, what’s up? why don’t you turn us in?”

“Hello, Os. Something’s up. The O. C.<sup>1</sup> is out in front and has been talking to Graham, the head watchman. I heard part of a report Graham made half an hour ago. He said he saw some midshipmen running through the yard. I guess there’s a late tea party somewhere and some midshipmen are out. Graham then left, and I imagine a trap has been laid to get them. Ring off; the O. C. is headed this way.”

A moment later Bollup stepped from his room, fully dressed and darted toward the back stairs, near where Ralph’s desk was. Ralph stood in the way. It now flashed over him that Bollup was expected at the party Warren had spoken of. He instantly made up his mind to prevent Bollup from committing such a serious breach of discipline.

“Hold on, Tom, you can’t go down here,” he said determinedly.

Bollup’s eyes flashed anger. “I’ll trouble you not to interfere with my doings, Mister Osborn,” he said.

“You can’t pass by me, Tom,” said Ralph sadly. “I have my duty to perform, both to the regulations and to my friend, for I’m not willing to give you up yet, Tom.”

“Don’t bother about the friendship, Mister

<sup>1</sup> O. C.—Officer-in-charge.



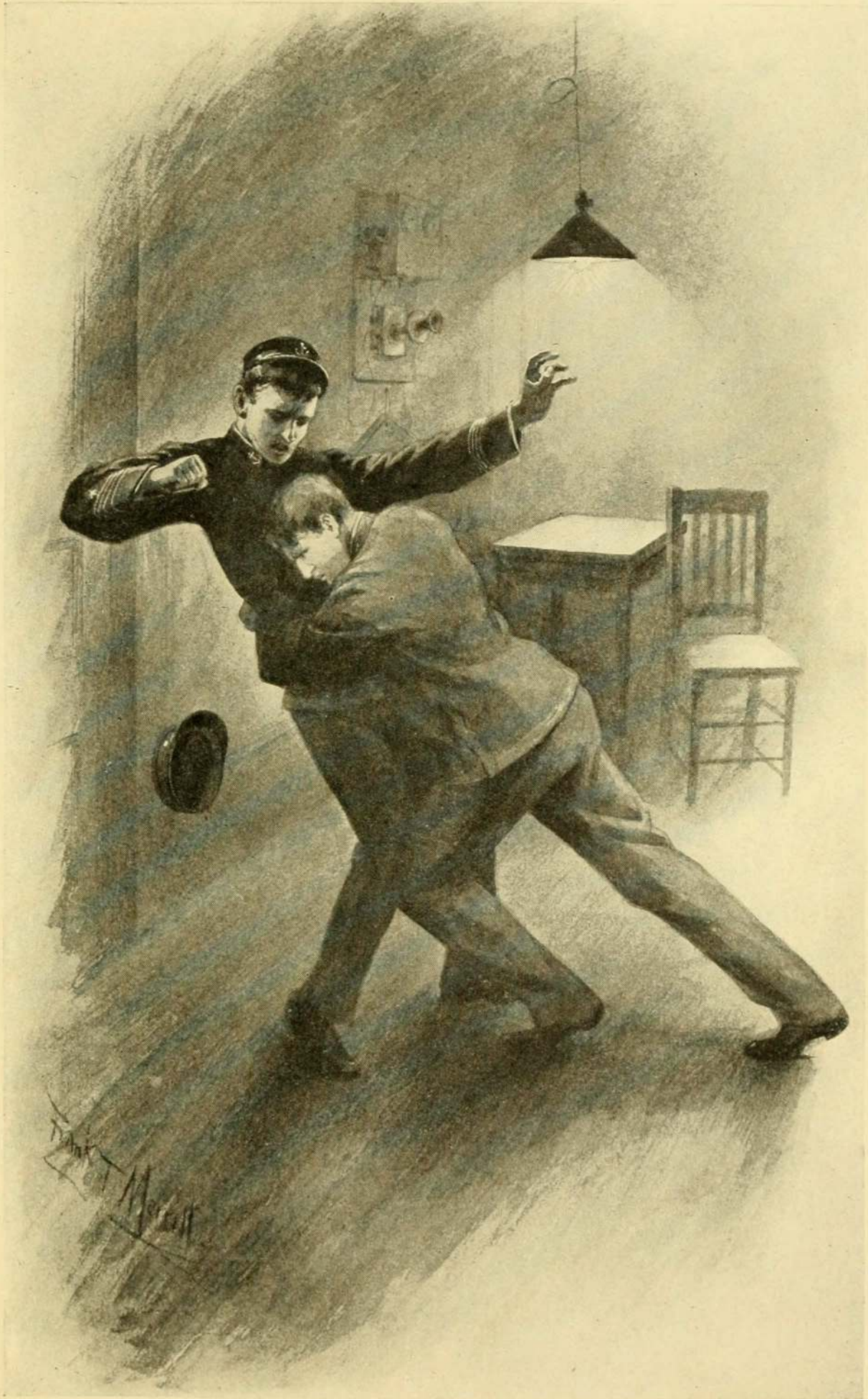
Osborn, and as for duty, it isn't customary for a private to talk about duty to his commanding officer. Get out of my way! Don't you dare to stop me!" He made a rush to pass Ralph but the latter threw himself on Bollup and caught him around the waist and down they both went in a heap to the floor, and rolled over and over. Bollup struggled with angry energy and was beside himself with rage; twice he viciously struck Ralph in the face. The latter clung desperately to Bollup; Bollup was the stronger of the two but he could not get rid of Ralph's hold. They finally got up and tears of passionate anger streamed from Bollup's eyes. "Oh!" he cried, "if I can ever show you how I hate and despise you, I surely will! If I live a thousand years I'll never speak to you again!"

Bollup looked at his beautiful new service coat, now torn and dirty, and his anger broke out afresh; and with bitter rage dominating those handsome features he reiterated his lasting hatred against Ralph, and then returned to his room.

Ralph's heart was filled with conflicting emotions. He believed he had saved Bollup a second time, but he knew he would receive no thanks for this; and he now feared the breach between himself and this once dear friend was irreparable.

While rueful thoughts were thus surging through Ralph's mind his telephone bell rang.





Ralph threw himself on Bollup and caught him around the waist







“Hello,” he heard Warren’s voice say, “break out Bollup and send him to the office immediately for orders ; and turn out everybody on your deck. We’re going to muster the battalion to see who’s missing.”

“Turn out, Bollup,” called out Ralph, rushing to the latter’s room ; “report to the office for orders. The battalion is to be broken out and mustered.” And then rushing up and down the corridor, he threw open the doors of different rooms, shouting, “Turn out on this floor, turn out, turn out.” Resounding cries from other floors were to be heard throughout “main quarters,” and soon from all the rooms sleepy midshipmen, rubbing their eyes, were to be seen emerging. Ralph now ran to his own room where Himski was in the act of dressing, and he threw off his dirty coat and started to bathe his face.

“What’s all this row about, Os ?” asked Himski. “Why are we being turned out? Look here, old fellow, you must have been fighting ; some one has plugged you a pretty good one. What’s the trouble ?”

“Somebody’s Frenching, I imagine, Himski, but please don’t ask me any questions about my appearance, please don’t ; I can’t talk about it. But it’s nothing to do with the turning out of the battalion.”

Himski stared soberly at Ralph but made no further comment. He observed that Ralph’s eye



was nearly closed up and felt that he would learn the facts later.

The muster of the battalion disclosed five absentees; these were of the first and second classes. Later they were all recommended to be dismissed but instead, the Secretary of the Navy directed that less drastic punishment be meted out to them. The graduation diplomas of the two first classmen were withheld for one month and the three second classmen were deprived of the following September leave.



## CHAPTER XXX

### THE THIEF UNMASKED

THE next day while Himski was in his room talking with Streeter, Cadet Lieutenant Hamm, better known in the battalion as "Billy Bacon," entered with a rush.

"Look here, Himski," he cried, "the thief has been busy again. This is the third time he's called on me in my absence and each time he's helped himself to something. This time it isn't much but I've suffered all I'm going to from him, and as you are class president I demand you do something."

"What's gone this time, Billy?" asked Himski, his dark eyes lighting with interest.

"Six towels. I'd just drawn them from the store; I haven't even cut them yet."

"No way of identifying them from other towels, is there?"

"Yes, by George, there is! Though I hadn't cut them apart I had stamped my name in indelible ink on the inside of each pair. I then folded them back. But my name is there all right."

"Streeter," said Himski suddenly, "you and Creelton are friendly, aren't you?"

"Oh, friendly enough; why?"



“I want you to go to his room now and ask him to lend you a half dozen of new towels, ones just from the store, and say you will return them later.”

“Look here, Himski, I don't like to do that. I don't care much for Creelton but I'd hate to believe him a thief. I know Os thinks he is, but he's never offered a bit of proof, and I'd hate to accuse a classmate of being a thief.”

“I don't ask you to do more than borrow some towels from Creelton, Streeter. Now I've got good reasons for what I'm asking you to do. I'd do it myself if I were on friendly terms with him. If it proves I've done Creelton a wrong I'll make as public an apology as you think I should. Now, Streeter, will you borrow those towels?”

“Yes, I will. I'll do it immediately.”

All three left the room, Streeter going first, and soon the latter was in Creelton's room.

“Say, Creelton,” said he, “can you let me have a half dozen face towels, new ones? I'll return you some later.”

“Certainly I can,” replied Creelton, glad to do Streeter a favor; “I've some new ones I have just drawn on my last monthly requisition. Take them, old man,” and he went to his wardrobe and took out some new towels and handed them to Streeter. As he was in the act of doing so, and before the towels had left his hands, Himski and Hamm entered the room. “Take a look at those



towels, Billy," said the former; "see if you can identify them."

"What do you mean?" shouted Creelton, a frightful fear entering his soul. "What are you insinuating? I drew those towels from the store; they have never left my possession." And though striving to be firm and decided, his features twitched and he was in a paroxysm of fear.

Without replying Hamm opened one pair of towels at a time, and there, in the center of each towel, was stamped in indelible ink, "William Hamm."

"Well, Creelton, you're the thief we've been looking for, and we've been looking a long time. I've suspected it for two years but could find no proof. But we have you now, thank goodness, and there'll be no thief in our class when we graduate."

Creelton seemed stunned and dazed at this sudden accusation; he looked as though he would collapse from sheer shock and fright; he tried to glance about at the others, searching for some one to help, to defend him; he tried to speak but the words failed to come; clutching the back of a chair he tried again, and this artificial support seemingly giving him some courage, he began hoarsely, "You fellows are fooling; I don't know what you're talking about. I got those towels on my last monthly requisition; I drew them only yesterday." He seemed to gain confidence in



himself as he went on. "Some one is either playing a joke or putting up a job on me. What do you mean about no thief graduating? You don't think I'm a thief, do you? You're not going to report me for anything, are you?"

"Not if I've made a mistake, Creelton," said Himski slowly. "If I have wronged you, I'll apologize. But this matter must be investigated."

"Never mind the apology, Himski; that will be all right. Let's shake hands," and Creelton came eagerly forward.

"Where did you get those towels?" asked Himski.

"At the store, I tell you; I drew them yesterday; this is the fourth time I've told you that."

"Just write that down on a piece of paper, Creelton, so that I will not forget and ask you again."

Creelton quickly took pencil and paper and wrote: "The towels I have lent to Streeter I drew from the store yesterday." Himski read the paper, then put it in his pocket. He then said to Hamm, "Billy, run down to the store double time; tell the clerk Mr. Creelton wants to see his requisition book to check up what he drew last month." And Hamm left on a dead run.

"I don't want it," cried Creelton; "this is a put up job!"

"Come in, Taylor," called out Himski to the former, who was passing in the corridor. "I



want you to stay here and see that Creelton gets fair play; never mind what it's all about. Streeter, skip out and bring Bollup here. He's four striper and should know what's going on."

In a few moments Streeter reappeared with Bollup, and soon Hamm ran breathlessly in with an open requisition book, of the kind in which are charged the articles drawn monthly by midshipmen.

"He didn't draw any towels last month and I don't know for how many months back," cried Billy Bacon.

"I'm going to search your room now, Creelton," said Himski; and suiting the action to the word, he commenced throwing things pell-mell from the shelves of the wardrobe to the floor.

"I object," cried Creelton, in frantic, impotent fear.

In the middle shelf, covered up by clothing, was a locked tin box. Creelton made a desperate leap toward Himski but was held back by Bollup who was looking on with grim approval.

After a while Himski said: "I think this is all; give me the towels and the box. We'll go now to the commandant's office. I want you fellows to keep entirely quiet about this and let me run it."

Creelton almost collapsed and now stricken with fear said nothing. In a moment they were before the commandant.



“Sir,” said Himski, “I have to report Creelton for being a thief; I believe he is the thief we’ve had among us for four years.”

“This is an awful charge, Mr. Himski,” said the commandant gravely.

“It is, sir, and if it’s true, as I believe it is, there is all the more reason why it should be made. I believe complete evidence will be found in this tin box which is pretty heavy.” And then Himski related all that had happened.

“What have you to say, Mr. Creelton?”

“It’s all a lie, sir; I don’t know how Mr. Hamm’s name came to be on those towels. It’s a job on me, sir,” gasped the miserable culprit.

“Sir,” said Himski, “I request permission for a class meeting after supper to-night to consider these things.”

The commandant mused for a moment, and then said: “Granted, but I will be present.”

“I would like to leave the box and towels with you, sir, so that there could be no question of any tampering with them.”

“Very well; I’ll take charge of them and will bring them with me to-night at your meeting.”

“I want my box, sir,” Creelton almost shrieked; “I have private papers, private things of my own. I protest!”

“That will do, gentlemen,” ordered the commandant, and all withdrew.

“Your roommate, the prig, will have his in-



nings now," remarked Bollup to Himski, as the two walked off together.

"What do you mean by calling Os a prig?" demanded Himski, sharply.

"Oh, he's become too fresh of late; for a clean sleever he's a bit too free with his advice to the four striper, at least I think so; any way, I've done with Osborn. I'll never speak to him again."

"Bollup, Os is one of the best of fellows and the best friend you ever had. You ought to know it better than any one."

"When a man interferes with my private arrangements and prevents me from keeping an engagement he's no friend of mine and Osborn is crossed off my list of friends," remarked Bollup savagely. "But," he continued with a hard, mirthless laugh, "he'll think of me occasionally, at least until that left eye of his heals up."

"I thought so," said Himski, quietly.

"Thought so?" exclaimed Bollup in surprise. "Didn't Osborn tell you where he got that eye?"

"He did not, and that's why I somehow imagined he got it from you."

"Hasn't Osborn told you of what happened between him and me after eleven last night?"

"Not a word."

"Well, I'll tell you. I had an engagement out in town; a pleasant party had been planned. I would have gone but Osborn stopped me. When I tried to pass him he tackled me and we both



went to the floor. He spoiled for me a brand new service coat and stopped me from keeping an engagement. I plugged him good and hard and I'm glad of it."

"If you had gone your absence would have been reported just like the five who were absent from the midnight muster last night, would it not?"

"Of course. But Osborn did not know that a muster was to be held."

"Yes, he did know it. Warren told me he telephoned Os last night at eleven that the O. C. knew some midshipmen were out and was laying a trap for them. Os stopped you from going and saved your stripes for you. And by the way of thanks you strike him a fearful blow in the eye and tell me you're glad of it. I'm disgusted with you," and indeed Himski looked his disdain.

Bollup began to feel uncomfortable. "Look here, Himski," he said weakly and uneasily, "don't you think Os, being nothing but a clean sleever, should pay a little more respect to the cadet lieutenant-commander than ——"

Himski, in a fever of indignation, now turned on Bollup with uncontrollable fury. "My heavens, man," he almost shouted, "have you the slightest conception of what a contemptible cad you are? Have you never guessed why you got four stripes and Os a clean sleeve? You, cad that you are, to suggest that the man who made you, who saved you from disgraceful dismissal, who with a whole



heart gave you the four stripes that up to that time were slated for him, should use more deference to the stripes that were his! and which out of his great soul he presented to you, shriveled, dwarfed, contemptible thing that you are! And so you are glad you blackened his eye, are you, and will never speak to him again?

“Faugh! You to speak so of the man who saved you from disgraceful expulsion! You make me sick. Cross my name out of your list of friends, too.”

“Why, why, Himski, what are you talking about?—why, I don’t think you have any right to talk this way to me,” stammered Bollup, utterly aghast at Himski’s onslaught.

“Bollup, do you remember the time, about a year ago now, you were so helplessly drunk at the Maryland Hotel?”

“I don’t like to remember it,” replied Bollup, reddening. “I thought no one even knew anything about that. But what has that got to do with what we are talking about?”

“Do you remember that that same night Os was reported for Frenching though no one ever knew why he had Frenched?”

“Yes, but I had nothing to do with that.”

“Nothing that you remember of. Os heard of your condition; there was no time to lose; he ran through the gate and knew he was reported. He ran into me on Maryland Avenue and together we



found you. You were too far gone to know either of us. Well, we got you into a boat, rowed around and got you into quarters and into bed without any one seeing you. Os saved you from a justly merited dismissal and made you a present of four stripes at the same time. He saved you a second time, at least saved your stripes last night. And what do you give him in return? Forsooth a black eye; and you cut his acquaintance! And you are indignant that he doesn't bow lower to those stripes which are tarnished and dim on your sleeves, but which, were they where they belonged, and you know where that is, would have been honored as yours never have been!"

A dawning consciousness now swept through Bollup's mind and a flood of recollection enveloped it. He thought of Osborn, the victim of persecution and one who had suffered so much; of Osborn, the self-sacrificing Os, to whom he owed everything; the loving friend who had given his all, and who even now, spurned and contemptuously treated, uttered no complaint. A well of emotion surged through his heart, and now came a bright, vivid appreciation of the brotherly love which Ralph had accorded him; Bollup was not prepared for this, and uncontrolled tears gushed from his eyes. He clutched Himski's arm and spoke brokenly.

"I—I didn't know of this, Himski, I—I never imagined it. Oh, what shall I do? What can I



do, Himski? I am the most contemptible cad any one ever knew," and bitter self-hatred was replacing conceit in Bollup's mind. "Is there anything I can do, is there any hope for me? Oh, what a friend I have had; did ever a man have such a friend? Have I lost him forever, Himski?"

"Suppose you go and ask him, Bollup; there he is now, standing by his desk in the corridor. I'm going to my room."

When Ralph saw Bollup approaching him in the corridor he was feeling particularly sad and woebegone. He had had many troubles and sorrows but the loss of Bollup's friendship cut him deepest.

When he found himself suddenly clasped by Bollup and heard that dear friend in broken, halting sentences beg for forgiveness and utterly debase himself he could have cried for joy; not to have seen Bollup in such dejected, shameful grief, but because he knew that the miserable misunderstanding of the last few weeks between himself and Bollup was forever dispelled.

Let us leave them together; young men are awkward in expressing their feelings to one another; they are not as demonstrative as girls, who no doubt would have had an outlet in kissing and petting each other with cooing words. But in this quarrel deep feelings had been touched and much emotion was displayed by both. A most perfect and complete reconciliation occurred and a glad happiness filled the heart of each.



It was amusing thereafter to watch Bollup. He became filled with an admiration for Ralph exceeding anything he had ever felt before. He was never satisfied unless he was with Ralph; in his mind Ralph was one of the greatest characters he had ever known, one who combined great mental capacity with a great soul.

Himski gave them about an hour to purr to each other, then went to them and said: "Os, there's a class meeting after supper to-night. Be sure to be there."

"All right; what's up?"

"Oh, I'm going to prove Creelton the thief we're looking for. But don't talk about it. I've got him, though; it's certain he's the man; I've got the proof."

Ralph was wild with excitement and curiosity, but the special detail were now called to supper and he had to hurry away.

"Himski," said Bollup, after Ralph had left, "I've been a cad; I deserve all you said, but I'm going to try to square things up as well as I can. I want to talk it over with you, and I want your advice."

A long talk in low tones followed. At first Himski expostulated and disapproved, but finally Bollup's vehemence won him over. "All right, Bol," finally said Himski; "I think it may be done and I'll help you if I can. I'm certain that you want to do it. And one thing more, Bol, I



want to withdraw my remarks about your being a cad. You're now proving yourself 'white.' "

"It will take a lot of proof," Bollup remarked, much pleased at Himski's words, "but I shall do the best I can. But I think you will have to do most of the talking, Himski; we'll see the commandant together and you will help me, I'm sure. You have a way of making people see things as you see them, and I may fail in expressing myself properly or as I wish to."

"All right. There goes the bugle for supper. We'll have an important job later, that of showing up Creelton. I have great hopes that the tin box may prove all the evidence we need; but if it doesn't he will have hard work to prove he didn't steal the towels; he has told impossible stories as to how he got them. Be on hand early after supper."



## CHAPTER XXXI

### RALPH'S LOST WATCH IS FOUND

AT the close of the evening meal the bell for attention was struck and all midshipmen waited for whatever notice or announcement was to be made. Himski then arose from his seat and called out :

“An important meeting of the first class will be held in the reading-room immediately after supper. Every first classman should be present.”

“What’s Himski going to spring on us?” asked Warren of Ralph later in the reading-room.

“Just wait till he tells you,” replied the latter. At this moment a party composed of Himski, Bollup, Creelton, Streeter and Hamm entered, and with them was the commandant. The latter carried under his arm a tin box and several towels. When inside the room he handed them to Himski and then quietly said, “Go ahead, Mr. Himski.” He then went to the rear of the room. Creelton seemed to hesitate, but Bollup with a firm grip on his arm half led, half dragged him to one end of the room where Himski had jumped on top of a table and had commenced speaking.

“Classmates,” he said, “we have all been conscious since we entered the Academy that there has



been a thief in this building, and at different times many of us have had things stolen. I had feared the thief was a classmate. This idea was a horror, a nightmare, but until now I have had no evidence. But something happened this afternoon which points suspicion strongly toward Creelton. Billy Bacon came to me, grumbling that the thief had collared some new towels of his ; but he said that though the towels were uncut he had stamped his name on the inside of each towel. Now I had suspected Creelton, for reasons I have not talked about, of being the thief ; so I asked Streeter to go to Creelton and borrow some new towels. Bollup, Billy Bacon and I followed Streeter to Creelton's room and saw Creelton in the act of handing Streeter these towels ; just pass them about among you ; you will see they are brand new, uncut, and you will find Billy Bacon's name on each of them. I accused Creelton of having stolen them from Billy ; he declared his innocence, said he had drawn these same towels from the store yesterday. I have his signed statement to that effect. I have here his requisition book, and find all he drew yesterday was a bottle of ink and six pairs of white gloves. I then searched his wardrobe and found this tin box which was covered with things and hidden from view. I took it to the commandant ; Creelton was with me at the time, and until a few minutes ago it was in the commandant's possession. Creelton cannot say that anybody has monkeyed



with this box since it left his possession. It's locked but I'm going to break it open."

"I object," rang out Creelton's voice to which Himski paid no attention, for he was prying open the box with a steel chisel he had provided himself with, and he soon broke the lock.

The first classmen stood listening, spellbound. Himski had spoken in a perfectly natural way, without feeling, yet his words had carried conviction. All had known that a persistent thief existed at the Academy; many had uneasy feelings this might be a midshipman, and some had feared it was a classmate. A few had known of Ralph's opinion of Creelton and perhaps were not surprised. Creelton, with deathlike pallor on his face, knowing in his heart that he had been discovered, that his crimes were now out, in awful fear and dismay looked the culprit he was; he did not dare to meet the indignant eyes that were now directed upon him.

Himski opened the box. "Hello," he said, "here's one mystery explained; here's a watch, with an inscription on the inside," and he commenced to read, "Ralph Osborn, from his uncle——"

"That's my watch," interrupted Ralph, shouting in his excitement, and full of delight he bounded toward Himski as if he had been fired out of a gun.

"And here's several class rings,—Warren, Taylor,—come up and get them. Here's a napkin



ring. And here's a watch and chain and several pins,—any of you fellows that have had any jewelry stolen from you come up and identify your property."

Tremendous excitement now followed.

"Hold on, fellows, here's a packet of letters. They are addressed to Creelton; he certainly is the thief we're looking for but I don't know that I have any right to read these letters."

"Go on, read them, read them, go ahead," came shouts from different parts of the room.

Himski paused, and then said looking to Creelton, "What do you say—do you object?"

Creelton threw open his arms in involuntary admission of complete surrender. Craven at heart, with no friend to encourage him, conscious of guilt and knowing he had been found out, he had no heart to attempt any defense. "Read them," he said. "You'll find out why I had to take Osborn's watch; there's somebody else as bad as I am."

And Himski read letter after letter, the letters from Short which Creelton had saved for his own protection. There was but one burden, one theme to these letters; they were characterized by a malignant animosity toward Ralph Osborn that can be most expressively described as fiendish. Schemes were suggested, many of them never attempted, by which Ralph was to be disgraced and dismissed from the Academy. The



theft of Bollup's watch and the attempt to fasten it on Ralph, the writing on Professor Moehler's blackboard, and the hazing of Mr. Chappell were all discussed.

In the earlier letters were forcible threats of what might happen to Creelton if the writer's plans were not carried out, and the relations that existed between Creelton and the writer of the letters were clearly defined.

"These letters are all signed T. G. S.," said Himski, "which may stand for Thomas G. Short. Do they?" he suddenly asked Creelton.

"Yes," replied the latter.

"Well, fellows," continued Himski, "Creelton is the thief we've been looking for; he's a disgrace to our class and to the uniform he wears; I'm thankful enough he has finally been found out even if it has taken four years. I don't know that I have anything more to say, except that reports will be made immediately and of course the authorities will take action—I'm glad the commandant has been with us to-night; he knows as much about it now as any of us do."

Himski's talk, and his reading of the letters, had created a most intense excitement. The world of these young men was very small and this matter was tremendously personal to every one of them. An all-powerful indignation now possessed them and undoubtedly wild disorder was about to ensue. A dozen were on their feet



and had commenced shouting, when suddenly Himski's clear voice in vibrating tones called out, "Attention," and the commandant's tall form was seen to approach Himski. The midshipmen all subsided and military order was once more in complete control.

"Mr. Creelton," asked the commandant, "do you admit the truth of Mr. Himski's charges?"

Creelton made no reply; he did not raise his eyes to the commandant's face. There was no fight in him; his one ambition now was to escape. He knew there was no hope of any possibility of defense and in fact he had as much as admitted his guilt.

"Mr. Bollup, take Mr. Creelton to the officer-in-charge in close arrest. I will give orders about him later." The miserable young man jumped up with alacrity, glad to hurry away from an atmosphere charged to the saturation point with indignation and contempt for him. He now feared bodily injury, not knowing to what extent the angry feelings of his classmates might dominate them. He concerns this narrative no further. It is enough to say that before nine o'clock, during a temporary absence of the midshipman in charge of the floor from his post, Creelton escaped from his room and from the building and was never seen again at Annapolis; but later, although not present, he went through formal dismissal, and a most scathing letter expelling him, written



by the Secretary of the Navy, was published to the battalion.

The commandant was speaking when Bollup returned to the class meeting.

“Gentlemen,” he began, “you have witnessed an astonishing thing; it does not seem possible that such a criminal could have lived among you for four years and have escaped detection in all of this time. However, with Mr. Himski and with you all, I am but too thankful that this thief has at last been unmasked. I wish to thank Mr. Himski for the way he has handled this matter; you made no mistake when you elected him your class president. I have known of his suspicions for some time but until to-day there has been positively nothing to work on.

“You are all feeling badly about this; you feel it is a smirch on your class name. But don't think of it in that way; it's not your fault if the laws and the authorities introduce a thief among you. None of you helped to make him a midshipman. But as I see the indignation on your faces that such a character should have been a classmate, what would your feelings be”—and here the commandant's voice rang out in intense tones that reached the heart of every midshipman before him—“what would your feelings be if this thief after stealing Mr. Bollup's watch had put it on your chain, so as to have you



accused of the theft? What would your feelings be if you were denounced to the superintendent in an anonymous letter for being a cheat, for gouging? But for Mr. Himski, I much fear I would have assisted in having Mr. Osborn dismissed because of the words the thief cleverly wrote on Mr. Osborn's blackboard in Professor Moehler's section room. And finally we dismissed Mr. Osborn because of the evil machinations of these unscrupulous villains."

The commandant paused for a moment, and then, with evident emotion, said, looking over to where Ralph stood drinking in his every word:—"Mr. Osborn, I can but apologize to you for the part in which I was made a tool of. It is hard for these other young men to have had a thief for a classmate, but they can have no conception of the fearful trials you have passed through. Your honor has been called into question, you have had repeated dastardly attempts made upon you by an unknown foe, your very roommate; and you actually went through the form of dismissal. All that I can say, is, that I now know, that instead of the last, you deserved the first consideration at the hands of the authorities, and that the unadorned coat sleeve of yours is a monument to my own lack of discernment; I will say but one thing more; gentlemen, I can assure you that if cadet officers of your class were to be made to-morrow, Mr. Osborn would have four stripes where now he



has nothing. Would you like to say anything, Mr. Osborn?"

Ralph arose, his face aglow with happiness. "Thank you, sir," he said; "I'm much obliged to you and to Mr. Himski. A year ago I was worrying about having the right to wear the uniform—I have always been perfectly satisfied with my position in the battalion, and now that I've got my watch I'm feeling pretty good all around; it was from an uncle I've never seen. It's an awful nice watch; I've wound it up and it's going all right; wouldn't you like to look at it, captain?"

Ralph's last remark was so utterly inconsequential and seemed so ridiculous after the intense feelings all had so recently undergone that it was followed by wild screams of laughter in which the commandant and later Ralph himself joined. This was a happy relief to everybody, and for a few moments the room fairly shook with the peals of laughter that came from everybody present; after this the commandant said: "Good-night, gentlemen; I am glad everything has ended so happily." And he left the room.

He was followed by Himski and Bollup. And the latter said: "May we have a private talk with you, sir?"

"Certainly; come to my office."

They both entered with him and remained in earnest consultation for nearly an hour. When the three left the office together the commandant



said: "Well, we'll go to the superintendent's house right away; you've convinced me though I was against it at first as I'm sure he'll be, but I'm now in favor of it."

The superintendent was surprised that after nine o'clock the commandant and two midshipmen should enter his house, but he received them cordially nevertheless. After listening for a while the superintendent expressed emphatic disapproval of the proposition made him, and yet he was impressed and commenced to ask Bollup some keen personal questions. That young gentleman had a very uncomfortable time of it for a few moments, and then, after some more talk, both midshipmen were sent to their quarters.

"Good gracious, Himski, it's after eleven o'clock; where in the world have you been?" demanded Ralph when his roommate entered, long after taps had sounded.

"Calling on some friends."

"I'm afraid you're reported for being out of the building after taps," said Ralph much concerned.

"Not this time," laughed his friend. "I was with the commandant."

At supper formation the next evening, Ralph was in ranks as usual. The companies were mustered, then aligned, and then, when each cadet lieutenant stood in front of the center of his company, the battalion adjutant, Himski, reported



to Cadet Lieutenant-Commander Bollup: "Sir, the battalion is formed."

"Publish the orders, sir," replied Bollup.

Ralph was now immensely startled to hear Himski call out, "Midshipman Osborn, fall out of ranks and report to the battalion adjutant immediately."

"What's up now?" wondered Ralph, yet not worried. He had not the faintest conception of what was about to happen. He left his place in ranks and went directly to where Himski was standing, in front of and facing the battalion. He saluted Himski. The latter motioned Ralph to one side, and then called out: "Attention to orders." He unrolled some papers he had in his hands and read as follows:

*Order:*

"The superintendent accepts the resignation voluntarily offered, as cadet lieutenant-commander, by Midshipman Bollup. Midshipman Bollup returns to ranks with the entire esteem of the authorities."

Himski then read another paper.

*Order:*

"Midshipman Ralph Osborn of the first class is appointed cadet lieutenant-commander and commander of the battalion of midshipmen, vice Bollup, resigned."

Ralph instantly understood what had been done



by his friends, but he felt dazed and stunned; a mist swam before his eyes and feelings difficult to control poured from his heart. He was almost unaware of the little ceremony that now was taking place. As soon as Himski had read the last order, he and Bollup went to Ralph. Bollup tore off the braid carrying four stripes on his sleeve. Each braid, specially prepared for this occasion, was held by but a thread, and in less than a moment they were pinned to Ralph's sleeves. Not a word was spoken. Bollup now saluted in a natural manner, came to an about face, and marched to the company Ralph had left.

Ralph faced the battalion now as commander where but a moment before he had been but a private in ranks. He looked at the stripes on his sleeves. His heart was full of emotion.

"The battalion is ready to be marched to supper, sir," reported Himski, in his adjutant voice.

"Give the order, I—I cannot," replied Ralph brokenly, not trusting himself to speak further.

"Battalion, fours right, march!" snapped out the adjutant and several hundred silent, erect young men swung into the march to the mess hall.

Ralph hesitated a moment, then went to the officer-in-charge who had purposely absented himself when Bollup had pinned his stripes on Ralph's sleeves.

"May I absent myself from supper, sir?" he



asked, in a husky voice ; “ I don’t feel as if I could go into the mess hall to-night.”

“ Certainly,” was the reply.

And Cadet Lieutenant-Commander Osborn went to his room, his mind stirred with conflicting emotions. He had had strange vicissitudes and marked triumphs at the Academy, but best of all were the friendships he had made.

He most heartily wished Bollup had kept his stripes ; he would have vehemently protested against this change had he known of it in time, yet he realized there was nothing now for him to do but accept his new status. It cannot be said that Ralph took any elation in his promotion. The year was nearly over ; the time was too short for him to have any effect upon the battalion. Yet, knowing how Bollup prized these stripes, Ralph was touched to the core at his classmate’s action, and the realization of what Bollup had given up, not what Ralph had received (which now he did not value highly), was what affected him. He had been delighted to get his watch back, but these stripes were but an empty, valueless honor to him. But as a measure of Bollup’s friendship and in this respect only, to Ralph they were of enormous value. And with this striking evidence of that dear friendship Ralph could not but be very happy.



## CHAPTER XXXII

### RALPH FINDS HIS UNCLE AT LAST

“**W**HAT part did you play in that crazy scheme?” asked Ralph of Himski, when the latter returned to his room after supper.

“I didn’t suppose you’d approve, Os,” replied Himski. “I was against it at first but Bollup was wild; he was bound to do something. And, Os, he has given you, however little you value it, what he prized most on earth, his stripes.”

“I know that and the thought of it is everything to me. But how in the world did he get the commandant and superintendent to do it?”

“That was really simple; these men did it more to ease down their own consciences than for any other reason; they knew they had treated you badly. Bollup clinched the matter by reporting himself for Frenching this year and last also, and told how you prevented him from Frenching the other night; and he told why you Frenched last year. No official notice will be taken of the reports he made against himself, but after all he said no superintendent could have allowed him to hold on to his stripes. So to give them to you was an easy slide. Now take the thing quietly and



don't let Bollup know how little you think of getting his job."

"All right. I'll think of what he gave, not what I received. But, Himski, I can't express how happy I feel at having such friends; when the thing happened I couldn't speak. Well, I'll not let old Bollup know the stripes aren't as precious to me as they were to him—good old Bol! I tell you, Himski, I have had some hard times here but I don't regret one of them. Creelton has gone and there's nothing that can touch me now; and we're going to graduate in less than two weeks; won't it be glorious for us to march to the tune of 'Ain't I glad to get out of the Wilderness,' in our own right?"

As a matter of fact, before the two weeks had finished Ralph did enjoy his four stripes. Although it was practically an honorary position for Ralph yet he knew the four stripes signalized his importance to the officers and the hundreds of visitors now present at formations. Contented as he had been as a clean sleever he enjoyed giving the few orders he was called upon to give, and he felt natural and easy in giving them. And he had the feeling he was in his right place at last; thus he finally appreciated the four stripes Bollup had given him far more than he had expected to at first.

Graduation day drew near, and before it came Bollup's mother and two sisters had come to Annapolis; Dorothy, though only thirteen years old,



had made such a fuss at being left at home that finally she was allowed to come.

It was an enthusiastic greeting that met Mrs. Bollup and her two daughters. "And this is Mr. Himski, of course," said the warm-hearted woman, after she had expressed her delight at seeing her "two boys" again; and Himski was immediately adopted into the family.

"Why, Tom," exclaimed the observant Dorothy, "I thought you had four stripes and Ralph had a clean sleeve; how is this? Ralph seems to have the four stripes and you haven't anything."

Bollup colored and looked uneasy but was saved by Ralph.

"Why, Dorothy," he quickly said, "you know what great friends Tom and I are; well, he's generous, and one time, much to my surprise, he handed them over to me. I guess he got tired of them and thought I might like to have them for a while."

"Well, I should have thought you wouldn't have taken more than two of them," pouted Dorothy; "I think you were greedy."

Mrs. Bollup was delighted with this additional evidence of her son's generosity. "It's just like Tom," she said.

Graduation week was and probably always will be, the most glorious period of Ralph Osborn's life. It takes vicissitudes to enable one to appreciate tri-



umphs, and of both of these Ralph had had full measure. From the depths of anxiety and misfortune he had viewed what he had believed to be unattainable heights of happiness. And now, on the eve of his graduation, he had attained to the pinnacle of all that was possible to a midshipman.

Every day the midshipmen were drilled in one way or another for the Board of Visitors, and every afternoon the battalion was drilled at dress parade. In all of these the cadet lieutenant-commander was a very important figure and Ralph enjoyed this importance.

He acted as the escort of Gladys, both to his class german and to his graduation ball. They were full of excited happiness and I judge had a never ending lot of things to tell one another, though what it was all about I never knew.

Gladys, dressed in white, was to Ralph the most beautiful vision he had ever seen.

On graduation day when the class was finally aligned to receive their graduating diplomas, and the first name called to step forward was Osborn, cheer after cheer rent the air both from the battalion and from the assembled spectators.

The President of the United States with one hand tended Ralph his diploma, giving him a warm clasp with the other. "I know all about you, Mr. Osborn," the President said, "and I heartily congratulate you on this well-deserved graduation. You had the stuff in you to stick it out, the



stuff that wins fights. You've started right ; keep it up."

After graduation as Ralph was hurrying to shift into his new officer's uniform, he met Captain Waddell. "Well, Mr. Osborn," said the old sea dog, "you're a friend worth helping. I've helped many young men in one way or another but none have reflected such signal honor on my help as you have. I count the interest I've taken in you as one of the best things I've done in my forty years of naval service."

"Just think what I owe you, captain," cried Ralph, joyfully ; "you've done everything ; I would never have graduated but for you, and now I'm the happiest person in the world."

"Oh, no, you're not," replied the captain ; "I know of one who is at least as happy as you are and because of you."

"Why, who can it be, captain ?" asked Ralph in great surprise.

"One of the best of men ; one I'm proud to call friend, your Uncle George."

"My Uncle George !" exclaimed Ralph. "Oh, where can I see this dear uncle ? Is he here ?"

"Yes, he has been here for several days, has seen you handle the battalion and saw you graduate at the head of your class this morning. I believe he's the proudest, happiest man alive."

"But why haven't I seen him ? Where is he ?"

"Oh, he's so confoundedly proud he's going



to take the afternoon train without seeing you. You see he couldn't mix in the same social set you would and he's afraid you'll be ashamed of his position in life."

"Ashamed!" exclaimed Ralph indignantly, and then asked determinedly, "Where can I find him, captain?"

"Room 141 Maryland Hotel," replied the captain.

Murmuring a hasty good-bye Ralph was off like a shot. He was so eager that he broke into a run and in a few minutes he had reached the hotel. Without stopping he ran up-stairs and was soon at a door marked 141. He knocked firmly, and in reply to a voice within saying, "Come in," he threw open the door. Inside the door stood a tall, vigorous looking man, perhaps about forty-three years old, dressed in blue jacket uniform. As Ralph entered, he instantly recognized the man before him. "Hester!" he cried, "my Uncle George! Oh, I'm so glad. Why didn't you let me know you were my uncle? I never dreamed it!"

"It isn't right, Mr. Osborn, that an officer should be related to an enlisted man."

"Never call me Mr. Osborn, Uncle George," cried Ralph, "unless I displease you. I'm so happy to have found you. And I'm proud of you; never believe I can have any other sentiment than that of affection and gratitude for you.



Your money helped me to get in the Academy and when I was dismissed your money sustained me till I was reinstated."

Uncle and nephew had a long talk. Ralph found his Uncle George a kindly, high-principled man, his father's own brother, the nearest person in all the world to him. Hester was indeed proud of his nephew and happy in his final triumph and high standing.

The sun was low in the sky when Hester left his nephew, the two bidding each other most affectionate good-byes.

That night was the great ball, given to the graduating class, the last act of the midshipman's career at Annapolis. And who are these tall, dignified young officers, in new long-tailed coats, with golden shoulder knots and with golden striped trousers coming toward us? Is it possible they are the short jacketed midshipmen of this morning?

From their erect carriage and brilliant new uniforms the stranger might imagine they were battle-ship captains. But indeed they were only Ralph and Bollup and Himski, and despite their gorgeous uniforms we know them, and we believe we will always find their hearts the same.

We will take our last glimpse at Ralph on his homeward walk with Gladys. He was to leave in the early morning for San Francisco, there to



take ship for the Philippine Islands where the natives were in insurrection.

“Gladys,” said Ralph, “Tom gave me voluntarily what he loved most, his stripes; had I known of it I would have prevented him. Here they are; they were sewed on Tom’s and my coat sleeves; first, for most of the year, on his coat and for the last two weeks on mine. I’m going to give you one set as a keepsake and I’ll keep the other myself.”

“Thank you, Ralph,” returned Gladys, gently; “I will be so glad to have it and I will treasure it always. It will remind me of Tom and of you.”









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