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Dave Darrin's First Year at Annapolis by H. Irving Hancock

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Dave Darrin's First Year at Annapolis

TWO ADMIRAL'S IN THE BUD

"Dave, I'm getting nervous!"

"Is that the best way you can find to enjoy yourself?" demanded the taller boy.

"But I am, Dave---dreadfully nervous!" insisted Dan Dalzell positively.

"Well, you'll have to conceal it, then. The doctors at the United States Naval Academy won't pass any nervous wrecks," laughed Dave Darrin.

"Don't you understand?" demanded Dan, in a hurt voice. "The nearer we get to Annapolis the more nervous I'm getting."

"You'd better drop off, then," hinted Dave ironically, "and take the next car back to Odenton and Baltimore. What earthly good would a Naval officer be who was going to get nervous as soon as he came in sight of an enemy?"

"But I wouldn't get nervous in the sight the enemy," flared up Dan Dalzell.

"Then why get nervous about the folks down at the Naval Academy? They all intend to be your friends!"

"I guess that is true," Dan went on. "Of course, back in April, we went before the Civil Service Commission and took our academic examinations. We passed, and haven't got that to go up against again."

"We passed the home medical examiner, too," retorted Dave. "In fact, you might say that we passed the sawbones with honors.

"But that medical chap put in a long time listening at my chest," complained Dan Dalzell, who was undeniably fidgeting in his seat. "Then, too, the civil service sawbones told me that, while he passed me, as far as he was concerned, I'd have to stand the ordeal again before the Naval surgeons at Annapolis."

"Well, he did just the same thing with me," rejoined Darrin. "You just keep your eye on me, Dan! Do you see me shaking? Do you hear my voice falter? See me burning any blue lights?"

"Perhaps, Dave, you don't take the whole business as much to heart as I do," continued Dan Dalzell almost tremulously. "Why, Great Scott, if they drop me at the Naval Academy, I'll be the bluest fellow you ever saw! But maybe you won't care, Dave, whether you are dropped or not."

"Won't I?" grumbled Darrin. "The Navy is the only thing in life that I care about!"

"Then aren't you nervous, just now?" demanded Dan.

"If I am, I'm not making a show of myself," retorted Darrin.

"But are you nervous?" begged Dan.

"No!" roared Dave, and then he allowed a grin to creep over his face.

"Oh, go ahead and say so tonight," jeered Dan. "Tomorrow, if you have the good luck to get sworn in, you'll have to quit fibbing and begin practicing at telling the truth. A midshipman at the Naval Academy, I understand, is kicked out of the service if he tells lies."

"Not quite---only in case he gets caught," laughed Dave Darrin.

"But really, about being nervous---"

"Oh, forget that sort of nonsense, won't you, Dan, old fellow?" begged his chum. "Just get your eye on the lovely country we're going through."

It was just about the first of June. Our two young travelers had come by train, from Baltimore to a little country junction. Thence they had traveled, briefly, by trolley, to Odenton. There, after a wait of some minutes, they had boarded another trolley car, and were now bowling along through the open country of that part of Maryland. At the end of their journey lay the historic little town of Annapolis. It was now after seven o'clock; still daylight, the fag end of a beautiful June day in Maryland.

Dave Darrin and Dan Dalzell had been appointed as midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy. If they should succeed in passing the four years' course in the big government school at Annapolis, they would then be sent to sea for two years, as midshipmen, after which they would return to Annapolis for their final examinations. Passing these last examinations, they would then be commissioned as ensigns in the United States Navy, with the possibility of some day becoming full-fledged admirals.

Readers of our High School Boys Series have no need of further introduction to Dave and Dan.

These two young men will be remembered as former members of Dick & Co., six famous chums back in the lively little city of Gridley.

Dick Prescott, Greg Holmes, Dave Darrin, Dan Dalzell, Tom Reade and Harry Hazleton had composed the famous sextette who, in their day at Gridley High School, had been fast chums and leaders in all pertaining to High School athletics in their part of the state.

Following their High School days, however, the six chums had become somewhat widely scattered. Dick Prescott and Greg Holmes secured appointments to the United States Military Academy. Readers of our West Point Series are already familiar with the stirring doings and life of Dick and Greg at the fine old Army Academy on the Hudson. At the time this present narrative opens Dick and Greg had been nearly three months as plebe cadets, as told in the first volume of the West Point Series, under the title, "*Dick PRESCOTT'S first year at west point.*"

Tom Reade and Harry Hazleton had gone from Gridley High School to the far West, where they had connected themselves with a firm of civil engineers engaged in railway construction. What befell Tom and Harry is told in "*The young engineers in Colorado,*" the first and very entertaining volume in the Young Engineers Series.

Readers of "*The high school captain of the team*" recall how Dave Darrin won his appointment to the Naval Academy, as did Dick Prescott his chance for West Point, from the Congressman of the home district. Dalzell's appointment, on the other hand, came from one of the two United States Senators from that state.

And here Dave and Dan were, on a trolley car from Odenton, rapidly nearing Annapolis.

At the forward end of the car was a small compartment set apart for the use of smokers Dave and Dan did not smoke; they had taken seats in this compartment because they wished to be alone.

"You asked me to let you know when we got near Annapolis, gentlemen," announced the conductor, a cheery-faced young man, thrusting his head in. "There is the town right ahead of you."

"You said that you go by the hotel, I think?" Dave asked.

"I'll stop and call the hotel," replied the conductor. "We'll be there in less than two minutes."

It was a quaint, old-fashioned, very pretty southern town that the car now entered.

"I'll bet they're a thousand years behind the times here," sighed Dalzell, as they gazed about them.

"Not at the Naval Academy, anyway," retorted Dave Darrin.

"Oh, of course not," Dan made haste to agree.

The car passed an imposing-looking brick building that housed the post-office, then sped along past the handsome, dignified old residence of the Governor of Maryland. Up on a hill at their left the State Capitol stood out. Then the car bell clanged, and the car stopped.

"Maryland Hotel!" called the conductor.

Dave and Dan caught up their suit cases and descended from the car. At their right, they found the steps leading to the porch of the roomy old hotel. In another moment they were in the office, registering.

"You want a room together, gentlemen?" asked the clerk.

"Surely," retorted Dan. "My friend is always afraid when the gas is turned off. My presence quiets him."

"Pardon me, gentlemen, but are you on your way to the Naval Academy?" queried the clerk.

"Yes," nodded Dave quietly.

"Then you will want a room with bath, of course. You'll have to strip before the medical examiners tomorrow.

"A room with bath, of course," assented Dan. "I never have stopped at a hotel without a bathroom."

Dan didn't mention that this was the first time he had ever stopped at a hotel in his short life.

"Front!" called the clerk.

A small black boy in knee trousers came forward, picked up their suit cases and led the way to the next floor.

"My! I wonder who else is expected," muttered Dalzell, as the two young travelers found themselves in their room after the boy had left them.

It was an enormous room, and the three beds in it did not crowd the apartment in the least. All the furniture was of a massive and old-fashioned pattern.

A few minutes later, with face and hands washed--clean collars, clothes neatly brushed, the two clear-eyed, manly-looking young fellows returned to the first floor.

"I suppose this hotel is full of young men like ourselves, wondering what tomorrow will bring them, when they get before the sawbones," muttered Dan.

"Candidates, like ourselves, you mean?" suggested Darrin. "We'll inquire." With that, he approached the clerk and made the inquiry.

"Oh, no," replied the clerk, in answer to Dave's question. "There are only two other candidates besides yourselves stopping here. There are a good many young men in town, of course, but most of them have been here for some weeks, and are in lodging houses. A good many young men come here, you know, to attend the Naval preparatory schools before they go up for their examinations."

"We've had our academic examinations, and have passed," announced Dan.

"What about supper, sir?" asked Dave, who, in his short trip through the South, had noticed that in this part of the country the "sir" is generally employed.

"You'll find supper ready, gentlemen," replied the clerk, pointing the way to the dining room.

So the two young men passed in and enjoyed their first sample of southern cookery.

At this hour there were only a half dozen other people in the dining room--none of them interesting, Darrin decided, after hastily surveying the other diners.

The meal over, the two young candidates sauntered again out into the hotel office.

"Any midshipmen out around the town, sir?" Darrin asked.

"Hardly, sir," replied the clerk, with a smile. "At this hour the young gentlemen are in their rooms at Bancroft Hall."

"What does a midshipman look like?" ventured Dalzell.

"Like a human being, of course," Dave laughed.

"You mean the uniform?" inquired the clerk. "A midshipman, sir, wears a dark blue uniform, like an officer's, and a visored cap, Naval pattern. He also wears the anchor insignia on each side of his coat collar."

Dave and Dan soon walked over to the open doorway and stood looking out upon the street, in which, at this time, few people were passing. Hearing a step in the office, Dan quickly turned. He saw a young man coming through the office, holding himself very erect. This young man was in dark blue uniform, with visored cap, and on each side of his collar

was the anchor insignia. Past the anchor were two bars, but Dalzell didn't notice that at the moment.

"There's a real midshipman," whispered Dan, plucking at Dave's sleeve. "I'm going to speak to him."

"Don't you do it," warned Dave, in an undertone. "You may make a mistake."

"Mistake?" echoed Dan. "With that anchor on his collar?"

Hastily Dan Dalzell slipped back into the office, going up to the young man in uniform, who had stopped before the desk.

"Good evening," began Dan politely. "I'd like to introduce myself. Tomorrow I expect to be one of the crowd. You're a midshipman, aren't you?"

"I'm an officer of the Navy," replied the uniformed stranger coldly, as he half turned to glance briefly at Dalzell. "You are a candidate, I suppose? Then I fancy you will report at the superintendent's office in the morning."

With that the Naval officer turned away, leaving poor Dalzell feeling decidedly dumfounded.

"Wasn't that a midshipman?" gasped Dan, in a whisper.

"That gentleman is a lieutenant in the Navy," replied the clerk, with a slight smile.

Crestfallen Dan hurried back to Darrin, brushing off his sleeves with his hands as he walked.

"Served you right; you must get over being fresh," Dave Darrin rebuked his chum. "But what is the matter with your sleeves?"

"I'm brushing the frost off of them," murmured Dan dejectedly. "Did you notice the ice-bath that fellow threw over me?"

"Come out for a walk," urged Dave. "But be careful where you step and what you say to others."

The two young men strolled down the street.

"Well," smiled Darrin, "I must say, Dan, that you appear to be getting all over your nervousness."

"No; I'm still nervous," protested Dan. "Before, I was afraid I wouldn't get into the Naval Academy. Now, I'm only afraid that I shall."

"What nonsense are you talking now?" demanded Darrin, giving his chum a sharp look.

"Why, if they're all going to be as chesty as that near-officer I spoke to in the hotel," blinked Dan, "I'm not so sure that I want to go in with the bunch."

"That officer wasn't either chesty or snobbish," rejoined Darrin.

"Then you will kindly explain what he tried to do to me?"

"That's easy enough. That Naval officer recognized in you a rather common type---the too-chummy and rather fresh American boy. Down here in the service, where different grades in rank exist, it is necessary to keep the fresh greenhorn in his place."

"Oh!" muttered Dan, blinking hard.

"As to your not wanting to go into the service," Dave continued, "if you should fail, tomorrow, in your physical examination, you would be as blue as indigo, and have the blue-light signal up all the way back home."

"I don't know but that is so. Yes; I guess it is," Dalzell assented.

"Now, there are at least ninety-nine chances in a hundred that you're going to pass the Navy doctors all right, Dan," his chum went on. "If you do, you'll be sworn into the Naval service as a midshipman. Then you'll have to keep in mind that you're not an admiral, but only a midshipman---on probation, at that, as our instructions from the Navy Department inform us. Now, as a new midshipman, you're only the smallest, greenest little boy in the whole service. Just remember that, and drop all your jolly, all your freshness and all your patronizing ways. Just listen and learn, Dan, and study, all the time, how to avoid being fresh. If you don't do this, I'm mighty confident that you're up against a hard and tough time, and that you'll have most of the other midshipmen down on you from the start."

"Any more 'roast' for me?" asked Dalzell plaintively.

"No; for, if you need any more, you'll get it from other midshipmen, who don't know you as well as I do, and who won't make any allowances for your greenness and freshness."

"My!" murmured Dan enthusiastically. "Won't I quiver with glee the first time I see you being called for twelve-inch freshness!"

Yet, despite their wordy encounters, the two remained, as always, the best and most loyal of friends.

For an hour and a half the two youngsters roamed about Annapolis, taking many interested looks at quaint old buildings that had stood since long before the Revolutionary War.

At last they turned back to the hotel, for, as Dalzell suggested, they needed a long night's sleep as a good preparation for going before the Naval surgeons on the next day.

Five minutes after they had turned out the gas Dave Darrin was soundly, blissfully asleep.

In another bed in the same room Dan Dalzell tossed for fully half an hour ere sleep caught his eyelids and pinned them down. In his slumber, however, Dan dreamed that he was confronting the superintendent of the Naval Academy and a group of officers, to whom he was expounding the fact that he was right and they were wrong. What the argument was about Dan didn't see clearly, in his dream, but he had the satisfaction of making the superintendent and most of the Naval officers with him feel like a lot of justly-rebuked landsmen.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST DAY AT THE NAVAL ACADEMY

A few minutes before nine o'clock, the next morning, Dave and Dan were strolling through Lover's Lane, not far from the administration building at the United States Naval Academy.

Their instructions bade them report at 9.15. Dan was for going in at once and "calling on" the aide to the superintendent. But this Dave vetoed, holding that the best thing for them to do was to stick to the very letter of their orders.

So, as they waited, the young men got a glimpse of the imposing piles of buildings that compose the newer Naval Academy. Especially did handsome, big, white Bancroft Hall enchain their admiration. This structure is one of the noblest in the country. In it are the midshipmen's mess, the midshipmen's barracks for a thousand young men, numerous offices and a huge recreation hall.

"That's a swell hotel where they're going to put us up for four years, isn't it?" demanded Dan.

"I fancy that we'll find it something more---or less---than a hotel, before we're through it," was Dave's prophetic reply.

As, at this time in the morning, all of the enrolled midshipmen were away at one form or another of drill or instruction, the central grounds were so empty of human life that the onlooker could form no idea of the immense, throbbing activity that was going on here among the hundreds of midshipmen on duty.

"Here's some of our kind," spoke Dan, at last, as he espied more than a dozen young men, in citizen's dress, strolling along under the trees.

"I guess they're candidates, fast enough," nodded Darrin, after briefly looking at the approaching group.

"Cheap-looking lot, most of them, aren't they?" asked Dalzell cheerfully.

"Probably they're saying the same thing about us," chuckled Dave dryly.

"Let 'em, then. Who cares?" muttered Dalzell.

"Dan, my boy, I reckon you'll need to put the soft pedal on your critical tendencies," warned Dave. "And, if you want my friendly opinion, I've a big idea that you're going to talk your way into a lot of trouble here."

"Trouble?" grinned Dalzell. "Well, I'm used to it."

In truth Dan had been victor in many a hard-fought schoolboy disagreement, as readers of the High School Boys Series are aware.

As the young men in question drew nearer they eyed Darrin and Dalzell with a disapproval that was not wholly concealed. The truth was that Dave and Dan were recognized as not being boys who had studied at one of the Naval prep. schools in Annapolis. The assumption was, therefore, that Dave and Dan had not been able to afford such a luxury.

"Good morning, gentlemen," was Dave's pleasant greeting. "You are candidates, like ourselves, I take it?"

This fact being acknowledged, Dave introduced himself and his friend, and soon some pleasant new acquaintances were being formed, for Darrin had a way that always made him popular with strangers.

"Have you two got to go up before the June exams. here?" asked one of the young men, who had introduced himself as Grigsby.

"Part of it," grinned Dan. "We've already gone through the primer tests and the catechism, and that sort of thing; but we still have to go before the barber and the toilet specialists and see whether our personal appearance suits."

"You're lucky, then," replied Grigsby. "Our crowd all have to take the academic exams."

"Cheer up," begged Dan. "Any baby can go past the academic exams. Arithmetic is the hardest part. One funny chap on the Civil Service Commission nearly got me by asking me how much two and two are, but Darrin saved me, just in the nick of time, by holding up five fingers; so I knew the answer right off."

Some of the candidates were already surveying Dan with a good deal of amusement. They had heard much of the severe way upper classmen at the Naval Academy have of taking all the freshness out of a new man, and, like Dave, these other candidates scented plenty of trouble ahead for cheerful, grinning Dan Dalzell.

"Gentlemen," broke in Dave quietly, "do you see the time on the clock over on the academic building? It's nine-fourteen. What do you say if we step promptly over to the administration building and plunge into what's ahead of us?"

"Good enough," nodded one of the new acquaintances. "Suppose you lead the way?"

So, with Dan by his side, Dave piloted the others over to the administration building, just beyond the chapel.

As they stepped inside, and found themselves in a hallway, a marine orderly confronted them.

"Candidates, gentlemen? Walk right upstairs. An orderly there will direct you to the office of the superintendent's aide."

"Thank you," replied Dave, with a bow, and led the way upstairs.

Near the head of the stairs another marine, in spick-and-span uniform, wearing white gloves and with a bayonet at his belt, called out quietly:

"Candidates? First two, step this way please."

He swung open a door. Dave and Dan stepped into an office where they found a young-looking though slightly bald gentleman in uniform, seated behind a flat-top desk.

"We have come to report, sir, according to our instructions," announced Dave Darrin, happily.

"You are candidates, then?" asked Lieutenant-Commander Graham, reaching for a pile of bound sheets.

"Yes, sir."

"Names?"

"David Darrin and Daniel Dalzell, sir."

"Have you your papers, Mr. Darrin?"

"Yes, sir."

Dave drew an official-looking envelope from an inner pocket and handed it to Lieutenant-Commander Graham.

These the Naval aide scanned closely, after which he looked up.

"You have your papers, Mr. Dalzell?"

"Yes," nodded Dan.

A more than perceptible frown flashed across the face of the officer.

"Mr. Dalzell, whenever you answer an officer you will say 'yes, sir,' or 'very good, sir.'"

Rather red in the face Dan handed over his envelope.

Mr. Graham examined these papers, too. Then, pulling a pile of blanks before him, he filled out two, bearing the names of the young men, and signed them, after which he handed one of the signed blanks to each.

"Mr. Darrin, you will inquire of the orderly downstairs your way to the office of the commandant of midshipmen. You will then at once present yourself before the commandant, handing him this paper."

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir," replied Dave, with a slight bow.

"Mr. Dalzell, stick close to your friend and you will find out what to do."

"Yes, sir," murmured Dan, again reddening.

The orderly below directed the two young men how to proceed to the main entrance of Bancroft Hall, there to turn to their left and inquire again their way to the commandant's office.

"You see," lectured Dave pleasantly, as the chums plodded along one of the walks, "you have already received your first lesson. You answered the superintendent's aide without saying 'sir.' You'll have to work out of this freshness."

"That wasn't freshness; it was ignorance," protested Dalzell. "Don't you worry, Dave; I shall soon get the Naval trotting gait to such an extent that I shall be saying 'sir' at every other word."

This declaration was more prophetic than Dalzell could guess at that moment.

Each lad had a queer feeling at heart as he began to climb the long series of white steps that lead to the main entrance to Bancroft Hall. What would be the outcome? Were they hence-forth to find this huge pile "home" for four years to come? Would they, through all after life, look back upon this great government training school as their alma mater? It all seemed to depend, now, on the verdict of the examining Naval surgeons!

But there was little time for thought. Once inside, they were ushered, by a white-gloved midshipman, into the office of Commander Jephson, commandant of midshipmen.

That gentleman, also in uniform, as were all Navy officers on duty at the Academy, looked briefly as the two young men stood before him.

"Candidates, gentlemen?"

"Yes, sir," replied Dave.

"Your orders?"

Each young man handed over the slip given him by the aide. Commander Jephson scanned each sheet closely, then made some entries on a set of papers of his own.

Next the commandant touched a button on his desk. Almost immediately footsteps were heard outside. Another white-gloved midshipman entered, raising his hand smartly to his cap in salute. This salute the commandant acknowledged in kind.

"Mr. Salisbury, conduct Candidates Darrin and Dalzell outside. Ascertain how soon the surgeons will be ready to examine them, and conduct the candidates to the Board Room at the time assigned for their examination."

"Very good, sir," replied Midshipman Salisbury, in measured tones. Again the inter-change of salutes, after which Midshipman Salisbury led Dave and Dan to an outer office.

"Wait here," directed the midshipman briefly, "I'll let you know when it's time to go to the Board Room."

Five minutes later the midshipman again approached them.

By this time there were seven more candidates in the room. The aide to the superintendent and the commandant were passing the young men quickly through the mill.

"Mr. Darrin, Mr. Dalzell!" called the midshipman master of ceremonies. As Dave and Dan started to their feet their conductor added:

"Follow me to the Board Room."

Down the corridor and into the Board Room the two chums were led. There, awaiting them, they found three Naval medical officers, all in their proper uniform and one of them seated at a desk.

"Strip, with the least delay possible," ordered the senior surgeon.

In a very short space of time Dave and Dan stood forth, minus clothes and, it must be confessed, both very nervous as to what these medical men might or might not find.

Thorough, indeed, was the examination, which began with the heart. But it went much further, including the hair, scalp, eyes, teeth, the condition of the tonsils, the appearance of the tongue, and so on, by regular stages, down to the soles of their feet.

"If there's a square quarter of an inch these fellows have missed, I didn't notice it," muttered Dan to himself.

"You may dress, Mr. Darrin," announced the senior surgeon, and Dave went to the chair on which his clothing lay.

"Mr. Dalzell, come here a moment"

Dan began to feel queer. What had they missed? On what point was his physical condition doubtful?

"Open your mouth," directed one of the surgeons.

Then followed some more exploration of his teeth.

"Oh," murmured Dan, when the medical men gave him a rest for a moment. "It's only my teeth, eh? That's not a vitally important point, is it, sir?"

"We reject candidates for what might seem very slight defects of the teeth," replied the senior surgeon, with emphasis. "Open your mouth again."

The cold ooze stood out on Dan's brow this time. Joke as he might, he did not want to be dropped out of the Navy. Were these medical officers going to find, in his mouth, the clue his disqualification?

"Hm!" said the senior surgeon, watching while another medical officer did the probing and the holding of the dental mirrors.

That "hm!" sent a cold chill of dread coursing down young Daniel's spine.

"Your teeth just about pass," remarked the senior officer. "You may dress, Mr. Dalzell."

It was not long before Dave and Dan both had their clothing on. As Dan was finishing, Dave turned to the senior surgeon.

"Is it improper, sir, for me to ask whether we have passed?" asked Darrin quietly.

"You have both passed," nodded the surgeon. "Mr. Dalzell, however, will do well to take the most wholesome care of his teeth hereafter."

Just then the door opened and two more candidates were shown in.

"Come with me," directed the same midshipman master of ceremonies.

Dan was indiscreet enough to range up alongside their conductor, just missing a vigorous nudge that Dave tried to give him.

"Well, we slipped by the drug-store sign all right," Dan confided to the white-gloved midshipman. "Now, how soon do we get our messenger-boy uniforms?"

"Never, I hope," replied their conductor frigidly, "unless you can learn to speak of the uniform of the service with more respect."

Dan fell back abashed. His style of humor, he was fast discovering, did not seem to make a hit at Annapolis.

Back in the same waiting room the two young men lingered until nearly eleven o'clock. More than two score of candidates had passed the medical examiners by this time, and some others had failed to pass. Yet many of these successful candidates had yet to take their scholastic examinations over in Academic Hall, and so did not wait with Dave and Dan, who had now passed in everything.

By eleven there were fully a dozen young men who, like Dave and Dan, were ready to be sworn in. These were now led to the commandant's office. Here each signed a paper agreeing to serve in the United States Navy for a term of eight years, unless sooner legally discharged. Each also signed a statement to the effect that he took this step with the full permission of parents or guardian.

Then the commandant of cadets ordered them to form in a line facing his desk. A notary appeared, who administered to them the oath of loyalty and obedience. These young men were at last actual members of the brigade of midshipmen.

Commander Jephson now delivered a short address to the lined-up dozen. He pointed out where the lines of their duty lay, and exhorted them to seek their duty and to perform it at all times. In closing the commandant put emphasis on these words:

"One word more, young gentlemen. Until this moment perhaps all of you have been wont to look upon yourself as boys. That time has passed. From the moment that you were sworn into the Navy of the United State---remember---you became men. All of your superior officers will now look to you to realize most fully that you are men---men in word, deed, thought and judgment."

Now another midshipman, a cadet petty officer, appeared and conducted the new members of the brigade outside.

"Fall in by twos," he directed. "When I give the word, move forward as well as you can, in the idea of marching."

It was, indeed, a busy hour that followed. The young men were led before the midshipmen's pay officer, with whom each deposited the sum of two hundred and sixty-four dollars and ninety-eight cents. This amount from each new midshipman is required by law. Of this sum sixty dollars is applied to the purchase of books needed by the new midshipman. The balance of the sum goes to pay for uniforms, articles of equipment, *etc.* From this it would seem that an absolutely poor boy had no chance to enter the Naval Academy. It usually happens, however, that, when a very poor boy is appointed to the Naval Academy, his Congressman, or some of his friends or fellow townsmen will loan him the money, returnable after he enters the service as an officer.

In addition to the amount required by law to be deposited with the Academy authorities each midshipman is ordered to turn over any other money that may be in his possession, this extra amount to be credited to him. A midshipman, on entering the service, receives a salary of six hundred dollars a year. Nearly all of this, however, is required to pay his ordinary expenses. Each midshipman is allowed a very small amount of spending money, with, however, a more liberal allowance when visiting ports during a cruise.

It is forbidden for a midshipman to receive spending money from home or friends. Midshipmen sometimes disobey this latter regulation, but, if detected, are liable to severe punishment.

Afterwards the new midshipmen were taken to the storekeeper's, where each was supplied with one of the uniform caps worn by midshipmen.

Thence the young men were marched back to Bancroft Hall and out onto the terrace over the mess hall.

"Halt! Break ranks!" commanded their instructor, Midshipman Cranthorpe. "You will now pay close heed and endeavor to learn rapidly. Mr. Darrin, step over here."

Dave went forward, Midshipman Cranthorpe placing him.

"The others will form in line of platoon front, using Mr. Darrin as their guide," directed the young instructor.

Then followed some rapid-fire drilling in dressing, facings, counting fours, marching and halting. The material in hand was excellent, or Midshipman Cranthorpe might have been in despair.

Presently their instructor gave the order to break ranks, showing the new men where to stand, up against the building, out of the way. Almost immediately a bugler sounded a call. Then the new men were treated to a sight that made their blood dance.

Out of Bancroft Hall hastily poured scores and scores of midshipmen, until nearly six hundred had assembled. These were the members of the three upper classes.

The brigade of midshipmen is divided into two battalions, each of two divisions, six companies. The first and fourth companies formed on the right of the first battalion, the seventh and tenth companies on the right of the second battalion. The divisions formed with intervals of two paces between companies preparatory to muster. Second call was sounded quickly on the bugle, immediately after which the first petty officer of each company began briskly to call the roll. Each man answered just loudly enough to be heard. While roll-call was going on company commanders stepped briskly along inspecting their companies.

As the muster of each company was completed the first petty officer commanded, "count off!"

"One, two, three, four! One, two, three four!" went the count along each company line. Then the first petty officer of each company wheeled about, saluted his company commander, and reported:

"Sir, all present or accounted for!"

Company commanders next corrected the alignment on the right center company of each line.

Battalion commanders, seeing the divisions of their respective battalions aligned, faced about, while the battalion adjutants took post to right and rear. The brigade adjutant then faced about, saluted the brigade commander, reporting: "Sir, the brigade is formed."

Receiving the word from his superior, the brigade adjutant next read the orders, after which he was ordered to take his post.

While this was going on Midshipman Cranthorpe had formed his awkward squad to the rear, behind the first battalion.

Now orders rang out crisply for battalion commanders to take charge. Thereupon each battalion commander marched his command in column of squads into the mess hall; battalion commanders preceding their battalions, company commanders preceding their companies and the junior officers of each company following the company. Last of all came Midshipman Cranthorpe's awkward squad.

And very awkward, indeed, these young men felt. Each had a burning conviction that he was being watched curiously by hundreds of pairs of eyes. The new men might as well have saved themselves their worry. Barely an upper class man in the hall was paying any heed whatever to these self-conscious plebes.

The meal, a mid-day dinner, was an excellent one. Few of the new men, however, had any notion of what it consisted.

Mess hall was left with almost the same amount of formality. In the short recreation period that followed the new men, painfully conscious that their caps were the only part of the uniform they wore, were hurried away by Midshipman Cranthorpe.

Now they were quickly assigned to the rooms that they would occupy during their first year at the Naval Academy.

The midshipmen are not roomed by classes. Instead, each is assigned to a company, and there are three companies to a division. Each division occupies a floor in Bancroft Hall. It is not called a "floor" but a "deck." Dave and Dan were assigned to the armory wing of the lowest deck, on what was virtually the basement floor of Bancroft Hall, or would have been, but for the mess hall underneath.

As far as wood work went it was a handsome room. When it came to the matter of furniture it was plain enough. There was the main or study room. Off at either side was an alcove bedroom. There was also a closet in which stood a shower bath. The one window of the room looked over across the Academy grounds in the direction of Academic Hall.

A cadet petty officer from the first class briefly, crisply instructed them concerning the care of their room, and their duties within its walls.

What followed that afternoon put the heads of the new midshipmen in a whirl. Afterwards they had a confused recollection of having been marched to the tailor at the storekeeper's, where they were measured for uniforms, all of which are made to order. They recalled receiving a thin, blue volume entitled "Regulations of the U.S. Naval Academy," a book which they were advised by a first class instructor to "commit to memory."

"In former days, in the old-time academy, there were something more than six hundred regulations," dryly remarked the cadet petty officer in charge of them. "In the new up-to-date Naval Academy there are now more than one thousand regulations. You are all expected to appreciate this merciful decrease in the number of things you are required to remember."

There were also two periods of drill, that afternoon, and what-not more.

Supper came as a merciful release. When the meal was over, while many of the upper class men remained outside in the warm June air, the plebes were ordered to go to their rooms and start in making themselves familiar with the thousand-and-more regulations.

"Thank goodness they give us some time for light reading," muttered Dan Dalzell, as he stalked into his room, hung up his uniform cap and sank into a chair. "Whew! What a day this has been!"

"I've rather enjoyed it," murmured Dave, as he sank into the chair on the opposite side of the study table.

"Huh! You have liberal ideas, then, about enjoyment. How many hundred rules are you going to commit to memory tonight?"

"I don't know," returned Dave. "But I do know that my head is in a big whirl, and that I'm going to rest it for a few minutes. By the way, Dan, there's one thing I hope you remember."

"What is that?" demanded Dalzell.

"What did they tell us this lower deck was named?"

"Dunno," grunted Dan. "But I have my own name for it. *I* call it the pinochle deck."

"I'm afraid that won't do to repeat," laughed Dave.

At that moment the handle of the door was turned. Five upper class midshipmen entered, closing the door behind them. Then they stood there, glaring at the two poor plebes in "cit." clothes.

CHAPTER III

A TASTE OF HAZING

"Good evening, gentlemen," nodded Dave pleasantly, as he rose and stood by the study table, waiting to hear the pleasure of his visitors.

Dan Dalzell favored his callers with a nod, but remained seated, both hands thrust deep in his pockets.

"Get up on your feet, mister!" ordered one of the midshipmen, so sternly that Dan obeyed like a shot.

"Excuse me," he began hastily. "I didn't know you came here in an official capacity. I thought--"

"Silence, mister!" commanded another of the visitors. Dan subsided.

"What's your name, mister?" demanded the last speaker, as he favored Dave with his next glance.

"Why, my name is Dave Darrin," replied that plebe pleasantly.

"Say 'sir,' mister, when you address an upper class man. When asked your name, reply, 'Darrin, sir.'"

"Darrin, sir," replied Dave promptly.

"Stand at attention, both of you!" commanded another visitor.

Both plebes obeyed. Now still another caller wheeled upon Dan.

"What's your name, mister."

"Dan Dalzell."

"Dalzell--Sir!" thundered Dan's questioner.

"Dalzell, sir," Dan responded meekly enough.

"It is plain enough that both of you plebes need a good deal of practice in the use of the word, sir. Therefore, in your next answers, you will be careful to employ 'sir' after each word that you utter in your reply. Mister," to Dave, "what did you come to the Naval Academy for?"

"To, sir, become, sir, a sir, Naval, sir, officer. Sir."

"Very good, mister. Mister," to Dalzell, "why did you come here?"

"For sir, the same pur---"

"Sir, sir, sir, sir!" interrupted the quizzer. "Now, try again, mister."

"For, sir, the, sir, same, sir, purpose, sir."

"Now, mister," continued the quizzing visitor, transfixing Dalzell with a look of tremendous sternness, "can you talk French?"

Dan's eyes twinkled briefly.

"I don't know, sir. I never tried, sir," replied Dalzell, in pretended embarrassment.

For a moment it looked as though Dan had turned the tables of mischief upon his tormentors. His reply was so absurd that all of the upper class men, for a moment, betrayed signs of twitching at the corners of their mouths. Then all of them conquered the desire to laugh and returned to the inquest with added severity. The late questioner turned to one of his classmates, remarking scornfully:

"Touge!"

"Very touge, indeed" replied the one addressed.

A "touge" plebe, in Naval Academy parlance, is one who is wholly "fresh."

"Mister," continued Dan's quizzer, "we find you too full of levity for one who intends to embrace the profession of quarter-deck lounge. In our belief it will be necessary for you to let some new ideas soak into your head. Mister, get your wash basin and fill it exactly half full of water. Remember, mister---neither a drop nor less than exactly half full."

Dan's first impulse was to grin, his second to laugh. Yet something in the tone and look of the last speaker made "touge" Dalzell feel that the simplest way out of difficulty would be for him to obey as carefully and speedily as he could. So, with a hurried "very good, sir," Dalzell turned in quest of his basin. He brought it, just about half full, for the inspection of his imperious visitor.

"Place it there on the floor, beside the wall," ordered the tormentor

Dan obeyed.

"Now, mister, stand on your head in that water!"

Dan flushed hotly, for an instant. He even clenched his fists. Then, with a sudden rush of good sense to the head, he bent over to carry out the order that he had received.

It was not as easy a feat as might be supposed, even for a rather well trained and hardened athlete like Dan Dalzell.

He got his head into the bowl all right, and rested his hands on the floor on either side of the bowl. It was when he tried to throw his feet up against the wall that he came to grief. His feet slid along the wall and came down to the floor again.

Dan fell out of the bowl with a good deal of splash.

"If, at first, you don't succeed, mister," began Midshipman Trotter, who had constituted himself chief of the tormentors, "try, try some more."

"I'll make it, sir," responded Dan cheerily, and his very manner, now, inclined his tormentors to go a little more lightly with him.

At the third trial, with his eyes closed, just below the level of the water, Dalzell succeeded in standing very solidly on his head.

The upper class men, who were all third class men, or "youngsters" as they are unofficially termed, watched the performance with interest.

"Rather well done, for a beginner," commented Midshipman Trotter. "As you were, mister."

Dan, unfortunately, tried to be a bit "smart." He made a half somersault forward, trying to spring up on his feet. He fell back, however, and sat down squarely in what was left of the water.

"Never mind a little wet, mister," advised Midshipman Trotter, with a very serious face. "We always rate a man as highly awkward, however, if he breaks the washbowl."

"Which one of you is the better athlete?" suddenly asked Midshipman Harris.

Neither chum intended to be caught, by this crowd, as wanting in modesty.

"He is, sir," replied Dan, with great promptness, nodding toward Darrin.

"Dalzell is, sir," contended Dave.

"In view of this conflicting testimony, we shall have to settle the question by actual test," replied Mr. Trotter. "Mister," to Dan, "bale out your boat."

From the nod which accompanied this command Dalzell understood that he was to empty the water from his wash basin so he promptly obeyed.

"Mister," to Darrin, "launch your boat on this water here."

Plainly the "water" signified the floor. Dave brought out his own wash basin with alacrity. Under further orders the chums placed their bowls about four feet apart.

"Here," announced Midshipman Trotter, taking two toothpicks from a pocket, "are a pair of oars."

Dave Darrin received the toothpicks with a grin.

"And here are your oars, mister," supplemented Mr. Trotter, handing another pair of toothpicks to Dan Dalzell.

At this instant a faint knock was heard at the door, which opened immediately after.

"Got a pair of beasts at work, fellows?" asked a voice. "Here are some more young admirals who need a little help."

Four new midshipmen, in the custody of three youngsters, now stepped into the room and the door was closed.

"Bender's in charge of the floor tonight, you know," nodded one of the newly-arrived youngsters, "and Bender's duty-crazy. Besides, he belongs to the second class, and hardly admits that we're alive."

On each floor a midshipman is detailed to be in charge through the evening. He is responsible for discipline on his floor, and must report all breaches of the rules. A midshipman who wishes to stand well with his comrades may, when in charge of the floor, conveniently fail to see a good many minor breaches of discipline. When the man in charge of the floor reports all breaches that come to his notice he is said to be duty-crazy. He is also charged with "trying to make his mark in grease." "Grease" is high standing on the efficiency report. As a rule the man who stands well in "grease" stands somewhat lower in general popularity.

Midshipman Bender, second class, was, at this time, regarded as one of the worst "greasers" of all.

"What's on?" inquired Midshipman Hayes, one of the newcomers in the room. "Tub race?"

"No, sir; fast spurt in single-pair shells," replied Midshipman Trotter impressively.

"Whew! You've caught some real athletes, have you?"

"That's what we want to find out," responded Mr. Trotter. "Now, then, misters, we warn you against approaching this noble sport in any spirit of levity! You are not to think that this work is for your own amusement, or for anyone else's. You must try yourselves out fairly and squarely. Our purpose is to find out which is the better oarsman, and also which rows with the more finish. Take your seats in your craft."

Dave and Dan seated themselves, with all possible gravity, in their respective wash basins.

"Up oars!" commanded Mr. Trotter.

As neither plebe knew just what was meant by this command they had to be shown how to sit holding their "oars" straight up in the air.

"Let fall!"

This time the two new men guessed fairly well. They went through the motions of allowing their toothpick oars to fall into row-locks.

"Now, at the outset, take your strokes from my count," directed Mr. Trotter. "One, two three, four, five, six, seven---"

And so on. It was all ludicrously absurd, to see Dave and Dan bending to their tasks as seriously as though they were rowing real craft with actual oars.

One of the visiting plebes was stupid enough to giggle.

"Go over and stand by the window in arrest, mister," ordered Midshipman Hayes. "You shall be tried later!"

Then the "boat race" continued. It soon proved to be more than absurd; it was decidedly fatiguing. Both Dave and Dan found that their strained positions, and the motions required of them, made backs and shoulders ache. Their legs, too, began to suffer from cramp.

It was not until both showed signs of decided weariness that the race was brought to an end.

Then the cadet who had giggled was called forward, ordered to half fill one of the washbowls and to stand on his head in it.

While this was going on there was not a smile from anyone. From the serious faces of all this might have been one of the most important bits of drill in the whole course at the Academy.

Dave, however, made the best impression upon the youngsters. All the other new men came sooner or later, to the ordeal of standing on their heads in the wet bowl, but Dave seemed destined to escape.

The rowing was carried on until all of the youngsters had tired of this sport.

"Fall in, in platoon front," directed Midshipman Trotter.

The six plebes, solemn as owls, stood up in line, "dressing" their line carefully.

"Now, attend me carefully," cautioned Mr. Trotter, sweeping a stern glance down the line of plebes. "I am about to tell you a bit of the day's news from over in Sleepy Hollow, which place is known to Maryland geographers as the village of Annapolis. You must attend me with extreme care, for, after I have narrated the news, I shall question you concerning it. Do you follow me, misters?"

"Yes, sir," came in a chorus.

"You need not answer quite as loudly," warned Midshipman Trotter, sending a backward look over his shoulder at the door. "Now, then, the police over in Sleepy Hol---Annapolis---today learned the details of a yellow tragedy. Some weeks ago three Chinamen came to town and opened a clean---I mean, a new---laundry. During the last week, however, the public noted that the door leading from the office to the rear room was always closed. You follow me?"

"Yes, sir," came in an almost whispered chorus.

"Finally," continued Mr. Trotter, "one customer, more curious than the others, reported his observations to the police. Today the Johnny Tinplates made a raid on the place. A most curious state of affairs came to light. So---but is this tangled tale clear to you all as far as I have gone?"

"Yes, sir," came the whispered chorus.

"What the police learned," went on Mr. Trotter, in a voice that now sounded slightly awestruck, "was this: a week ago the three Chinese partners had a serious row. They quarreled, then fought. Two of the yellow partners killed the third! And now, a serious problem confronted the two survivors of that misunderstanding. What was to be done with the remains of the unsuccessful disputant?"

Midshipman Trotter looked at each of the wondering plebes in turn. It looked as though he were asking the question of them.

"I don't know, sir," admitted Dan Dalzell, at the left of the line.

"I don't know, sir," admitted the man next to Dan. So it went down the line, until Dave Darrin, at the further end, had admitted himself to be as much in the dark as were the others.

"Then, listen," resumed Mr. Trotter impressively. "The Chinese, being descended from a very ancient civilization, are not only very ingenious but also very thrifty. They were burdened with two hundred pounds of evidence on the premises. In their extremity the two survivors cut up their late partner, cooked him, and disposed of the flesh at meal times."

From the gravity of the narrator's expression he appeared to be reciting a wholly true story.

"Now, then," rasped out Midshipman Trotter, "that being the state of affairs at the laundry---*what was the telephone number?*"

Trotter's gaze was fixed on Dan Dalzell's face almost accusingly.

"How the---" began startled Dan gruffly. Then, instantly realizing that he was making a mistake, he broke in hastily:

"Beg your pardon, sir, but I don't understand how to get at the telephone number."

"You try, mister," ordered Midshipman Trotter, turning to the plebe next to Dalzell.

"I can't solve the problem, sir."

So it ran, straight down the line, each confessing his ignorance, until finally Mr. Trotter glared at Dave Darrin.

"Come, come, mister, from the very exact narrative that I have given, can't you deduce the telephone number of that laundry?"

"Yes, sir; I think so," answered Darrin, with a slight smile.

"Ah! Then there's a man in the squad who is more than a mere saphead. Let us have the telephone number, mister!"

"Two-ate-one-John," replied Dave promptly.

This was the correct answer. Dave had heard that "gag" before.

"Mister," beamed Mr. Trotter, "I congratulate you. You are no mollycoddle. Your head is not over-fat, but somewhat stocked with ideas. As soon as you have soaked in a few more ideas you will be fit to associate with the young

gentlemen at this sailor-factory. You may, therefore, take the washbowl, fill it half full of ideas, and stand on your head in them until they have soaked well in!"

Poor Dave, his face flushed crimson, could have dropped in his humiliation at having thus fallen into the trap. But he started manfully for the washbowl, which he half filled with water. Meanwhile the other five plebes were choking. They could have screamed in their glee---had they dared!

Placing the bowl where ordered, Dave bent down to his knees, immersing the top of his head in the water.

With hands on opposite sides of the bowl he balanced his feet, preparatory to hoisting them into place against the wall.

"Up oars!" commanded Mr. Hayes dryly.

From one of the visiting plebes came an incautious giggle. Mr. Hayes turned and marked his man with a significant stare that made the unfortunate giggler turn red and white in turn with alarm.

At the order, "up oars," Dave Darrin sent his feet aloft. By rare good luck he succeeded the first time trying.

There he remained, his head in the bowl of water, his feet resting against the wall.

Just at this moment, though, the sound of trouble was in the air, even if it reached interested ears but faintly.

A step was heard in the corridor outside. There was a faint knock.

The upper class midshipmen knew on the instant what the knock meant---and so indeed did Dave Darrin.

CHAPTER IV

The "Youngsters" Who became "Spoons on"

It was a most critical moment in the life histories of several young men who had grown to consider themselves as future officers in the United States Navy!

Such a man as Midshipman Bender was certain to report any form of hazing he detected.

Now, the usual punishment meted out to hazers at either Annapolis or West Point is dismissal from the service!

True, this was not brutal hazing, but merely the light form of the sport known as "running" the new man.

Nevertheless, "all hazing looks alike" to the public, when posted by the newspapers, and the Naval Academy authorities deal severely with even "running."

So, for all of the "youngsters," or third class men, who had been conducting the evening's festivities, all the elements of trouble, and perhaps of dismissal, were at hand.

But Dave Darrin had been the first to hear the soft approach of footsteps, and somehow, he had guessed at the meaning of it all.

Just in the fraction of a second before the knock had sounded at the door Dave had made a fine handspring that brought him from his topsy-turvy attitude to a position of standing on his feet. And, at the same time, he held the washbowl in his hand without having spilled a drop of the water. Like a flash Dave flew across the room, depositing the bowl where it belonged. With a towel he wiped his hair, then swiftly mopped his face dry. Hair brush and comb in hand, he turned, saving:

"Why, I suppose, gentlemen, Dalzell and myself were very fair athletes in the High School sense of the word. But it's a long jump from that to aspiring to the Navy football team. Of course we'll turn out for practice, if you wish, but---"

At this moment, Lieutenant Bender, the "duty-crazy" one, thrust the door open.

Here Dave, on his way to the mirror, hairbrush and comb in hand, halted as though for the first time aware of the accusing presence of Bender, midshipman in charge of the floor for the day.

"Uh-hum!" choked Midshipman Bender more confused, even, than he had expected the others to be.

"Looks like rather good material, doesn't he, Bender?" inquired Mr. Trotter. "Green, of course, and yet---"

"I didn't come here to discuss Navy athletics," replied Midshipman Bender.

"Oh, an official visit---is that it?" asked shipman Hayes, favoring the official visitor with a baby-stare. "As it is past graduation, and there are no evening study hours, there is no regulation against visiting in the rooms of other members of the brigade."

"No," snapped Mr. Bender, "there is not."

Saying this the midshipman in charge turned on his heel and left the room.

An instant after the door had closed the lately scared youngsters expressed themselves by a broad grin, which deepened to a very decided chuckle as Mr. Bender's footsteps died away.

"Mister," cried Midshipman Trotter, favoring Darrin with a glance of frank friendliness, "do you know that you saved us from frapping the pap hard?"

"And that perhaps you've saved us from bilging?" added Midshipman Hayes.

"I'm such a greenhorn about the Navy, sir, that I am afraid I don't follow you in the least, sir," Darrin replied quietly.

Then they explained to him that the "pap" is the conduct report, and that "to frap" is to hit. To "frap the pap" means to "get stuck on" the conduct report for a breach of discipline. A "bilger" is one who is dropped from the service, or who is turned back to the class below.

"I judged that there was some trouble coming sir," Dave confessed, "and I did the best that I could. It was good luck on my part that I was able to be of service to you."

"Good luck, eh?" retorted Midshipman Trotter. "Third class men, fall in!"

As the "youngsters" lined up Mr. Trotter, standing at the right of the line, asked coaxingly:

"Mister, will you be condescending enough to pass down the line and shake hands with each of us?"

Flushing modestly, but grinning, Dave did as asked---or directed.

"Mister," continued Midshipman Trotter impressively, "we find ourselves very close to being 'spoons on' you."

For a youngster to be "spoons on" a new fourth classman means for the former to treat the latter very nearly as though he were a human being.

"Now, you green dandelions may go," suggested Mr. Trotter, turning to the four "visiting" plebes.

As soon as this had come about Trotter turned to Dave Darrin.

"Mister, we humble representatives of the third class are going to show you the only sign of appreciation within our power. We are going to invite you to stroll down the deck and visit us in our steerage. Your roommate is invited to join us."

Dave and Dan promptly accepted, with becoming appreciation. All of the youngsters escorted Dave and Dan down the corridor to Midshipman Trotter's room.

In the course of the next hour the youngsters told these new midshipmen much about the life at the Naval Academy that it would otherwise have taken the two plebes long to have found out for themselves.

They were initiated into much of the slang language that the older midshipmen use when conversing together. Many somewhat obscure points in the regulations were made clear to them.

Lest the reader may wonder why new fourth class men should tamely submit to hazing or "running," when the regulations of the Naval Academy expressly prohibit these upper class sports, it may be explained that the midshipmen of the brigade have their own internal discipline.

A new man may very easily evade being hazed, if he insists upon it.

His first refusals will be met with challenges to fight. If he continues to refuse to be "hazed" or "run," he will soon find himself ostracized by all of the upper class men. Then his own classmates will have to "cut" him, or they, too, will be "cut." The man who is "cut" may usually as well resign from the Naval Academy at once. His continued stay there will become impossible when no other midshipman will recognize him except in discharge of official duties.

The new man at Annapolis, if he has any sense at all, will quietly and cheerfully submit to being "run." This fate falls upon every new fourth class man, or nearly so. The only fourth class man who escapes being "run" is the one who is considered as being beneath notice. Unhappy, indeed, is the plebe whom none of the youngsters above him will consent to haze. And frequent it happens that the most popular man in an upper class is one who, while in the fourth class, was the most unmercifully hazed.

Often a new man at the Naval Academy arrives with a firm resolution to resist all attempts at running or hazing. He considers himself as good as any of the upper class men, and is going to insist on uniformly good treatment from the upper class men.

If this be the new man's frame of mind he is set down as being "ratey."

But often the new man arrives with a conviction that he will have to submit to a certain amount of good-natured hazing by his class elders. Yet this man, from having been spoiled more or less at home, is "fresh." In this case he is called only "touge."

Hence it is a far more hopeful sign to be "touge" than to be "ratey."

The new man who honestly tries to be neither "touge" nor "ratey," and who has a sensible resolve to submit to tradition, is sometimes termed "almost sea-going."

Dave Darrin was promptly recognized as being "almost sea-going." He would need but little running.

Dan Dalzell, on the other hand, was soon listed as being "touge," though not "ratey."

CHAPTER V

Invited to join the "Frenchers"

Within the next few days several things happened that were of importance to the new fourth class men.

Other candidates arrived, passed the surgeons, and were sworn into Naval service.

Many of the young men who had passed the surgeons, and who had gone through the dreary, searching ordeals over in grim old Academic Hall, had now become members of the new fourth class.

As organized, the new fourth class started off with two hundred and twenty-four members---numerically a very respectable battalion.

At the outset, while supplied only with midshipmen's caps, and while awaiting the "building" of their uniforms, these new midshipmen were drilled by some of the members of the upper classes.

This state of affairs, however, lasted but very briefly. Graduation being past, the members of the three upper classes were rather promptly embarked on three of the most modern battleships of the Navy and sent to sea for the summer practice cruise.

The night before embarkation Midshipman Trotter looked in briefly upon Dave Darrin and his roommate.

"Well, mister," announced the youngster, with a paternal smile, "somehow you'll have to get on through the rest of the summer without us."

"It will be a time of slow learning for us, sir," responded Darrin, rising.

"Your summer will henceforth be restful, if not exactly instructive," smiled Trotter. "In the absence of personal guidance, mister, strive as far as you can to reach the goal of being sea going."

"I'll try, sir."

"You won't have such hard work as your roommate," went on Trotter, favoring Dalzell with a sidelong look. "And, now, one parting bit of advice, mister. Keep it at all times in mind that you must keep away from demoralizing association

with the forty per cent."

Statistics show that about forty per cent of the men who enter the U.S. Naval Academy fail to get through, and are sent back into civil life. Hence the joy of keeping with the winning "sixty."

The next morning the members of the three upper classes had embarked aboard the three big battleships that lay at anchor in the Severn. It was not until two days afterwards that the battleships sailed, but the upper class men did not come ashore in the interval.

Soon after the delivery of uniforms to the new fourth class men began and continued rapidly.

Dave and Dan, having been among the first to have their measure taken, were among the earliest to receive their new Naval clothing.

A tremendously proud day it was for each new midshipman when he first surveyed himself, in uniform, in the mirror!

The regular summer course was now on in earnest for the new men.

On Mondays those belonging to the first and second divisions marched down to the seamanship building, there to get their first lessons in seamanship. This began at eight o'clock, lasting until 9.30. During the same period the men who belonged to the third and fourth divisions received instruction in discipline and ordnance. In the second period, from 10 to 11.30 the members of the first and second division attended instruction in discipline and ordnance while the members of the third and fourth divisions attended seamanship.

In the afternoon, from 3 to 4.45, the halves of the class alternated between seamanship and marine engineering.

All instruction proceeded with a rapidity that made the heads of most of these new midshipmen whirl! From 5 to 6 on the same afternoon the entire fourth class attended instruction in the art of swimming---and no midshipman hope to graduate unless he is a fairly expert swimmer!

Wednesday and Saturday afternoons were devoted to athletics and recreation.

A midshipman does not have his evenings for leisure. On the first five evenings of each week, while one half of the class went to the gymnasium, the other half indulged in singing drill in Recreation Hall.

"What's the idea of making operatic stars out of us?" grumbled Dan to his roommate on day.

"You always seem to get the wrong impression about everything, Danny boy," retorted Darrin, turning to his roommate with a quizzical smile. "The singing drill isn't given with a view to fitting you to sing in opera."

"What, then?" insisted Dan.

"You are learning to sing, my dear boy, so that, later on, you will be able to deliver your orders from a battleship's bridge in an agreeable voice."

"If my voice on the bridge is anything like the voice I develop in Recreation Hall," grimaced Dalzell, "it'll start a mutiny right then and there."

"Then you don't expect sailors of the Navy to stand for the kind of voice that is being developed in you in Recreation Hall?" laughed Darrin.

"Sailors are only human," grumbled Dalzell.

The rowing work, in the big ten-oared cutters proved one of the most interesting features of the busy summer life of the new men.

More than half of these fourth class midshipmen had been accustomed to rowing boats at home. The work at Annapolis, however, they found to be vastly different.

The cutter is a fearfully heavy boat. The long Naval oar is surprisingly full of avoirdupois weight. True, a midshipman has to handle but one oar, but it takes him many, many days to learn how to do that properly.

Yet, as August came and wore along, the midshipmen found themselves becoming decidedly skilful in the work of handling the heavy cutters, and in handling boats under sail.

Competitive work and racing were encouraged by the Navy officers who had charge of this instruction.

Each boat was under the direct command of a midshipman who served as crew captain, with thirteen other midshipmen under him as crew.

When the post of crew captain fell to Dan Dalzell he embarked his crew, gave the order to shove off and let fall oars, and got away in good style.

Then, leaning indolently back Dan grinned luxuriously.

"This is the post I'm cut out for," he murmured, so that stroke-oar heard him and grinned.

Yet, as "evil communications corrupt good manners," Dan's attitude was reflected in his crew of classmates. The cutter was manned badly at that moment.

"Mr. Dalzell!" rasped out the voice of Lieutenant Fenton, the instructor, from a near-by boat.

Dan straightened up as though shot. But the Navy officer's voice continued sternly:

"Sit up in a more seamanlike manner. Pay close attention to the work of your boat crew. Be alert for the best performance of duty in the boat that you command. For your inattention, and worse, of a moment ago, Mr. Dalzell, you will put yourself on the conduct report."

The next morning, at breakfast formation, Dan's name was read from the "pap." He had been given five demerits. This was below the gravity of his offense, but he had been let off lightly the first time.

"You've got to stick to duty, and keep it always in mind," Darrin admonished his chum. "I don't intend to turn preachy, Dan; but you'll surely discover that the man who lets his indolence or sense of fun get away with him is much better off out of the Naval Academy."

"Pooh! A lot of the fellows have frapped the pap," retorted Dalzell. "Demerits don't do any harm, unless you get enough of 'em to cause you to be dropped."

"Well, if there is no higher consideration," argued Dave, "at least you must remember that the number of demerits fixes your conduct grade. If you want such liberties and privileges as are allowed to new midshipmen, you'll have to keep your name away from the pap."

"Humph! Setting your course toward the grease mark are you?" jeered Dan.

"Think it over!" urged Dave Darrin patiently.

Before August was over the new fourth class men marched "like veterans." They had mastered all the work of drill, marching and parade, and felt that they could hold their own in the brigade when the upper class men returned.

On the 28th of August the three big battleships were sighted coming up the bay in squadron formation. A little more than an hour later they rode at anchor.

It was not, however, until the 30th of August that the upper classmen were disembarked.

August 31 was devoted to manifold duties, including the hurried packing of light baggage, for now the members of the three upper classes were to enjoy a month's leave of absence before the beginning of the academic year on October 1.

Then, like a whirlwind mob, and clad in their "cit." clothes, the upper class men got away on that hurried, frenzied leave.

There was no leave, however, for the new midshipmen.

In lieu of leave, through the month of September, the new fourth class men spent the time, each week-day, from ten o'clock until noon, at the "Dago Department," as the Department of Modern Languages is termed.

Here they made their start in French.

"When Trotter comes back," muttered Dan, "if he asks me whether I can talk French, I'll tell him that I've tried, and now I know I can't."

It was the last night before the upper classmen were due back from their leave.

Dave and Dan were in their room, poring hard over French, when a light tap sounded on the door.

Right on top of the tap Midshipman Farley, fourth class, entered on tiptoe, closing the door behind him.

This accomplished, Farley dropped his air of stealth, strolling over to the study desk.

"There's a nice little place in town---you know, Purdy's," began Farley significantly.

"I've heard of it as an eating place," responded Darrin.

"It's more than that," returned Farley, smacking his lips. "It's an ideal place for a banquet."

"I accept your word for it," smiled Dave.

"I don't ask you to, Darrin," grinned Farley. "Like any honest man I'm prepared to prove all I say. Purdy has received---by underground telegraph---orders to prepare a swell feast for eight. It's to be ready at eleven tonight. We had the eight all made up, but two fellows have flunked cold. We're to French it over the wall tonight, leaving here a few minutes after taps. Are you on?"

Farley's enthusiastic look fell upon the face of Dalzell.

"I'm on!" nodded Dan

"No; you're not" broke in Dave quietly.

"I'm afraid I must disagree with you, little David," murmured Dan.

"Oysters, clams, fish---watermelon!" tempted Midshipman Farley.

"Um-yum!" grunted Dan, his eyes rolling.

"Then you're with us, Dalzell?" insisted Farley.

"Well, rather---"

"---not!" interjected Dave Darrin with emphasis.

"Now, what are you butting in for, you greasy greaser?" demanded Farley, giving Dave a contemptuous glance. "Maybe you won't join us, and maybe we'd just as soon not have as greasy a midshipman as you at the festive board, but Dalzell isn't tied to your apron strings, are you, Dalzell?"

"No; he's not," replied Darrin, speaking for his chum. "Dalzell will speak for himself, if he insists. But he and I have been chums these many years, and we've often given each other good advice in trying or tempting times. Dalzell will go with you, if he cares to, for he already knows all that I have to say on the subject."

"You've had your nose stuck down deep in the grease-pot ever since you struck Annapolis!" cried Farley angrily. "I hope you bilge, Darrin; with all my heart I hope you bilge soon. We don't need a mollicoddle like you here in the Naval Academy!"

"Isn't that about all you want to say?" demanded Dave, looking up with a frown.

"No; it's not half what I have to say," cried Farley hotly. "Darrin, your kind of fellow is a disgrace to the Naval service! You're a sneak---that's what---"

"You may stop, right there!" frowned Darrin, rising from his chair.

"I'll stop when I'm proper ready!" retorted Farley hotly.

"If you don't stop right now, you'll finish while engaged in landing on your ear in the hall outside!" warned Dave, stepping forward.

There was a new look in Darrin's usually patient eyes. It was a look Farley hadn't seen there before, and it warned the hot-headed midshipman that he was in danger of going too far.

"Oh, fudge on you, Darrin!" jeered Farley, turning on his heel. "Going to be with us, Dalzell?"

"No," replied Dan promptly. "I never travel with the enemies of my friends."

"Greasers, both of you!" flung back the caller, and left them.

"If that fellow had talked an hour longer I believe I might have lost my patience," smiled Darrin, as he turned back to his desk. "But I'm glad you're not with that outfit tonight Danny boy. It may turn out a big scrape."

"Why should it turn out a big scrape." demanded Dan.

"Oh, you never can tell," replied Darrin, as he picked up his book.

Farley did not succeed in getting two more midshipmen to join in the Frenching. Twenty minutes after taps, however, the original six of the fourth class slipped out of Bancroft Hall.

Slyly they made their way to where they had a board hidden near the wall of the Academy grounds.

One at a time, and swiftly, they went up this board, and over the wall.

At Purdy's they found a meal to tempt the most whimsical appetite. The meal over they spent much time in singing and story-telling.

It was nearly two in the morning when Farley and his fellow feasters tried to get back into the grounds, over the wall.

They got over the wall, all right, but only to fall into the hands of one of the watchmen, who seemed to have known exactly where to expect their return.

All six were reported to the officer in charge. At breakfast formation Midshipmen Farley, Oates, Scully, Brimmer, Henkel and Page were assigned fifty demerits each for unauthorized absence during the night.

Farley and his friends were furious. More, they were talkative.

Had Dave Darrin been less occupied that day he would have noted that many of his classmates avoided him.

Dan did notice, and wondered, without speaking of the matter.

That day all the upper class men returned, and Bancroft Hall hummed for a while with the bustle of the returning hundreds.

Just before the dinner formation Youngster Trotter encountered Dave in the corridor.

"Hullo, mister!" was Trotter's greeting, and the youngster actually held out his hand.

"I hope you had a mighty pleasant leave, sir," replied Dave, returning the handclasp.

"Passably pleasant, passably, mister," returned Midshipman Trotter. "But see here, mister, what's this about you and your class that I've heard?"

"Nothing, so far as I know, sir," replied Dave, scanning the youngster's face closely.

"It must be more than nothing," returned Trotter. "I understand that more than half of your class are furious with you over something that happened last night. I've heard you called a sneak, mister, though I don't believe that for a single minute. But I've heard mutterings to the effect that your class will send you to coventry for excessive zeal in greasing, to the detriment of your classmates. What about it all, mister?"

Dave Darrin gazed at the youngster with eyes full of wonder.

"What about it?" repeated Dave. "That's the very thing I'd like to know, sir, for this is the very first word I've heard of it."

Nor could Midshipman Trotter doubt that Dave Darrin had answered in all sincerity.

"Well, you certainly must be innocent, mister, if you're as puzzled as all this," replied the youngster. "Then it must be that malicious mischief is brewing against you in some quarter. Take my advice, mister, and find out what it all means."

"Thank you. I most certainly will, sir," replied Dave, his eyes flashing.

CHAPTER VI

DAVE PASSES THE LIE

Dalzell looked up wonderingly as Darrin marched swiftly into their room.

"Danny boy, have you heard any talk against me today?" demanded Dave.

"Do I look as though I had been fighting?" queried Dan promptly.

"I've just heard, from Trotter, that a good many of the fellows in our class are scorching me, and talking of sending me to coventry. Will you---"

"I sure will," broke in Dan, dropping his book, rising and snatching at his cap. "I'll be back as soon as I've heard something, or have settled with the fellow who says it."

Dan was out of the room like a flash.

Dave sat down heavily in his chair, his brow wrinkling as he tried to imagine what it all meant.

"It must all be a mistake that Trotter has made," argued Dave with himself. "Of course, Trotter might be stringing me, but I don't believe he would do that. Now, to be sure, I came near to having words with Farley last night, but that wouldn't be the basis for any action by the fourth class. That, if anything, would be wholly a personal matter. Then what am I accused of doing? It must be some fierce sort of lie when the fellows talk of taking it up as a class matter."

For ten minutes more Dave puzzled and pondered over the problem. Then the door flew open and Dan bolted hastily in.

"You haven't been hitting anyone have you?" asked Dave, noticing the flushed, angry face of his chum.

"No! But one of us will have to do some hitting soon," burst hotly from Dalzell.

"It'll be my hit, then, I guess," smiled Dave wearily. "Have you found out---"

"Dave it's the most absurd sort of lie! You know that Farley and his little crowd got caught last night, when they returned from their Frenching party over the wall?"

"Frenching" is taking unauthorized leave from the academic limits by going over the wall, instead of through the gate.

"Yes; I know Farley and his friends got caught," rejoined Darrin. "But what has that to do with me?"

"Farley and his friends are sore---"

"They ought not to be," said Darrin quietly. "They took the chance, and now they ought to be ready to pay up like good sportsmen."

"Dave, *they say you informed on them, and got them caught!*"

"What?" shouted Darrin, leaping to his feet. His face was deathly white and the corners of his mouth twitched.

He took two bounding steps toward the door, but Dalzell threw himself in his chum's way.

"Not just this minute, Dave!" ordered Dan firmly. "We don't want any manslaughter here---not even of the 'justifiable' kind! Sit and wait until you've cooled off---some. When you go out I'm going with you---whether it's out into the corridor, or out of the Naval Academy for good. Sit down, now! Try to talk it over coolly, and get yourself into a frame of mind where you can talk with others without prejudicing your case."

"My case?" repeated Dave bitterly, as he allowed Dan to force him back into his chair. "I haven't any case. I haven't done anything."

"I know that, but you've got to get cool, and stay so, if you want to make sure that others have a chance to know it," warned Dan.

"Does Farley say that I sneaked in information against him?"

"Farley and the others are so sore over their demerits that they believe almost anything, now, and they say almost anything. Of course, Farley remembers the row he had with you last night. In a fool way he puts two and two together, and decides that you helped set the trap for them."

"If I had done a dirty thing like that, then I'd deserve to be cut by the whole brigade," retorted Dave, his face flushing.

"But I want to tell you, right now, Dave, that some of the fellows of our class know you too well to believe any such thing against you."

"I'm properly grateful to the few, then," retorted Darrin, his eyes softening a trifle. "But come along, Dan, if you will. I mean to start in at once to sift this thing down."

"Let me look at you," ordered Dalzell, grappling with his chum, and looking him over.

Then, a moment later, Dan added:

"Yes; you're cool enough, I think. I'll go with you. But remember that the easiest way to destroy yourself is to let your temper get on top. If anybody is to get mad before the crowd, let me do it. Then you can restrain me if I get too violent."

Dave Darrin took his uniform cap down from the nail and put it on with great deliberation. Next, he picked up his whisk broom, flecking off two or three imaginary specks of dust.

"Now, I guess we can go along, Danny boy," he remarked, in a tone of ominous quietness.

"Where are you headed?" murmured Dalzell, as they reached the room door.

"To Farley's room," answered Dave Darrin coolly. "Do you suppose he's there?"

"He was, a few moments ago" Dan answered.

"Then let us hope he is now."

Carrying himself with his most erect and military air, Darrin stepped down the corridor, Dalzell keeping exactly at his side.

The chums arrived before the door of the room in which Farley was lodged.

Dave raised his hand, sounding a light knock on the door, which he next pushed open.

Farley and a dozen other members of the fourth class were in the room. Moreover, it was evident instantly that some of those present were discussing the burning class issue.

"But are you sure he did it? Farley?" one midshipman inquired, as the chums entered.

"Sure?" repeated Farley. "Of course I am! Didn't I tell you what a hot row we had. Darrin---"

"I'm here to speak for myself, Farley," boomed in the quiet, steady voice of Dave Darrin. "But I'll hear you first, if you wish."

"Oh, you're here, are you?" cried Farley hotly, wheeling about on the visitors.

Some of the other fourth class men present turned and glanced coldly at the two last-comers. Others looked on with eager curiosity.

"I've heard," announced Darrin, "that you are saying some things about me that don't sound well. So I've come to ask you what you are saying."

"I won't keep you waiting," jeered Farley. "You know, from hearing morning orders, that six of us were given fifty demerits apiece."

"For going over the wall to a late supper in town," nodded Dave.

"You wouldn't go with us," continued Farley angrily, "and gave us a greaser's talk-fest instead."

"I didn't advise you against going," responded Dave, standing with his arms folded, utterly cool as he eyed his accuser.

"Then, after we went, some one went and wised the powers," charged Farley. "Now, no one but a most abandoned greaser would do that."

To "wise the powers" is to give information to the Naval officers.

"The fellow who would wilfully tell on you would be worse than what you term a greaser," agreed Dave.

"Careful," warned Farley ironically. "You know who told, or who caused the wise word to leak to the powers."

"I don't," Dave denied bluntly.

"You're the sneak, yourself!" cried Farley angrily.

"I am not," spoke Dave, with clear denial.

"Do you mean to say I lie?" demanded Midshipman Farley threateningly, as he took a step forward.

"Do you deliberately state that I informed upon you, or caused you to be informed upon?" demanded Dave Darrin.

"Yes, I do!

"Then you lie!" returned Darrin promptly.

With a suppressed yell Farley sprang at Darrin, and the latter struck out quickly.

CHAPTER VII

ON THE FIELD OF THE CODE

Midshipman Farley had the bad judgment to stop that blow with the side of his neck.

Across the room he spun, going down in a heap, his head under the study table.

Dave Darrin looked on with a cool smile, while Farley lay there for an instant, then scrambled out and up onto his feet.

But two or three other new midshipmen sprang in between Dave and his accuser.

"We can't have a fight here, Farley," urged two or three in the same breath.

"Let me at the sneak!" sputtered Farley who was boiling over with rage.

"Yes; let him at me," voiced Dave coolly, "and I'll send him into the middle of next term!"

But three of the midshipmen clung to Farley, who furiously strove to fling them off.

"Let me at him!" insisted the accuser. "He struck me."

"You struck at him first, and didn't land," replied one of the peacemakers. "You go on with a fight here, and you'll bring the officer in charge down on us all. Farley, if you feel you've a grievance you are privileged to take recourse to the regular code in such matters."

"The fellow has lied about me, and I'm ready to settle it with him now, or outside by appointment," broke in Dave, speaking as coolly as before.

"He calls me 'fellow' and 'liar,'" panted Farley, turning white. "Do you think I can stand that?"

"You don't have to," replied one of those who held Farley back. "Send Darrin a challenge, in the regular way."

"I will!" panted Midshipman Farley. "And I'll hammer him all over and out of the meeting-place!"

"Then it's settled for a challenge," interposed Dan Dalzell. "That will suit us all right. We'll be ready whenever the challenge comes. And now, to prevent getting a lot of decent fellows into a needless scrape, Darrin and I will withdraw."

Dan took Dave by the arm, and both turned to leave the room.

"You---" began Farley hoarsely, when another midshipman clapped a hand over his mouth.

"Shut up Farley! Save all of your undoubted grit for the field, when you two meet."

The door closed softly behind Darrin and Dalzell.

"Why didn't you let me at the sneak?" bellowed Farley, released, now, from interfering hands.

"See here, Farley," advised one of his friends, "cool down and keep your face in a restful attitude. Darrin behaved twice as well as you did. If you don't look out you'll lose the sympathy of the class. Just keep cool, and restrain your tongue from wagging until you've met Darrin. Don't try to start the row again, this side of the field where you meet. If you do, you'll get many a cold shoulder."

Other midshipmen present spoke in the same vein. Farley, who wanted to be popular at all times, presently allowed himself to be advised.

Of course the news of the meeting, and of the more emphatic one to come spread fast through Bancroft Hall. There is an unknown wireless that carries all such news on wings through the brigade of midshipmen.

Within half an hour Henkel and Page brought the challenge to Dave Darrin. Dan, in the meantime, had been busy, and had induced Midshipman Rollins, of the fourth class, to act with him as second. Rollins, indeed, needed little urging. He was eager to see the fight.

Tyson, of the second class, was secured as referee, while Trotter, of the third class, gladly agreed to act as time-keeper.

The time was set for an hour before taps, as, on this evening, it would be easy for all the young men involved to slip away and be back in time for taps.

"I won't let the thing run over two rounds," promised Farley, who had an excellent idea of himself as a fighter.

That afternoon Dave and Farley were obliged to pass each other. Dave did not even seem to know that his enemy was around. Farley, on the other hand, glared ferociously at Darrin as he passed.

Midshipman Trotter certainly would have come around to offer Dave friendly counsel, had not his position as one of the officials of the fight restrained him.

Dave, by his prompt action, had veered many of his classmates around to his side. The bulk of opinion in the class, however, was that Farley would make good in his boasts of victory. He was a heavily-built yet very active young man, who had shown great promise in boxing bouts in the gymnasium.

At half-past eight that evening, while scores of cadets strolled through the grounds, thinking of the academic term to begin on the morrow, some little groups made their way more directly across the grounds. Many interested glances followed them.

Over in the direction of the Old Government Hospital stepped Dave, accompanied by Dan and Rollins.

They were the first to arrive, though a few minutes later Midshipmen Tyson and Trotter appeared.

"Farley doesn't seem in as a big hurry as he was," remarked Dan Dalzell laughingly.

It was not, in fact, until close to the time that Farley, Henkel and Page came on the scene.

"We want to put this mill through briskly, gentlemen," announced Midshipman Tyson, in a low tone. "Both principals will be good enough to get ready as rapidly as possible."

Dave Darrin had been only awaiting the order. Now he took off his cap and uniform blouse, handing them to Dan, who folded the coat and laid it on the ground, placing the cap on top of it.

By this time Darrin had pulled his shirt over his head. Dan took that also, while Rollins produced a belt which Dave strapped about his waist with care.

Then he stepped forward, like a young war horse, sniffing the battle.

Farley was more leisurely in his preparations, though he did not appear nervous. In fact, Farley wasn't a bit nervous. But he meant "wind up" the fight in such short order that there would be an abundance of time to spare.

"There's no use in giving you any advice, old fellow," murmured Dan. "You've been in too many fights, back in the good old High School days of Dick & Co."

"I can handle myself," nodded Dave, "unless Farley proves to be a veritable wonder."

"He certainly thinks he is," warned Rollins. "And a good many of the fellows believe Farley to be the best man of the class in this line of work."

"They won't think so much longer," returned Dan, as simply as though merely stating a proved fact. "You see, Rollins, you never had the great good luck to get your kid training with Dick & Co. Our old crowd always went in to win just because we were blind to the idea that there was any possible chance of losing."

"Did you always make good?" asked Rollins curiously.

"Just about always, I reckon," nodded Dan confidently.

"You must have been a wonder-bunch then," smiled Rollins.

Farley was ready, now, and coming forward with a second on either side of him.

"Step in Dave old fellow." directed Dan.

Dave came forward to where Midshipman Tyson awaited them.

"Gentlemen," announced the referee, "this is to be a fight to the finish, bare hands. As time is short you are urged to mix it up briskly to a conclusion. The usual ring rules will guide the officials of this meeting. Hand-shaking will dispensed with. Are you ready?"

"Ready!" hissed Farley venomously.

"Ready," nodded Dave coolly.

"Time!"

With a yell Farley leaped in. He didn't want it to last more than one round, if it could be helped.

The fury of his assault drove the lighter Darrin back. Farley followed up with more sledge-hammers. He was certainly a dangerous man, with a hurricane style. He was fast and heavy, calculated to bear down a lighter opponent.

Before that assortment of blows Dave Darrin was forced to resort to footwork.

"Stand up and fight!" jeered Farley harshly as he wheeled and wheeled, still throwing out his hammer blows. "Don't play sneak on the field!"

Dave didn't even flush. Trained with Dick Prescott at Gridley High School, Darrin was too old a hand to be taunted into indiscretion.

In spite of his footwork, however, Farley succeeded in landing upon him twice, though neither blow did much damage.

Then a third blow landed, against the side of Darrin's head, that jarred him. It was all he could do to stand off Farley until he recovered his wits enough to dodge once more.

Yet, all the while, Darrin was watching his chance.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAN WHO WON

"This isn't a sprint!" yelled Farley, in high disgust. "Come back here!" Dave did come back.

Wheeling suddenly, he struck his right arm up under Farley's now loose guard.

In the same fraction of a second Dave let fly with his left.

Smack!

It wasn't such a very hard blow---but it landed on the tip of Farley's nose.

With a yell of rage Farley made a dive at his lighter opponent.

"Time!"

In his rage Farley tried to strike after that call, but Dave bounded to one side.

Then, turning his back, Darrin walked away to where Dan and Midshipman Rollins awaited him.

"Be careful, Mister Farley," warned Second Class Man Tyson, striding over to him. "You struck out after the call of time. Had the blow landed I would have been compelled under the rules to award Darrin the fight on a foul."

"First blood for our side!" cheered Dan, as he sprang at Dave with a towel.

In a few moments the young man had been well rubbed down, and now Dan and Rollins, on opposite sides, were kneading his muscles.

From over in Farley's corner came a growl:

"I came here to fight, not to go in for track work. That fellow can't fight."

"Queer!" remarked Dan cheerfully. "We hold all the honors so far."

Quickly enough the call of time came.

Farley, the flow of blood from his nose stanching, came back as full of steam as before.

Dave's footwork was as nimble as ever. Speed and skill in dodging were features of Darrin's fighting style.

Yet Farley caught him, with a blow on the chest that sent him to his knees.

Like a flash, however, Darrin was upon his feet, and Farley lunged at him swiftly and heavily.

In the very act of reaching his feet, however, Dave Darrin leaped lightly to the left.

With an exclamation of disgust Farley turned and swung again.

But Dave dropped down, then shot up under his opponent's guard once more.

Biff!

This time an exclamation of real pain came from Farley, for the blow had landed solidly on his left eye, just about closing it.

A second time Darrin might have landed, but he was taking no chances under a steam-roller like Farley.

As Dave danced away, however, followed up by his opponent, bellowing from the sudden jolt his eye had received, he saw that Farley was fighting almost blindly.

Dan Dalzell now jumped in as close as he had any right to be. He wanted to see what would happen next.

Nor was he kept long guessing, for Dave had slipped around on the blind side of his opponent.

"Confound you! Can't you stand up and fight square?" demanded Farley harshly.

Dave flushed, this time. Dodging two of Farley's blows he next moved as though about to retreat.

Instead, however, Darrin leaped up and forward.

Pound! Dave's hard left fist landed crushingly near the point of Farley's jaw.

Down went the larger man, while his seconds rushed to him.

Midshipman Trotter, watch in hand, began calling off the seconds.

Steadily he counted them, until he came to "---eight, nine, *ten!*"

Still Farley lay on the ground, his good eye, as well as his damaged one, closed.

If he was breathing it was so slightly that his seconds, not permitted under the rules to go close, could not detect the movements of respiration.

"He loses the count," announced Second Class Man Tyson, in businesslike tones. "I award the fight to Mister Darrin."

Always the ceremonious "mister" with which upper class men refer to new fourth class men. It is not until the plebe becomes a "youngster" that the "mister" is dropped for the more friendly social address.

Farley's seconds were kneeling at his side now.

"Can you bring him out easily?" asked Midshipman Tyson, going over to the defeated man's seconds.

"He's pretty soundly asleep, just now," put in Midshipman Trotter. "My, but that was a fearful crack you gave your man, mister!"

"I'm sorry if I have had to hurt him much," replied Dave coolly. "I am not keen for fighting."

Dan and Rollins offered their services in helping to bring Farley to, only to met by a curt refusal from Midshipman Henkel.

So Dave and his seconds stood mutely by, at a distance, while the two officials in the late fight added their efforts to those of the seconds of the knocked-out man.

At last they brought a sigh from Farley's lips.

Soon after the defeated midshipman opened his eyes.

"Is---Darrin---dead?" he asked slowly, with a bewildered look.

Midshipman Trotter chuckled.

"Not so you could notice it, mister. But you surely had a close call. Do you want to try to sit up?"

This Farley soon concluded to do. Then his seconds dressed him.

"Now, see if you can stand on your feet," urged Midshipman Tyson.

By this time Farley's wits had returned sufficiently for him to have a very fair idea of what had passed.

Aided by Henkel and Page Midshipman Farley got to his feet. There he stood, dizzily, until his late seconds gave him stronger support. "You can't go back to Bancroft while you are in this condition, mister," hinted Tyson decidedly. "You'll have to pass in review before one of our medical gentlemen, and do whatever he deems best."

"Dan," murmured Dave, "go over and ask Farley whether he cares to shake hands."

Dan crossed in quest of the information.

"Never!" growled Farley, with a hissing intake of breath.

"It's a shame to have bad blood after the fight is over," muttered Tyson rebukingly.

"I don't want anything to do with that fellow until we meet again," growled Farley.

"Great Scott, mister! You don't think of calling Mister Darrin out again, do you?" demanded Tyson, with a gasp.

"Yes; if he can be made to fight fair!" snarled Farley.

"He fought fairly this time, mister," replied Second Class Man Tyson, almost with heat. "You're a fast, heavy and hard scrapper for your age, mister, but the other man simply out-pointed you all through the game. If you call him out again, and he meets you, he can kill you if he sees fit."

"Misters," directed Midshipman Trotter, addressing Henkel and Page, "you'd better hurry to get your man over to a surgeon if you want to be in your rooms at lights-out time."

As Page and Henkel started away with their unfortunate comrade, Dave approached Tyson.

"Sir, do you believe that I fought with entire fairness?" asked Darrin of the referee.

"Fair? Of course you did, mister," replied Tyson. "Come along, Trotter."

Dave, who had dressed some time before, now turned with Dan and Rollins and started back. They took pains not to be seen close to the upper class men.

"Who won?" demanded a fourth class man, curiously, as they neared Bancroft Hall.

"Farley will tell you tomorrow if he's able," grinned Dan.

When taps sounded on the bugle, that evening, all of the midshipmen, save Farley, were in their rooms.

Promptly as the last note of taps broke on the air the last of the midshipmen was in bed, and the electric light was turned off from a master switch. The inspection of rooms was on.

CHAPTER IX

Dan just can't help being "Touge"

Fourth Class Man Farley did not put in an appearance at breakfast formation in the morning.

As this was the opening day of the first term of the academic year it was a bad time to be "docked for repairs" at the hospital.

Merely reading over the list of the fourth class studies did not convey to the new men much idea of how hard they were to find their work.

In the department of Marine Engineering and Naval Construction there were lessons in mechanical drawing.

No excuse is made for a midshipman's natural lack of ability in drawing. He must draw satisfactorily if he is to hope to pass.

In mathematics the new man had to recite in algebra, logarithms and geometry.

In addition to the foregoing, during the first term, the new midshipman had courses in English and in French.

As at West Point, the mathematics is the stumbling block of the new man at Annapolis.

In the first term algebra, logarithms and geometry had to be finished, for in the second term trigonometry was the subject in mathematics.

Shortly before eight in the morning the bugle call sounded for the first period of recitation.

The midshipmen fell in by classes in front of Bancroft Hall. After muster the classes marched away by sections.

Each section contained an average of ten men, under command of one of their number, who was known as the section leader.

It was the section leader's duty to march his section to the proper recitation room in Academic Hall, to preserve discipline while marching, and to report his section to the instructor.

At the beginning of the academic year the fourth class men were divided into sections in alphabetical order. Afterwards the sections would be reorganized according to order of merit.

So, at the outset, Darrin and Dalzell were in the same section, and Dave, as it happened, had been appointed section leader.

When the command rang out Dave marched away with his section, feeling somewhat proud that he had attained even to so small a degree of command.

It was an interesting sight to see hundreds of midshipmen, split up into so many sections, marching across the grounds in so many different directions, for not all the sections were headed for Academic Hall.

Dave knew the number of the room to which his section was bound, and knew also the location of the room.

Sections march, in step, at a brisk gait, the clicking of so many heels against the pavements making a rhythmic, inspiring sound.

Some of the midshipmen in Dave's section however, felt low-spirited that morning. They had been looking through their text-books, and felt a dread that they would not be able to keep up the stiff pace of learning long enough to get past the semi-annual examinations in the coming January.

Dave and Dan, however, both felt in good spirits. They had looked through the first lessons in algebra, and felt that they would not have much trouble at the outset, anyway. They believed that they had been well grounded back in their High School days.

On their way Darrin's section was passed by three officers of the Navy. Midshipmen must always salute officers of the Navy. While marching in sections, however, the only midshipman who salutes is the section leader.

Three times Dave's hand came smartly up to the visor of his cap in salute, while the other men in his section looked straight ahead.

Reaching Academic Hall Dave marched his section mates into the recitation room.

Lieutenant Bradshaw, the instructor, was already present, standing by his desk.

Darrin saluted the lieutenant as soon as he had halted the section.

"Sir, I report all members of the section present."

Five of the midshipmen were directed by Lieutenant Bradshaw to go to their seats. The rest were ordered to blackboards, Dave and Dan among the latter number.

Those at the blackboards were each given a problem to lay out on the blackboard. Then the instructor turned to the fourth class men who remained in their seats.

These he questioned, in turn, on various aspects of the day's lesson.

All the time the midshipmen at the blackboard worked busily away, each blocking out phase after phase of his problem.

Dave Darrin was first to finish. He turned his back to the board, taking the position of parade rest.

Dan was third to finish.

"Mr. Darrin, you may explain your work," announced Lieutenant Bradshaw.

This Dave did, slowly, carefully, though without painful hesitation. When he had finished the instructor asked him several questions about the problem, and about some other phases of the day's work. Darrin did not jump at any of his answers, but made them thoughtfully.

"Very good, indeed, Mr. Darrin," commented the instructor. "But, when you are more accustomed to reciting here, I shall hope for a little more speed in answering."

As Dave was returning to his seat Lieutenant Bradshaw marked him 3.8 per cent on the day's work.

That was an excellent marking, 4 being the highest. The lowest average in a study which a midshipman may have, and hold his place in the Naval Academy, is 2.5. Anything below 2.5 is unsatisfactory, which, in midshipman parlance is "unsat." Taking 4 to represent 100 per cent., 2.5 stands for 62.5 per cent. This would not be a high average to expect, as courses are laid down in the average High School of the land; but as most of our American High Schools go 2.5 at Annapolis is at least as good a marking as 90 per cent would be in a High School.

"Good old Dave leaks too slow at the spout, does he?" chuckled Dan to himself, as he waited at parade rest. "When it comes my turn, then, as I happen to know my problem as well as the fellow who wrote the book, I'll rattle off my explanation at a gait that will force the lieutenant to stand on his feet to hear all I say."

Dalzell was the fourth man called upon at the blackboard.

Taking a deep breath, and assuming a tremendously earnest look, Dan plunged into the demonstration of his problem as fast as he could fire the words out.

Lieutenant Bradshaw, however, listened through to the end.

"Your demonstration is correct, Mr Dalzell," said the instructor quietly. "However while speed in recitation is of value, in the future try to speak just a little more slowly and much more distinctly. You are fitting yourself to become a Naval officer one of these days. On shipboard it is of the utmost importance that an officer's voice be always distinct and clear, in order that every word he utters may be instantly understood. Try to keep this always in mind, Mr. Dalzell, and cultivate the habit of speaking distinctly."

The rebuke was a very quiet one, and courteously given. But Dan, who knew that every other man in the section was grinning in secret over his discomfiture, was quickly losing his nerve.

Then, without favor, Lieutenant Bradshaw questioned Dan searchingly on other details of the day's work. Dan stammered, and forgot much that he had thought he knew.

Lieutenant Bradshaw set down a mark of 2.9, whereas Dalzell, had he stuck sensibly to the business in hand, would have been marked as high as Dave had been.

As the section was marching back to Bancroft Dan whispered:

"Dave, did you hear the old owl go 'too-who' at me in the section room?"

"Stop talking in section!" ordered Dave crisply.

"Blazes! There isn't a single spot at Annapolis where a fellow can take a chance on being funny!" muttered Dalzell under his breath.

"Dave, old chum," cried Dan tossing his cap on the bed as they entered their room. "Are you going to turn greaser, and stay greaser?"

"What do you mean?" asked Darrin quietly.

"You told me to shut up in the ranks."

"That was right, wasn't it? I am under orders to see that there is no talking in the section when marching."

"Not even a solitary, teeny little word, eh?"

"Not if I can stop it," replied Dave.

"And what if you can't stop it?"

"Then I am obliged to direct the offender to put himself on the report."

"Great Scott! Would you tell your chum to frap the pap for a little thing like that, and take demerits unto himself?"

"If I had to," nodded Dave. "You see, Dan, we're here trying to learn to be Naval officers and to hold command. Now, it's my belief that a man who can't take orders, and stick to them, isn't fit to give orders at any period in his life."

"This sort of thing is getting on my nerves a bit," grumbled Dan. "Just think of all the freedom we had in the good old days back at Gridley!"

"This is a new life, Dan---a different one and a better one."

"Maybe," half assented Dalzell, who was beginning to accumulate the elements of a "grouch."

"Dan," asked Darrin, as he seated himself at his desk and opened a book preparatory to a long bit of hard study, "don't you know that your bed isn't the regulation place to hang your cap?"

"Oh, hang the cap, and the regulations, too!" grumbled Dalzell. "I'm beginning to feel that I've got to break through at some point."

"Pick up your cap, and put it on its hook---do," begged Darrin coaxingly.

At the same time he looked us with a smile which showed that he thought his friend was acting in a very juvenile manner.

Something impelled Dan to comply with his chum's request. Then, after hanging the cap, with great care, on its nail, the disgruntled one slipped to the study table and picked up a book.

Just as he did so there came a knock on the door.

Then Lieutenant Stapleton, in white gloves and wearing his sword, stepped into the room, followed by a midshipman, also white-gloved.

Lieutenant Stapleton was the officer in charge, the young man the midshipman in charge of the floor.

"Good morning, gentlemen," said the Lieutenant pleasantly, as both midshipmen promptly rose to their feet and stood at attention. Dave and Dan remained standing at attention while the lieutenant stepped quickly about the room, taking in everything with a practiced glance.

"Everything in order," commented the lieutenant, as he turned to the door. "Resume your work, gentlemen."

"Maybe you're glad you hung your cap up just in time," grinned Dave.

"Oh, bother the whole scheme!" grunted Dan "The idea of a fellow having to be a jumping-jack all the time!"

"A midshipman has to be a jumping-jack, I reckon," replied Dave, "until he learns to be a man and to live up to discipline as only a man can."

"See here, do you mean to say---"

"Go on with your study of English, unless you're sure you know all the fine points of the language," interrupted Darrin. "I know I don't and I want time to study."

Dan gazed steadily at his chum, but Darrin seemed too deeply absorbed in his work to be conscious of the gaze.

On the whole studies and recitations passed off rather pleasantly for both chums that day, though both could see that there were breakers ahead.

After supper a few minutes were allowed for recreation, which consisted mostly of an opportunity for the midshipmen to chat with each other. Then came the call that sent them to their rooms to study for two solid hours.

"I wish the powers that be would let us sit up an hour later," sighed Dave, looking up from his book in the middle of the study period.

"I'd rather they'd let us sleep an hour later in the morning," grumbled Dan.

"But, really, it would be great to have chance to study an hour more each evening," insisted Dave.

"Huh!"

"Yes; I begin to feel that we're going to need more study time than we get, if we're ever to pass."

At 9.30 the release bell rang. Dan closed his book with a joyful bang, Darrin closing his much more reluctantly.

"I'm going visiting," declared Dalzell, starting toward the door.

Before he could reach the door, however, there sounded a slight knock and two midshipmen of the third class stepped in.

"Mister, what's your name?" demanded one of the visitors.

"Dalzell, sir," replied Dan, standing at attention.

"What's yours, mister?"

"Darrin, sir."

"Stand on your head, mister."

Dave obeyed with good-natured speed.

"That will do, mister. Now, on your head, mister."

Dan made a grimace, but obeyed.

Then the other visitor demanded:

"Do either of you fourth class men intend to try to be ratey?"

"No, sir," replied Darrin promptly.

"Do you, mister?" turning to Dalzell.

"No, sir."

"Are you both a bit touge?" asked the youngster questioner.

"I hope not, sir," replied Dave.

"Do you feel that way, mister?"---looking at Dan.

"What way, sir?"

"Do you feel inclined to be touge, mister?"

"I'm willing to be anything that's agreeable, and not too much work, sir," replied Dan, grinning.

It is offensive for a fourth class man to grin in the presence of an upper class man.

Moreover, two other youngsters had just stepped into the room to watch proceedings.

"Mister," commanded the youngster whom Dan had answered, "wipe that grin off your face."

Dalzell drew out his handkerchief, making several elaborate passes across his countenance with it.

"Touge!" growled his inquisitor.

"Very touge, indeed," assented the other three youngsters.

"Why did you bring out your handkerchief, mister?"

"Just obeying orders," replied Dan, with another grin.

"Wipe that grin off your face, sir!--no, not with your handkerchief!"

So Dalzell thrust the handkerchief away and applied his blouse sleeve to his face.

"Stop that, mister!"

"Yes, sir," replied Dalzell meekly.

"Don't you know how to wipe a grin off your face?"

"I'm not sure, sir," Dan admitted.

"Mister, you are wholly touge! I'm not sure but that you're a ratey plebe as well."

Thereupon Youngster Quimby plunged into a scathing lecture on the subject of a plebe being either touge or ratey. At first Dan listened with a becoming air of respect. Before long, however, a huge grin began to illumine Dalzell's face.

"Wipe that grin off, mister!" commanded Mr. Quimby sternly.

"I--I simply can't!" gasped Dan, then began to roar with laughter.

"Why can't you?" insisted Quimby. "What's the matter?"

"It's---it's your face!" choked Dan.

"My face?" repeated Quimby, reddening "What do you mean, sir?"

"I--I---it would be a shame to tell you!" sputtered Dalzell between spasms of laughter.

Truth to tell, Midshipman Quimby did look funny when he attempted to be over-stern. Quimby's face was one of his sensitive points, anyway. Yet it was not, strictly speaking, the face, but the look of precocious authority on that face which had sent Dan, with his keen sense of humor, off into spasms of laughter. But the youngster didn't propose to see the point.

"Mister," spoke Midshipman Quimby, with an added sternness of look that sent Dan off into another guffaw, "you have been guilty of insulting an upper class man. Your offense has been so serious---so rank---that I won't accept an apology. You shall fight, mister!"

"When? Whom?" asked Dan, the big grin still on his face.

"*Me*, mister---and as soon as the thing can be pulled off."

"Oh, all right, sir," nodded Dalzell. "Any time you like, then, sir. I've been accustomed, before coming here, to getting most of my exercise out of fighting. But---pardon me, if I meet, I shall have to hit---pardon me---that face."

"Call this plebe out, Quimby, and trim him in good shape," urged one of the other youngsters present. "He's touge all the way through. He'll need trimming."

"And he'll get it, too," wrathfully promised Midshipman Quimby, who was rated high as a fighter at the Naval Academy.

CHAPTER X

"Just for exercise"

"Now, then, mister, keep your eyes on my humorous face!"

It was the next evening, over behind the old government hospital.

Midshipman Quimby had just stepped forward, from the hands of his seconds, two men of the third class.

"I can't keep my eyes away from that face, and my hands are aching to follow the same route, sir," grimaced Dalzell.

He, too, had just stepped forward from the preliminary care of Dave and of Rollins, for that latter fourth class man was as anxious to see this fight as he had been the other one.

"Stop your talk, mister," commanded Midshipman Ferris, of the second class, who was present to officiate as referee. "On the field you talk with your hands. Don't be touge all the time, or you'll soon have a long fight calendar."

"Very good, sir," nodded Dan, his manner suddenly most respectful---as far as appearance went.

Dave Darrin did not by any means approve his chum's conduct of the night before, but Dave was on hand as second, just the same, and earnestly hoping that Dan might get at least his share of the honors in the event that was now to be "pulled off."

"Gentlemen," began Mr. Ferris, in the monotonous way of referees, "this fight is to be to a finish, without gloves. Hand-shaking will be dispensed with. Are you ready?"

"Ready!" assented both.

"Time!"

Both men advanced warily.

Quimby knew well enough that he could whip the plebe, but he didn't intend to let Dalzell get in any blows that could be guarded against.

Both men danced about until Mr. Ferris broke in, rather impatiently:

"Stop eating chocolates and mix it up!"

"Like this, sir?" questioned Dan. Darting in, on a feint, he followed Quimby's block with a blow that jolted the youngster's chin.

Then Dan slipped away again, grinning gleefully, well aware that nothing would anger Quimby more easily than would that same grin. "I'll wipe that disgrace off your face myself," growled Quimby, closing in briskly.

"Come over here and get it," taunted Dan, showing some of his neatest footwork.

Quimby sent in three blows fast; two of them Dalzell blocked, but one hit him on the chest, staggering him slightly. Midshipman Quimby started to follow up his advantage. In another moment, however, he was backing away with a cut lip.

"There's something to wipe off your own face," suggested Dan, grinning harder than ever.

Stung, Mr. Quimby made strenuous efforts to pay back with worse coin. He was still trying when the call of time sounded.

"You didn't half go in after him, Dan," murmured Dave, as the latter and Rollins quickly towed their man in the corner.

"If I had, I might have gotten more of him than I wanted," muttered Dalzell.

"Why don't you mix it up faster?" queried Rollins.

"Because," proclaimed Midshipman Dan, "I don't want to fight or get hurt. I'm doing this sort of thing just for exercise, you understand."

Then they were called into the second round. Quimby, in the meantime, had been counseled to crowd the plebe hard, and to hammer him when he got close.

So, now, Quimby started in to do broadside work. At last he scored fairly, hitting Dalzell on the nose and starting the flow.

But, within ten seconds, Dalzell had return the blow with interest. After that things went slowly for a few more seconds, when time was again called.

"That plebe isn't exactly easy," Quimby confided to his seconds. "I've got to watch him, and be cautious. I haven't seen a plebe as cool and ready in many a day."

In the third round Quimby was perhaps too cautious. He did not rush enough. Dan, on the other hand, bore down a bit. Just before the call of time he closed Quimby's right eye.

Both Quimby and his seconds were now dubious, though the youngster's fighting pluck and determination ran as high as ever.

"I've got to wipe him off the field in this fourth round, or go to the grass myself," murmured Quimby, while his seconds did the best they could with him.

"I'm warming up finely," confided Dan to Dave and Rollins.

"You're coming through all right," nodded Dave confidently. "At present you have twice as much vision as the other fellow, and only a fraction as much of soreness. But keep on the watch to the end."

For the first twenty seconds of the new round it was Quimby who was on the defensive. Dan followed him up just warmly enough to be annoying.

At last, however, Dan straightened, stiffened, and there was a quick flash in his eyes.

He saw his chance, and now he jumped in at it. His feint reached for Quimby's solar plexus, but the real blow, from Dalzell's right hand, hammered in, all but closing Quimby's other eye.

Smack! Right on top of that staggerer came a hook that landed on the youngster's forehead with such force that Quimby fell over backward. He tried to catch himself, but failed, and lurched to the ground.

"---six, seven, eight---" counted the timekeeper.

Quimby staggered bravely to his feet, but stood there, his knees wobbling, his arms all but hanging at his side.

Dan did not try to hit. He backed off slightly keeping only at half-guard and watching his opponent.

"What's the matter, Quimby" called Mr. Ferris. "Can't you go on?"

"Yes; I'm going on, to the knock-out!" replied the youngster doggedly.

He tried to close in, but was none too steady on his feet. Dan, watching him, readily footed it, merely watching for the youngster to lead out.

"Time!"

Quimby's two seconds rushed to his side. Midshipman Ferris and the time-keeper also gathered around.

"Quimby," spoke the referee, "you're in no shape to go on."

"I can stand up and be hit," muttered the youngster gamely.

"Mr. Dalzell, do you care to go further?" asked Mr. Ferris.

"I shan't attempt to hit Mr. Quimby, sir, unless he develops a good deal more steam."

Ferris looked at Quimby's seconds. They shook their head.

"I award the fight to Mister Dalzell," declared Midshipman Ferris.

"Oh, give it to Mr. Quimby, if you don't mind, sir," begged Dan. "He got the game, and might as well have the name along with it."

"Mister, don't be touge all the time," cried Mr. Ferris sharply.

"I don't mean to be, sir," replied Dan quite meekly. "What I meant to convey, sir, is that I don't care anything about winning fights. The decision, sir, is of very little importance to me. I don't fight because I like it, but merely because I need the exercise. A fight about once a week will be very much to my liking, sir."

"You'll get it, undoubtedly," replied Midshipman Ferris dryly.

"Whee, won't it be great!" chuckled Dan, in an undertone, as he stepped over to his seconds. "Give me that towel, Dave. I can rub myself off."

While Dan was dressing, and Quimby was doing the same, one of the seconds of the youngster class came over, accompanied by the timekeeper.

"Mister, you really do fight as though you enjoyed it," remarked the latter.

"But I don't," denied Dan. "I'm willing to do it, though, to keep myself in condition. Say once a week, except in really hot weather. A little game like this tones up the liver so that I can almost feel it dancing inside of me."

As he spoke, Dalzell clapped both hands to his lower left side and jumped up and down.

"You heathen, your liver isn't there," laughed the time-keeper.

"Isn't it?" demanded Dan. "Now, I'm ready to maintain, at all times, that I know more about my liver and its hanging-out place than anyone else possibly can."

There was a note of half challenge in this, but the time-keeper merely laughed and turned away. Members of the second class usually feel too grave and dignified to "take it out of" plebes. That work is left to the "youngsters" of the third class.

A little later Mr. Quimby presented himself for medical attendance. His face certainly showed signs of the need of tender ministrations. "Dan, why in the world are you so fresh?" remonstrated Dave, when the two chums were back in their room. "You talk as though you wanted to fight every man in the upper classes. You'll get your wish, if you don't look out."

"Old fellow," replied Dalzell quizzically, "I expect to get into two or three more fights. I don't mean to be touge, but I do intend to let it be seen that I look upon it as a lark to be called out. Then, if I win the next two or three fights also, I won't be bothered any after that. This is my own scheme for joining the peace society before long."

Nor is it wholly doubtful that Dan's was the best plan, in the long run, for a peaceful life among a lot of spirited young men.

CHAPTER XI

MIDSHIPMAN HENKEL DOES SOME THINKING

"Busy" asked Midshipman Henkel, of the fourth class, stepping into the room which Farley and Page shared.

The release bell had just sounded, giving all of the young men a brief interval of freedom before taps.

"Not especially," laughed Farley, as he finished stacking his books and papers neatly.

It was about a week after the night of Dan's fight with Midshipman Quimby.

"Let me get a good look at your face, Farley, under the light," continued Henkel. "Why, it looks almost natural again. My, but it was a rough pounding that fellow, Darrin, gave it!"

"Yes," nodded Farley, flushing.

"Let me see; isn't it about time that you squared matters up with Darrin?" went on Midshipman Henkel.

"How? What do you mean?" demanded Farley, while Page, too, looked on with interest.

"Well, first of all, Darrin gets the whole bunch of us ragged by the watchman. The when you object, he pounds your face at his own sweet will."

"What are you trying to do?" laughed Farley. "Are you trying to fan up the embers of my wrath against Darrin?"

"Such embers shouldn't need much fanning," retorted Mr. Henkel coolly. "Surely, you are not going to let the dead dog lie?"

"Darrin and I fought the matter out, and he had the good fortune to win the appeal to force," replied Plebe Farley stiffly. "I don't associate with him now, and don't expect to, later on, if we both graduate into the Navy."

"That satisfies your notions of honor, does it, with regard to a man who not only injured you, but pounded your face to a fearful pulp?"

Henkel's tone as he put the question, was one of bitter irony.

"Do you know," demanded Farley, rising, his face now flushing painfully, "I don't wholly like your tone."

"Forget it, then," begged Henkel. "I don't mean to be offensive to you, Farley. I haven't the least thought in the world like that. But I take this whole Darrin business so bitterly to heart that I suppose I am unable to comprehend how you can be so meek about it."

"Meek?" cried Farley. "What do you mean by that word?"

"Well, see here," went on Henkel coaxingly, "are we men of spirit, or are we not? We fellows devise a little outing in the town of Annapolis. It's harmless enough, though it happens to be against the rules in the little blue book. We are indiscreet enough to let Darrin in on the trick, and he pipes the whole lay off to some one. Result---we are 'ragged' and fifty 'dems.' apiece. When you accuse Darrin of his mean work he gives you the lie. True, you show spirit enough to fight him for it, but the fight turns out to be simply more amusement for him. Now, I've been thinking over this thing

and I can't rest until the mean work is squared. But I find you, who suffered further indignities under Darrin's fists, quite content to let the matter rest. That's why I am astonished, and why I say so frankly."

Having delivered this harangue with an air of patient justice, Henkel seated himself with one leg thrown over the edge of the study table, waiting to hear what Farley could say in reply. "Well, what do you plan to do further in the matter?" insisted Midshipman Farley.

"To get square with Darrin!"

"How?"

"Well, now see here, Farley, and you, too, Page, what has happened? At first we had the class pretty sore against Darrin for getting our crowd ragged. Since the fight, however, in which you were pummeled like---"

"Never mind my fate in the fight," interposed Farley. "It was a fair fight."

"Well, ever since the fight," resumed Henkel, "Darrin has been climbing up again in class favor. Most of the boobies in the fourth class seem to feel that, just because Darrin hammered you so, the beating you received proves Darrin's innocence of a mean act."

"I can't help what the class concludes," retorted Farley stiffly.

"Page, you have more spirit than that, haven't you?" demanded Henkel, wheeling upon Midshipman Farley's roommate.

"I hope I have spirit enough," replied Page, bristling slightly, "but I am aware of one big lack."

"What is that?"

"I seem to lack the keen intelligence needed to understand what you are driving at, Henkel."

"That's the point, Henkel," broke in Midshipman Farley, walking the floor in short turns. "Just what are you driving at? Why are you trying to make me mad by such frequent references to the fact that Darrin won his fight with me?"

"I'm sounding you fellows," admitted Henkel.

"That's just what it rings like," affirmed Midshipman Page, nodding his head. "Well, out with it! What's your real proposition?"

"Are you with me?" asked Midshipman Henkel warily.

"How can we tell," demanded Farley impatiently, "until you come down out of the thunder clouds, and tell us just what you mean?"

"Pshaw, fellows," remarked Mr. Henkel, in exasperation, "I hate to think it, but I am beginning to wonder if you two have the amount of spirit with which I had always credited you."

"Cut out the part about the doubts," urged Farley, "and tell us, in plain English, just what you are driving at."

"Fellows, I believe, then," explained Midshipman Henkel, "that we owe it to ourselves, to the Naval Academy and to the Navy, to work Dave Darrin out of here as soon as we can."

"How?" challenged Farley flatly.

"Why, can't we put up some scheme that will pile up the 'dems.' against that industrious greaser? Can't we spring a game that will wipe all his grease-marks off the efficiency slate?" asked Midshipman Henkel mysteriously.

"Do you mean by putting up a job on Darrin?" inquired Page.

"That's just it!" nodded Henkel, with emphasis.

"Putting up a job on a man usually calls for trickery, doesn't it?" questioned Farley.

"Why, yes---that is---er---ingenuity," admitted Henkel.

"Trickery isn't the practice of a gentleman, is it?" insisted Farley.

"It has to be, sometimes, when we are fighting a rascal," retorted Midshipman Henkel.

"I'm afraid I don't see that," rejoined Page, shaking his head. "Dirty work is never excusable. I'd sooner let a fellow seem to win over me, for the time being, than to resort to trickery or anything like underhanded methods for getting even with him."

"Good for you, Page!" nodded Farley "That's the whole game for a gentleman---and that's what either a midshipman or a Naval officer is required to be. Henkel, old fellow, you are a little too hot under your blouse collar tonight. Wait until you've cooled off, and you'll sign in with us on our position."

"Then you fellows are going to play the meek waiting game with Darrin, are you?" sneered Henkel.

"We're going to play the only kind of game that a gentleman may play," put in Page incisively, "and we are not going to dally with any game about which a gentleman need feel the least doubt."

"You've spoken for me, Page, old chap," added Farley.

Midshipman Henkel took his leg off the desk, stood there for a moment, eyeing his two comrades half sneeringly, then turned on his heel and left the room. Just before he closed the door after him Henkel called back:

"Good night, fellows."

"Well, what do you think of that?" demanded Farley, a moment later.

"I think," replied Midshipman Page, "just as you do, that Darrin, in his desire to bone grease somewhere, played a dirty trick on us. I consider Darrin to be no better than a dog, and I apologize to the dog. But we're not going to make dogs of ourselves in order to even up matters."

"We're certainly not," replied Farley, with a nod. "Oh, well, Henkel is a mighty good fellow, at heart. He'll cool down and come around all right."

At that instant, however, Midshipman Henkel, with a deep scowl on his face, was whispering mysteriously with his roommate Brimmer.

CHAPTER XII

A CHRONIC PAP FRAPPER

Another week had passed.

By this time all of the new midshipmen had had a very strong taste of what the "grind" is like at the U.S. Naval Academy.

If the lessons had seemed hard at the outset, the young men now regarded the tax demanded on their brains as little short of inhuman.

The lessons were long and hard. No excuse of "unprepared" or otherwise was ever accepted in a section room.

The midshipman who had to admit himself "unprepared" immediately struck "zip," or absolute zero as a marking for the day. Many such marks would swiftly result in dragging even a bright man's average down to a point where he would fall below two-five and be "unsat."

"I thought we plugged along pretty steadily when we were in the High School," sighed Dave Darrin, looking up from a book. "Danny boy, a day's work here is fully three times as hard as the severest day back at the High School.

"David, little giant," retorted Dalzell, "your weak spot is arithmetic. It's just seven times as hard here as the worst deal that we ever got in the High School."

"Oh, well," retorted Darrin doggedly, "other men have stood this racket before us, and have graduated into the Navy. If they did it, we can do it, too. Mr. Trotter was telling me, yesterday, that the plebe year is the hardest year of all here."

"Mr. Trotter is a highly intelligent individual, then," murmured Dan Dalzell.

"He explained that the first year is the hardest just because the new man has never before learned how to study. After our first year here, he says, we'll have the gait so that we can go easily at the work given us."

"If we ever live through the first year," murmured Dan disconsolately. "As for me, I'm hovering at the 'unsat.' line all the time, and constantly fearing that I'm going to be unseated. If I could see myself actually getting through the first year here, with just enough of an average to save me, I'd be just as happy as ever a fourth class man can hope to be here."

"Remember the old Gridley spirit, Danny boy," coaxed Dave. "We can't be licked---just because we don't know how to take a licking. We're going to get through here, Danny, and we're going to become officers in the Navy. It's tough on the way---that's all."

"And we green young idiots," sighed Dalzell, "thought the life here was just a life of parading, with yachting thrown in on the side. We were going to feel swell in our gold lace, and puff out our chests under the approving smiles of the girls. We were going to lead the german---and, say, Dave, what were some of the other fool things we expected to find happiness in doing at Annapolis?"

"It served us right," grunted Darrin, "if we imagined that we were going to get through without real work. Danny boy, I don't believe there's a single thing in life--worth having--a fellow can get without working hard for it!"

"There goes the call for mathematics, Dave. We'll tumble out and see whether we can get a two-six today.

"Or a two-seven," suggested Darrin hopefully. "My, but how far away a full four seems!"

"Did anyone ever get a full four?" asked Dan, opening his eyes very wide.

As each, with his uniform cap set squarely on, and his book and papers carried in left hand, turned out, he found the corridor to be swarming with midshipmen fully as anxious as were this pair.

A minute later hundreds of midshipmen were forming by classes. Then the classes parted into sections and the little groups marched away in many directions, all going at brisk military gait. Dave got through better, that forenoon, than usual. He made a three-one, while Dalzell scored a two-eight.

Then this section, one of many, marched back.

As Dave and Dan swung down the corridor, and into their own room, they halted, just inside the door, and came quickly to attention. Lieutenant Hall, the officer in charge for the day, stood there, and with him the midshipman who served as assistant cadet officer of the day.

"Mr. Darrin," spoke Lieutenant Hall severely, "here is your dress jacket on the floor, and with dust ground into it."

"Yes, sir," replied Dave, saluting. "But I left it on its proper hook--I am sure of that."

Up came Dan's hand in quick salute.

"May I speak, sir?"

"Yes, Mr. Dalzell," replied the officer in charge.

"I remember seeing Mr. Darrin's coat hanging properly on its hook, sir, just before we marched off to math. recitation."

"Did you leave the room, Mr. Dalzell, after Mr. Darrin, or even with him?" questioned Lieutenant Hall.

"No-o, sir. I stepped out just ahead of Mr. Darrin."

"That is all, then, Mr. Dalzell. Mr. Darrin, there is a pair of your shoes. They are in place, but one of them is muddy."

Dave glanced at the shoes uneasily, a flush coming to his face.

"I am certain, sir, that both shoes were in proper condition when I left to go to the last recitation."

"Then how do you account for the dust-marked dress jacket on the floor, and the muddy shoe, Mr. Darrin?"

"I can think of no explanation to offer, sir."

"Nor can I imagine any excuse," replied Lieutenant Hall courteously, yet skeptically.

Lieutenant Hall made a further inspection of the room, then turned to Dave.

"Mr. Darrin, you will put yourself on the report for these two examples of carelessness of your uniform equipment."

"Very good, sir."

Saluting, Dave crossed to the study table, laying his book and papers there. Then, once more saluting, he passed Lieutenant Hall and made his way to the office of the officer in charge.

Taking one of the blanks, and a pen, Dave Darrin filled out the complaint against himself, and turned it over.

"Dave, you didn't leave your things in any such shape as that?" burst from Dan as soon as Dave had returned to his room.

"I didn't do it---of course I didn't," came impatiently from Darrin.

"Then who did?"

"Some fellow may have done it for a prank."

Dan shook his head, replying, stubbornly:

"I don't believe that any fellow in the Naval Academy has a sense of humor that would lead him to do a thing like that, just as a piece of what he would consider good-natured mischief. Dave, this sort of report against you on pap means demerits."

"Fortunately," smiled Darrin, "the pap sheet is so clear of my name that I can stand a few demerits without much inconvenience."

But at breakfast formation, the next morning, Dave's name was read off with twenty demerits.

"That's a huge shame," blazed forth Dan, as soon as the chums were back in their room, preparing to march to their first recitation.

"Oh, well, it can't be helped---can it?" grimaced Dave.

Within the next fortnight, however, Darrin's equipment and belongings were found to be in bad shape no less than five other times. With a few demerits which he had received in the summer term Dave now stood up under one hundred and twenty demerits.

"I'm allowed only three hundred demerits for the year, and two hundred by January will drop me," muttered Dave, now becoming thoroughly uneasy.

For, by this time, he was certain that some unknown enemy had it "in for him." Darrin felt almost morally certain that some one---and it must be a midshipman---was at the bottom these troubles. Yet, though he and Dan had done all they could think of to catch the enemy, neither had had the least success in this line.

"Eighty demerits more to go," muttered Dave, "and the superintendent will recommend to the Secretary of the Navy that I be dropped for general inaptitude. It seems a bit tough, doesn't it, Danny boy?"

"It's infamous!" blazed Dalzell. "Oh, if I could only catch the slick rascal who is at the bottom of all this!"

"But both of us together don't seem to be able to catch him," replied Darrin dejectedly. "Oh, well, perhaps there won't be any more of it. Of course, I am already deprived of all privileges. But then, I never care to go into Annapolis, and I am never invited to officers' quarters, anyway, so the loss of privileges doesn't mean so very much. It's the big danger of losing my chance to remain here at the Naval Academy that is worrying me."

Yet outwardly, to others, Dave Darrin was patient. His surplus irritation he vented in extraordinary effort in the gymnasium, where he was making a remarkable record for himself.

But of course his worries were reflected in his studies and recitations. Dave was dropping steadily. He seemed soon destined to reach the "wooden section" in math. This "wooden section" is the section composed of the young men who stand lowest of all in a given study. The men of the "wooden section" are looked upon as being certain of dismissal when the semiannual examinations come along.

Now, for five days, things went along more in a better groove. Nothing happened to Darrin, and he was beginning to hope that his very sly persecutor had ceased to annoy him for good.

On the sixth day, however, the chums returned from recitation in English.

"Nothing seems to be wrong here," remarked Dave, with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Umf---umf!" sniffed Dan, standing still in the middle of the room. "Doesn't it smell a little as though some one had been smoking in here?"

"Don't even suggest the thing!" begged Dave turning white at the thought.

Tap-tap! sounded at the door. In walked the white-gloved cadet assistant officer of the day.

"Mr. Darrin, you will report immediately to the officer in charge."

"Very good, sir," Dave answered.

This was again Lieutenant Hall's day to be in charge. Dave walked into that gentleman's office, saluted, reported his presence under orders and then stood at attention.

"Mr. Darrin," began Lieutenant Hall, "I had occasion to inspect your room. The air was quite thick with tobacco smoke. I felt it necessary to make a very thorough search. In the pocket of your rain-coat I found"---Lieutenant Hall produced from his desk a pouch of tobacco and a well-seasoned pipe---"these."

The officer in charge looked keenly at Darrin, who had turned almost deathly white. Certainly Dave had the appearance of one wholly guilty.

"Have you anything to say, Mr. Darrin?" continued the officer in charge.

"I have never, in my life, sir, smoked or used tobacco in any form," Darrin truthfully answered.

"Then how did these articles come to be in your possession?"

"They were *not in my possession*, sir, were they?" Darrin asked, with the utmost respect.

Lieutenant Hall frowned perceptibly.

"Mr. Darrin, do not attempt any quibble. The circumstances under which these articles were found place them sufficiently in your possession. What have you to say that will clear you?"

"I can offer, sir, the testimony of my roommate, Mr. Dalzell, who will declare most positively that he has never known me to use tobacco."

"Did Mr. Dalzell leave your room with you when you went to your last recitation?"

"No, sir; he left fifteen minutes before, by permission, to go to his locker in the gymnasium to look over certain articles there."

"Then you are unable to call your roommate to support your assertion that you did not smoke before going with your section to recitation in English?"

"I have only my unsupported word, sir, as a midshipman and a gentleman, to offer."

"Under almost all circumstances, Mr. Darrin, a midshipman's word of honor should be sufficient. But you have been reported several times of late, and with apparent justice. You will make in writing, Mr. Darrin, at once, such report as you wish to hand in on this incident, and the report against you will be considered in the usual way."

Dave returned to his room. Though he was discouraged his face looked grim, and his air was resolute.

Taking pen and paper he began to prepare his report on this latest charge.

Having finished and signed, Dave next picked up a bit of exercise paper and began to figure.

"What are you doing, old chap?" asked Dan sympathetically.

"My head is in too much of a whirl for me to trust myself to any mental arithmetic," Darrin answered. "I have been figuring how much further I have to go. First offense of having tobacco in possession calls for twenty-five demerits. That brings the total up to one hundred and forty-five. Dave, I have a lease of life here amounting to fifty-four more demerits in this term. The fifty-fifth signs my ticket home!

"The next trick of this kind attempted," cried Dalzell, his face glowing with anger, "must sign, instead, the home ticket of the rascal who is at the bottom of all this!"

"But how?" demanded Dave blankly. "He has been entirely too slick to allow himself to be caught."

CHAPTER XIII

MIDSHIPMAN FARLEY'S ABOUT-FACE

The gloom that now hung over Dave Darrin was the thickest, the blackest that he had ever encountered in his short life.

He was fully convinced, of course, that his troubles were the work of some determined and unscrupulous enemy or enemies.

Yet he was equally convinced that he was not likely to catch the plotter against his happiness. He and Dan had already done all that seemed to be in their power.

On the Saturday afternoon following the tobacco incident the first ray came to light up the gloom---though it did not take away any of awesome demerits that had piled up against him.

Dave and Dan were standing chatting in a group of about a score of fourth class men when Farley and Page stepped briskly in their direction.

Dave glanced at the pair in some astonishment, for it was weeks since he had been on speaking terms with either of them, and now both looked as though about to address him.

"One moment gentlemen, all, if you please," called out Midshipman Farley. "Let no one leave just now. I have something to say that I wish to make as public as possible."

Then, turning toward the astonished Darrin, Mr. Farley continued:

"Darrin, I got into a bad scrape once, and I accused you of carrying the information that resulted in several others and myself being detected. I was positive in my charge. I now wish to make you the most public apology that is possible. I know now that you did not in any way betray myself and my companions."

"I am glad you have come to this conclusion," Dave Darrin replied.

"It is not exactly a conclusion," replied Farley frankly. "It is a discovery."

"How did you find it out, Farley?" asked Dan Dalzell, speaking to that midshipman for the first time in many weeks.

"I have the word of the watchman who caught us. That is old Grierson, and there isn't a more honest old fellow in the yard."

"Did you ask Grierson, Farley?" questioned another midshipman gravely.

"No; for that would be to pile on another offense," replied Farley readily. "I am well enough aware that a midshipman has no right to go to a watchman about a matter in which the watchman has reported him. But a civilian is under no such restrictions. As some of you fellows know, my cousin, Sloan, was here at the Academy yesterday. Now, Ben Sloan is a newspaper man, and a fellow of an inquiring disposition. I told Ben something about the scrape I had been in, and Ben soon afterward hunted up Grierson. Grierson told Ben the whole truth about it. It seems that Grierson did not have any information from anyone. He saw our crowd go over the fence the night we Frenched it. But Grierson was too far away to catch any of us, or recognize us. So he made no alarm, but just waited and prowled until we came back. He heard the noise we made trying to get up over the wall from the outside, and ran down to that part of the wall. He didn't make any noise, and stood in the shrubbery until we had all dropped over. Then he stepped out, looked us over quickly and

demanded our names. He had us ragged cold, so there was nothing to do but give him our names. Now, there's the whole story fellows, and I'm mighty glad I've got at the truth of it."

"So am I," muttered Dan dryly.

"Darrin, you haven't said whether you accept my apology," Farley continued insistently. "I'm mighty sorry for the whole thing, and I'm glad you thrashed me as you did when we met. I richly deserved that for my hot-headedness."

For just a moment Dave Darrin couldn't speak, but he held out his hand.

"Thank you, old fellow," cried Farley, grasping it. "From now on I hope we shall trust each other and be friends always."

Farley had been a good deal spoiled at home, and had a hasty, impetuous temper. His career at Annapolis, however, was doing much to make a man of him in short time.

Several of the other midshipmen spoke, expressing their pleasure that the whole thing was cleared up, and that Dave had proved to be above suspicion.

"And now I'm off to find the other fellows who were with me that night," continued Farley. "I've told Page, already, but I've got to find Scully and Oates, Henkel and Brimmer and put them straight also."

Five minutes later Farley was explaining to Midshipman Henkel.

"Well, you are the softy!" said Henkel, in a sneering tone.

"Why?" demanded Farley stiffly.

"To fall for a frame-up like that."

"Do you mean that my cousin lied to me?"

"No; but Grierson certainly did."

"Old man Grierson is no liar," retorted Farley. "He is one of most trusted employes in the yard. He has caught many a midshipman, but Grierson is such a square old brick that the midshipmen of two generations love him."

"You're too easy for this rough world," jeered Midshipman Henkel.

"Perhaps I am," retorted Farley. "But I'm going through it decently, anyway."

"So you went and rubbed down Darrin's ruffled fur as gently as you could," continued Henkel.

"I went to him and apologized---the only thing a man could do under the circumstances."

"And now I suppose some of the fellows are trying to build up an altar to Darrin as the class idol?"

"I don't know. I hope so, for I'm convinced that Dave Darrin is as decent a fellow as ever signed papers at Annapolis."

"Go on out and buy some incense to burn before Darrin," laughed Henkel harshly.

Perhaps Mr. Henkel might not have been as flippant had he known that, all the time, Farley was studying him intently.

"So, in spite of all explanations, you still have no use for Darrin?" asked Midshipman Farley.

"I have just as much use for him as I have for any other big sneak," retorted Mr. Henkel. "He betrayed us to the watchman, and I don't care what explanations are offered to show that he didn't."

"And you won't be friendly with Darrin?" insisted Farley.

"I?" asked Henkel scornfully. "Not for an instant!"

"Well, I hardly believe that Darrin will care much," replied Mr. Farley, turning on his heel and walking out of the room.

"It's a mighty good thing that Darrin is going to be dropped out of Annapolis," growled Henkel to himself. "He's altogether too slick in playing a dirty trick on people and then swinging them around so that they'll fawn upon him. When Farley first came here he was a fellow of spirit. But he's been going bad for some time, and now he's come out straight and clean for grease-mark!"

Saturday afternoon proved a dull time for Dave Darrin. The heavy pile of demerits opposite his name prevented his getting leave even to stroll out into the town of Annapolis. Dan could have gone, but would not leave his chum.

Sunday morning there was chapel, but Dave, usually attentive, heard hardly a word of the discourse. Sunday afternoon he turned doggedly to his books. Dan, who was getting along better, and who just now, stood three sections higher than Dave in math., went visiting among the members of his class.

Sunday evening all the cadets were again busy at their studies until 9.30. As early as the regulations allowed Dave turned down his bed, undressed and got into it, feeling utterly "blue."

"It's no use," he told himself, as he lay awake, thinking, thinking, thinking. "Some one has it in for me, of course. But Dan and I together can't find out who the rascal is. He may try nothing against me again, for weeks, but sooner or later he'll turn another demerit trick against me. Before January I shall be home again, looking for some sort of job."

Before eight o'clock the following morning the class, after muster, broke into sections which marched away to recitation in math.

Dan Dalzell was now section leader of one group. Dave marched in the ranks of a much lower section.

This morning the section with which Dave marched was one man short. Not until the members had taken their seats, or places at the blackboards, did Darrin give heed enough to note that it was Farley who was absent.

The section leader, however, had reported that Mr. Farley was absent by permission of the head of the Department of Mathematics, "for purposes of study." Unusual as this excuse was the instructor had accepted it without making any inquiry.

If Farley was in his room for purposes of study, then what kind of "study" could it be?

For at that precise moment, Midshipman Farley was standing close to a tiny crack between the edge of his room door and the jamb. He was "peeking" out attentively.

Curiously enough Midshipman Page, Farley's roommate, had also been excused from attending section work. At this moment Mr. Page sat tilted back in his chair, with his feet resting across the corner of the study table.

A most unmilitary pose for Mr. Page, to be sure. Yet what need was there to fear report with roommate Farley thus industriously standing by the door?

So Mr. Page hummed softly to himself and stared out of the window.

Midshipman Farley remained by the door until he was becoming decidedly wearied of his occupation, and Page had several times shifted his feet.

Then, all of a sudden, Midshipman Farley turned with a low, sharp hiss.

"It?" whispered Midshipman Page, rising swiftly.

"Yes," nodded Farley.

Midshipman Page walked swiftly out of the room, though his heels did not make as much noise as usual.

Just after Page had left the room Midshipman Farley stole along the corridor, halting before a door.

There he paused, as though on duty. It was not long before his erect attitude was accounted for, for Lieutenant Nettleson, the officer in charge, came down into the corridor, followed by the cadet officer of the day.

Just a little way behind them walked Midshipman Page.

Farley stood quickly at attention, saluting the officer in charge, who returned the salute.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TRAP IN MIDSHIPMEN'S QUARTERS

Tap-Tap! sounded Lieutenant Nettleson's knuckles on the door.

Just a shade longer than usual the lieutenant waited ere he turned the door knob and entered the room.

Behind him, like a faithful orderly, stood Midshipman Hawkins, of the first class, cadet officer of the day.

A quick look about the room Lieutenant Nettleson took, then turned to the cadet officer of the day.

"Mr. Hawkins," spoke the O.C., "Mr. Darrin seems to be growing worse in his breaches of duty."

"So it seems, sir," agreed the cadet officer the day.

"Mr. Darrin has left his bed turned down," continued the lieutenant, inspecting that article of furniture. "And, judging by the looks of the sheets, he has been abed with his boots on."

"Yes sir."

"You will put Mr. Darrin on the report for this latest offense, Mr. Hawkins."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Lieutenant Nettleson made a further inspection of the room.

"And Mr. Darrin has neglected to empty his washbowl. He has also thrown the towel on the floor. Put Mr. Darrin on the report for that as well."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"That is all here, Mr Hawkins."

"Very good, sir."

O.C. and cadet officer of the day turned to leave the room. As they were crossing the threshold Midshipman Farley, saluting, reported:

"I think, sir, if you search more closely, you will find some one in this room."

"Very good," replied the officer in charge, turning back.

In truth, Lieutenant Nettleson was already aware that there was a prowler in the room, for he had seen a pair of feet in a dark corner; but he had purposely awaited Midshipman Farley's report.

Now, swift as a flash, Lieutenant Nettleson turned back, going straight to the cupboard in which Dave Darrin's uniform equipment hung.

Pushing aside a dress uniform and a raincoat that hung like curtains, Lieutenant Nettleson gazed into the face of---Midshipman Henkel!

Henkel had been caught so suddenly, had realized it so tardily, that the grin of exultation had not quite faded from his face by the time that he stood exposed.

In another second, however, that midshipman's face had turned as white as dirty chalk.

"Stand forth, sir!" ordered the O.C. sternly.

Henkel obeyed, his legs shaking under him.

"What is your name?"

"Henkel, sir."

"Mr. Henkel, what are you doing in the room of another midshipman, in the absence of both occupants?"

"I--I---just dropped in, sir!" stammered affrighted midshipman.

"Mr. Henkel, sir," continued Lieutenant Nettleson sternly, "it has long been a puzzle to the discipline officers why Mr. Darrin should so deliberately and senselessly invite demerits for lack of care of his equipment. You may now be certain that you will be accused of all breaches of good order and discipline that have been laid at Mr. Darrin's door. Have you anything to say, sir."

Midshipman Henkel, who had been doing some swift thinking, had had time enough to realize that no one had seen him doing any mischief in the room. The offense, merely, of visiting another midshipman's room improperly would call but for ten demerits. Pooh! The scrape was such a simple one that he would lie valiantly out of the graver charge and escape with ten demerits.

"I admit being here, sir, without propriety. I am innocent of any further wrongdoing, sir," lied the culprit.

Lieutenant Nettleson studied the young man's face keenly.

"Mr. Henkel, was Mr. Darrin's bed turned down and in its present disordered state when you entered the room?"

"Yes, sir."

"You declare this on your honor as a midshipman and gentleman?"

"Yes, sir," lied the unabashed Henkel.

"Was Mr. Darrin's washbowl in its present untidy state?"

"I don't know, sir. I didn't notice that."

"Very good, Mr. Henkel. Go to your room and remain there in close arrest. Do not leave your room, except by orders or proper permission, sir."

"Very good, sir," replied Henkel, saluting. Then, his face still a ghastly hue, he turned and marched from the room, not venturing, under the eyes of the O.C., to look at either Farley or Page.

When the sections came marching back from math. Lieutenant Nettleson stood outside the door of his office.

"Mr. Darrin!" called the O.C. And, a moment later, "Mr. Dalzell!"

Both wondering midshipmen approached the officer in charge for the day at Bancroft Hall, and saluted.

"Mr. Darrin," stated Lieutenant Nettleson, "you and your roommate may go to your room to leave your books. In the room you will find some evidences of disorder. Do not attempt to set them straight. As soon as you have left your books return to me."

"And I also, sir?" queried Dan, saluting.

"You, also, Mr. Dalzell," replied the officer.

"Now, has this thing broken loose again?" groaned Dave Darrin, as the two chums hurried below.

"It seems as if it ought to stop some time," gasped Dalzell.

"It will, and soon," gritted Darrin. "In a very short time, now, I shall certainly have the full course of two hundred demerits. Great---Scott!"

For now the two chums were in their room, and saw the full extent of the mischief there. "I guess I may as well wire home to Gridley for the price of my return ticket," hinted Dave bitterly.

"Don't do anything of the sort," urged Dan, though with but little hope in his voice. "You may still have a margin of ten or fifteen dems. left to hold you on."

"We're under orders, Danny boy, to report back to the O.C."

"O.K."

"Come along, then."

In the office of the officer in charge stood Midshipmen Farley and Page. Just after Dave and Dan entered Henkel came in, accompanied Midshipman Hawkins, the cadet officer of day.

It was an actually ferocious gaze that Henkel turned upon Darrin. In that same instant Dave believed that a great light had broken in upon his mind.

"Mr. Hawkins," requested the O.C., "ascertain whether the commandant of midshipmen can see us now."

Saluting, the cadet officer of the day passed out of the room, very prim and erect, his white gloves of duty a very conspicuous part of his uniform.

In a few moments, he returned, raising his right, white-gloved hand to the visor of his cap.

"The commandant of midshipmen is ready, sir."

"Come with me, then," directed Lieutenant Nettleson, who had already risen to receive the cadet officer's report.

The O.C. led the way into the office of Commander Jephson, U.S. Navy, the commandant of midshipmen.

"This, Mr. Nettleson, I understand, relates to Mr. Darrin's late apparent course in matters of discipline?" inquired Commander Jephson.

The commandant of midshipmen, who was middle-aged and slightly bald, removed his eye-glasses, holding them poised in his right hand while he gazed calmly at Mr. Nettleson.

"Yes, sir. This is the matter," replied the O.C., saluting his superior.

Commander Jephson had, usually, a manner of slow and gentle speech. He impressed one, at first sight, as being a man lacking in "ginger," which was a great mistake, as many a midshipman had found to his cost.

The commandant of cadets, however, did not believe in becoming excited or excitable until the occasion arose.

"Be good enough to make your statement, Mr. Nettleson," requested Commander Jephson.

Consulting a slip of paper that he held in his left hand the younger Naval officer recounted the previous instances in which Midshipman Darrin, fourth class, U.S. Naval Academy, had been found delinquent in that he had slighted the care of his equipment or of his room.

Having made this preliminary statement, the officer in charge now came down to the doings of the present day.

Midshipman Henkel kept his gaze fixed on Lieutenant Nettleson's face. Henkel's bearing was almost arrogant. He had fully decided upon his course of lying himself out of his serious scrape.

CHAPTER XV

Air "The rogue's march"

"It is already, sir," spoke Lieutenant Nettleson, "a matter of knowledge with you that Mr. Darrin denied his responsibility in each case of disorder among his personal belongings. It is also a matter within your knowledge, sir, that Mr. Darrin, finally, in his desperation, informed you that he believed that some enemy in the brigade of midshipmen was responsible for all the bad appearances against him.

"The reply of this department, sir, to Mr. Darrin, was to the effect that, while there was a possibility of his claim being correct, yet it was nearly inconceivable. Mr. Darrin was given permission to bring forward any evidence he could secure in support of his view. As time passed, and he confessed himself unable to secure any such evidence, one set of demerits after another accumulated against Mr. Darrin.

"Yesterday, sir, so I am informed, Mr. Farley and Mr. Page approached you, stating that they believed they had good reason for suspecting a member of the brigade of seeking to injure Mr. Darrin. Midshipmen Farley and Page also stated to you that they believed the offender to be a member of the half of the fourth class which does not recite in mathematics the same time as does the half of the class to which Mr. Darrin and his roommate belong.

"As Midshipmen Farley and Page belong to the half of the class that recites during the same periods as do Mr. Darrin and Dalzell, Midshipmen Farley and Page requested permission to remain in their room during the time when they would otherwise be reciting in mathematics. They were thus to remain for two mornings, and other members of the fourth class were then willing to stay on watch for two mornings more, and so on, until the offender against Mr. Darrin, if there was one, could be caught in the act."

What a baleful glare Midshipman Henkel shot at Farley and Page! Then Henkel saw the eye of the commandant of midshipmen fixed curiously on him, and glanced down at the floor.

"This very unusual permission, sir, you finally agreed to seek from the head of the Department of Mathematics. So, this morning, Mr. Farley and Mr. Page did not march off to recitation in mathematics, but remained in their room. Presently Mr. Page reported to me, in great haste, that a midshipman other than Mr. Darrin, or Mr. Dalzell had just entered their room. I thereupon went down to that room, knocked, waited a moment, and then entered, accompanied by the cadet

officer of the day. The condition of things that I found in the room you already, sir, know from my written report. While in the room I detected a pair of feet showing under the bottom of Mr. Darrin's uniform equipment hanging in his cupboard. I pretended, however not to see the feet, and turned to leave the room when Mr. Farley, as prearranged, stepped forward and informed me that he had seen some one enter the room a while before. I then turned and compelled the prowler to step forth. That prowler was Mr. Henkel."

"You questioned Mr. Henkel as to his reason for being in the room?" asked Commander Jephson.

"I did, sir."

"Did he deny guilty intention in being there?"

"He did, sir, other than admitting that he had broken the regulations by entering another midshipman's room in that midshipman's absence."

Tapping his right temple with the eye-glasses that he held in his hand, the commandant of midshipmen turned to look more directly at the startled culprit.

"Mr. Henkel, did you arrange any or all of the disorder which Lieutenant Nettleson reported having found in Mr. Darrin's room?"

"I did not, sir."

Henkel's voice was clear, firm--almost convincing.

"Have you, at any time, committed any offense in Mr. Darrin's room, by tampering with his equipment or belongings, or with the furniture of the room?"

"Never, sir," declared Midshipman Henkel positively.

"You are aware that Mr. Darrin has been punished by the imposition of a great many demerits for untidiness in the care of his equipment?"

"Yes, sir."

"But you were not responsible for any of these seeming delinquencies on Mr. Darrin's part?"

"Never, sir."

"You did not turn down, disarrange and soil his bed this forenoon, or create the appearance of untidiness in connection with Mr. Darrin washbowl?"

"No, sir."

"You make these denials on your word of honor, as a midshipman and gentleman?" persisted Commander Jephson.

"I do, sir, and most earnestly and solemnly, sir," replied Midshipman Henkel.

"One word, more, Mr. Henkel," went on the commandant of midshipmen. "When you improperly entered Mr. Darrin's room this morning, did you then observe the signs of disorder which Lieutenant Nettleson subsequently discovered and reported?"

"I did, sir, as to the bed. The washbowl I did not notice."

"That will do, for the present, Mr. Henkel. Mr. Farley, will you now state just what you saw, while watching this forenoon?"

Midshipmen Farley told, simply, how he and Page had commenced their watch.

"In the first place, sir," declared Farley, "as soon as Mr. Darrin and Mr. Dalzell had left their room, and the corridor was empty, Mr. Page and I, acting by permission and direction of this office, went at once to Mr. Darrin's room. We made an inspection. At that time there were no such signs of disorder as those which Lieutenant Nettleson subsequently found. Then, sir, Mr. Page and I went back to our room. I held our door very slightly ajar, and stood in such a position that I could glance down the corridor and keep Mr. Darrin's room door constantly within my range of vision."

"As a matter of vital fact, Mr. Farley," interrupted the commandant of midshipmen, "did you at any time relax such vigilance, even for a few seconds?"

"Not even for a few seconds, sir."

"After the inspection that Mr. Page and yourself made, who was the first person that you saw enter Mr. Darrin's room?"

"Mr. Henkel!"

"Was he Alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you then immediately send Mr Page to the officer in charge?"

"I did, sir."

"And yourself?"

"Without allowing my glance to turn from Mr. Darrin's door, sir, I stepped out into the corridor, walked close to Mr. Darrin's room door, and then stood there until Lieutenant Nettleson and Mr. Hawkins arrived."

"Then, Mr. Farley, you are certain that there was no disorder in Mr. Darrin's room at the time when he and Mr. Dalzell left to recite in mathematics?"

"I am absolutely positive, sir."

"And you are also certain that none but Mr. Henkel entered that room up to the time when the disorder was discovered by Lieutenant Nettleson?"

"I am certain, sir."

Midshipman Page was then questioned. He bore out the testimony just given by Farley in every particular.

The manner of the commandant of midshipmen was still gentle when he turned again to Henkel.

"Mr. Henkel, do you wish to modify your previous statements in any way?"

"No, sir," replied Henkel. "In all my answers I have told the whole and exact truth, as I know it. I am eager, sir, to answer any further questions that you may wish to put to me on the subject."

"Gentlemen, you may all withdraw, save Lieutenant Nettleson and Mr. Henkel," announced the commandant, after a few moments of seemingly mild thought. "Mr. Hawkins, of course you understand that what you know of this matter you know officially, and that you are not to mention or discuss it until such time as official action shall have been taken. As for you other midshipmen, I see no harm, gentlemen, in your discussing it among yourselves, but you will see to it that information does not, for the present, spread through the brigade. You may go, gentlemen."

Once outside Farley and Page walked so rapidly that Dave and Dan did not attempt to overtake them in the corridors. But they found Farley and Page waiting outside Dave's room door.

"May we come in?" asked Farley.

"If anyone on earth may," replied Dave heartily, throwing open the door, then stepping back to allow the others to enter.

"I'm afraid we've cooked a goose for some one," cried Farley, with grim satisfaction.

"Great Scott, yes," breathed Dan Dalzell, in devout thankfulness.

"Is it fair, Farley, for me to ask you whether you suspected Henkel before you caught him?" queried Dave Darrin.

"Yes; and the commandant knows that. Henkel came here one night, weeks ago, and mysteriously tried to interest us in putting up a job to get you dropped from the Navy rolls. When Page and I really tumbled that an enemy working against you, it didn't take us two minutes to guess who that enemy was. Then we started on the warpath."

"I wonder," asked Dave Darrin huskily, "whether it is really necessary for me to assure you of the tremendous burden of obligation that you've put upon me?"

"It isn't necessary, any way that you can look at the question," retorted Farley promptly. "What we did for you, Darrin, is no more than we'd stand ready to do for any man in the brigade who was being ground down and out by a mean trickster."

"Wouldn't I like to take peep in on Henkel, now, while the commandant is grilling him in that gentle way the commandant has?" mocked Midshipman Page.

"David, little giant, the matter is cleared and as good as squared," cried Dalzell. "And now I know this is the first time in my life that I've ever been really and unutterably happy!"

During the next two days it was known through the brigade at large that Midshipman Henkel was in close arrest. The brigade did not at once learn the cause. Yet, in such appearances as Henkel was permitted to make, it was noted that he bore himself cheerfully and confidently.

Then, one day, just before the dinner formation, Darrin was ordered to report at the commandant's office.

"Mr. Darrin," announced Commander Jephson, when the midshipman had reported and saluted, "I am glad to be able to announce that we have been able to pile up so much evidence against Mr Henkel that young man finally confessed that it was he, and he alone, who created all the disorders with your equipment, and in your room for which so many demerits have been inflicted upon you. At the dinner formation. Therefore, when the orders of the day are published by the brigade adjutant, you will again hear that your demerits, given for the offenses unjustly charged against you, have been remitted by order of the superintendent. You will also learn that you have been restored to the first conduct grade, with all the privileges belonging to the midshipmen of that grade."

It was with a light heart that Dave Darrin left the commandant's office, though the young man had been expecting that very decision.

Yet, despite the fact that he knew it was coming, Dave's heart thrilled with exultation and gratitude as he heard the order read out in the brigade adjutant's quick, monotonous tones.

Then, immediately following, came another order.

Midshipman Henkel, for dishonorable conduct, was dropped from the rolls!

"Fours right, march!"

By companies the brigade wheeled and marched into the mess hall---the air resounding with the quick, martial tread of eight hundred or more of the pick of young American manhood!

As the command "march" was given one man fell out of the ranks. Henkel, from the moment of the publications of the order, was no longer a midshipman!

He had fallen deservedly, as one not fit to associate with gentlemen, or to figure among the future defenders of his country of honorable men.

As the brigade marched indifferently off, and left him there, Henkel gazed, for a few moments at the solid ranks of blue and gold, and a great sob welled up within him. In this supreme moment he realized all that he had lost---his place among honest men!

Then, crushing down any feeling of weakness, he turned on his heel, a sneer darkening his face.

Then, recalling himself, Henkel sprang up the steps and hastened to the room that had been partly his. Here he discarded his uniform substituting for it the citizen's clothes which had been brought to him from the midshipmen's store. His own few belongings that he cared about taking with him he packed hastily in a dress-suit case.

Yet the task required time. His roommate, Brimmer, was back before Henkel was ready to depart.

"You'd better wait, now, until the coast is clear," whispered Brimmer. "Hosts of the fellows are hanging about outside."

"They won't see me," jeered Henkel harshly. "I'll wait until they're off at afternoon duties. But see here, Brimmer, don't you dare forget that I might have said much about you, and that I didn't. Don't dare forget that I leave to you the task of humbling that fellow, Darrin. If you fail me, Brimmer, it won't be too late for me to do some talking."

"Oh, I'll get Darrin out of here," grimaced Brimmer. "But I won't try to do it the way you did. You went in for enmity. I'm going to undo Darrin by being his friend."

"Well, I'm through and ready to leave," muttered Henkel. "But I'm not going until the coast is clear."

Seating himself by the window, he stared moodily out, thinking of the life which had strongly appealed to him, and from which he had exiled himself. While he was so occupied knock sounded at the door; then the cadet officer of the day stepped in:

"I see you are ready to go, Mr. Henkel," announced the cadet officer. "The published order was to the effect that you leave the Naval Academy immediately. The officer in charge has sent me to see that you comply with the order at once."

"Oh, well," muttered Henkel bitterly. He turned, holding out his hand to his late roommate.

"Goodby, Brimmer; good luck!"

"The same to you," replied Brimmer, as their hands met. That was all that was said with the cadet officer of the day looking on, but both of the late roommates understood the compact of dishonor that lay between them concerning Dave Darrin's coming fate.

With his derby hat pulled low over his eyes and gripping his suit case, Henkel slunk through the corridors of Bancroft Hall. Now he faced the hardest ordeal of all in going out through the entrance of the great white building, beyond which stood many groups of midshipmen.

Now these young men of the Navy caught sight of Henkel. No goodbyes were called out to him. Instead, as his feet struck the flagging of the walk scores of lips were puckered. The midshipmen gave the departing one a whistled tune and furnished the drum part with their hands. That tune was---

"The Rogue's March."

CHAPTER XVI

BRIMMER MAKES A NEW FRIEND

"Darrin, I hope you don't hold me in any way responsible for that fellow Henkel's actions.

"Why should I?" asked Dave, turning and looking into the eyes of Midshipman Brimmer.

"I know that, for a while, there was hard feeling between us," continued Brimmer seriously. "It took me a long time to get it out of my stubborn head that you were the one responsible for having our crowd ragged by the watchman the night of the spread in Annapolis. Even after Farley changed his mind it took me a long time to believe that he was right."

"I forgot that whole matter long ago," replied Darrin.

"Then will you accept my tardy apology, and let us be friends?" urged Brimmer, holding out his hand.

It was not Dave Darrin's way to hold a grudge forever. He extended his own hand to take Brimmer's.

"And I hope you'll let me know you better," continued Brimmer, turning to Dan Dalzell.

"Most people who know me at all think they know me too well," laughed Dan, but he held out his hand.

Perhaps, in other walks of life, the chums might have been more wary about accepting Brimmer's suddenly proffered friendship, as they stood in the open air just after dinner one November day. The weather was so fine and mild that it seemed a shame to be cooped up between walls. Back in the High School days, for instance, Dave and Dan would have been more cautious in accepting such an offer of friendship. But at the U.S. Naval Academy the atmosphere is wholly different. The midshipmen are ranked as gentlemen, and all are so taken on trust unless they betray themselves as dishonorable. Ninety-nine per cent of the young men are earnest, honest and wholly aboveboard.

After that, during the next two or three weeks, Brimmer cultivated the acquaintance of Darrin and Dalzell at every possible opportunity. Often, in the evening, he came hastening to their room for a short visit after the release bell had sounded at 9.30. When he called, Brimmer always remained until the warning call just before taps.

"It took you a long while to find out that Dave Darrin is white enough to shake hands with," laughed Farley, one day.

"As I remember, it took you quite a little while, also, to find it out," laughed Brimmer. "I admit that I am slow at forming my friendships. But there's no mistake about Darrin, when you get to know him. He's about the finest fellow in the class."

"He certainly is," nodded Farley heartily.

Being shorn of the long list of unjustly-given demerits that had stood against his name, Darrin was now in the first conduct grade. So was Dan. That gave to both considerable in the way of privileges. On Saturdays and Sundays, for instance, they were at liberty to accept invitations to call on or dine at the houses of officers and their families. This privilege, while pleasant to possess, amounted to little, for Dave and Dan had been too busy over their studies to have any opportunity to attract social notice.

As to dancing, fourth class men do not, by tradition, attend any of the midshipmen's hops, which are reserved for upper class men.

Neither is a plebe midshipman expected to be seen escorting young ladies. In fact, the plebe has no social pleasures within the academy walls.

Outside, however, it is different. If the fourth class men are acquainted with young ladies in the town of Annapolis they may visit them on Saturday afternoons when so invited.

Here, again, Dave and Dan found no delight. For they became acquainted with none of the girls of Annapolis.

They could, however, on Saturday afternoon secure permission to go into the town. Any change outside of the Academy walls now became welcome, though our young midshipmen had no other form of pleasure than merely to stroll through the streets of the town and occasionally regale themselves with a dish of ice-cream or a glass of soda at Wiegard's.

Brimmer, one Saturday afternoon, when strolling through the town, discovered a new little shop on Main Street.

This was a little store that had just been fitted up. Some fruit was displayed for sale, though the main business of the place appeared to be the dispensing of various temperance drinks.

On the sign over the door the proprietor's first name was given as "Tony." The second name was an unpronounceable Greek one.

Being thirsty Brimmer stepped inside.

"Are you Tony?" he asked of the swarthy young man behind the counter.

"Yes, sare," grinned Tony. "What you drink?"

Brimmer looked over the stock, selected a bottle of ginger ale and paid for it.

"Business good?" asked the midshipman.

"No, sare; ver' bad," replied Tony sadly.

"Oh, well, it will pick up by-and-by."

"I hope so, sare. But when I come here I think maybe the midsheepmen come see me offen. You, sare, first midsheepman who came here."

"You have a neat little place," continued Brimmer. "And this ginger ale," holding up his glass, "is good. You'll have trade enough by-and-by."

"You tell other midsheepmen they come here, sare?" asked Tony hopefully.

"Why, yes; I think perhaps I can send you a bit of trade," replied Brimmer. The young man's father was a politician, and a prosperous one. The son had learned the wisdom of making friends wherever he could, since there could be no telling when a friend anywhere might be useful.

"You come with me, sare," urged Tony, taking a gentle hold on Brimmer's arm, and leading him to the rear of the store.

Tony threw open a door, revealing a rear room in which were three tables.

"Maybe midsheepmen like play cards, sometimes," suggested Tony, with a grin.

"Great!" cried Brimmer. "Yes; sometimes the fellows do like to know a quiet little place where they can have a good game without a discipline officer butting in. Good enough; I'll tell some of the fellows about this place; but you must keep it quiet, and not let anyone else into that room."

"For midsheepmen on'y," promised Tony solemnly.

"Good enough, then," smiled Mr. Brimmer. "I'll bring you a party as soon as possible."

"Then you make me your frien', sare," protested the Greek.

As Brimmer went strolling along the street, after that, a plan began rapidly to hatch in his mind. He thought he saw how Tony could made a most valuable ally.

As luck would have it, Brimmer was not long in meeting three midshipmen of rather wild tendencies. To them he proposed a quiet little game of cards. He led his classmates back to Tony's. Here they regaled themselves with ginger ale, then passed on into the rear room. For more than two hours the midshipmen remained here. Occasionally they called for more of the temperance drinks. As they left Brimmer passed Tony a two-dollar bill, for this midshipman disregarded the regulations in that he frequently received money from home and was always well supplied.

"Thank you, sare," cried Tony, bowing very low, indeed.

The following Saturday Brimmer returned to the little shop with a small party of friends.

Late that afternoon Tony was richer by a few dollars.

"You one ver' good frien', sare," protested the delighted Tony. "Me? I your ver' good frien', too. I do anything for you, sare---try me!"

"I'm getting Tony about where I want him," thought Mr. Brimmer. "Just a little more help to him, and then I'll spring my idea on him."

Thanksgiving had gone by, and now the Christmas Holidays were nearing. Brimmer was playing his game slowly, and without the slightest risk to himself. Tony must take all the risk. If the Greek got into any trouble Brimmer could deny all knowledge of the matter.

One Saturday afternoon, just before Christmas Midshipman Brimmer came down Main Street, looked in and found the Greek standing alone in his shop.

"Howdy, Tony," was the midshipman's greeting, as he sauntered into the store.

"Hullo, my good frien', sare."

"Wish you a Merry Christmas, Tony."

"I don' know, sare, I don' know," replied the Greek, shaking his head.

"Why, isn't business good now, Tony?"

"You do ver' much, my frien', to help make it better," replied Tony, shaking his head, "but still I not make much money."

"Are you hard up at Christmas, Tony?" asked Brimmer, with pretended sympathy.

"Oh, yes, sare; all time hard up."

At that moment Brimmer's gleaming eyes saw Dave Darrin and Dan Dalzell passing on the other side of the street.

"Quick, Tony! Get a look at my friends over there!" whispered Brimmer. "Take such a good look that you will know them again anywhere. Now, it's the one on the inside, especially. Note him sharply, Tony."

"I never mistake him again, sare, eff I see him," replied the Greek gravely.

"Do you see many of these ten-dollar bills nowadays, Tony?" questioned Brimmer, carelessly displaying a banknote.

The Greek shook his head wistfully.

"This is yours now, Tony; and twice as much more afterwards, if you do what I want of you. It's a good joke that I want to play on a midshipman down at the Academy."

"A joke, eh?" repeated the Greek. "Then, sare, my frien', it can't be anything so ver' bad, eef it only a joke."

"Oh, it isn't anything bad," Brimmer lied cheerfully. "But that fellow played a warm one on me, and I want to pay him back."

"I understand, sare, my ver' good frien'."

Inside of five minutes Tony understood very much better. Still, the Greek saw no real harm in what he now engaged himself to do.

That night Tony slept with Brimmer's ten-dollar note under his pillow. Dave Darrin slept as soundly as ever, unconscious of harm hanging over his head.

Midshipman Brimmer did much gleeful chuckling after taps, as he lay on the bed in the room that Henkel had once shared with him.

"Now, let's see anyone get a chance to bring this job back to me!" laughed Brimmer. "And goodbye, Darrin! The Naval Academy won't know you much longer!"

CHAPTER XVII

TONY BAITs THE HOOK

Up to this time Darrin had dropped in at Tony's but once, and Dan not at all.

The Saturday after Christmas was an anxious one for nearly all of the midshipmen. Only a few availed themselves of any privilege of going into Annapolis this Saturday afternoon. Most of the young men remained in their rooms at Bancroft Hall, anxiously going over the work in which they were soon to take their semi-annual examinations.

Especially was this true of the fourth class men in the "wooden" or lowest sections. Most of these men knew that, if they succeeded in staying on at all, it would be by a very small margin indeed. Even the men in the "savvy sections," with the highest marks of their class, were eager to come out as well as possible in the dreaded semi-ans.

Dave and Dan both had secured permission to go into Annapolis.

"We'll want to clear out the cobwebs by a brisk walk, anyway," declared Darrin.

They did not intend to go townward, however, until rather late in the afternoon.

Dan, when he could stand the grind no longer picked up his cap. Dave wanted to put in least fifteen minutes more over his book.

"I've got to get out in the air," Dalzell muttered.

"Going to town?" Dave asked.

"Yes. Coming along?"

"I've got a little more in logarithms to clean up," murmured Darrin, looking wistfully at two pages in one of his text-books on mathematics. "Will it do as well, Danny boy, if I follow in fifteen or twenty minutes?"

"Yes; you'll probably find me on Main Street, though you can look in at Wiegard's on the way."

Wiegard's is the famous confectionery shop where cadets go for candy, for ices or soda fountain drinks. If upper class men and young ladies are plentiful in Wiegard's, however, prudent fourth class men keep right on without stopping.

Dan left Bancroft Hall quite certain that his chum would not be along for at least an hour.

At the gate Dan made his report of liberty, then kept on up Maryland Avenue.

As he turned into State Circle he slowed up a trifle, glancing in through the door at Wiegard's.

"Too many upper class men in there for me," decided Dan, so turning he made his way through the State Capitol grounds, and on into Main Street.

Here he strolled more slowly, passing, here and there, a member of his class, though none with whom he was particularly intimate.

"I'm thirsty," decided Dalzell. "I don't believe I want any of the hot drinks. There's Tony's. I'll drop in and get a bottle of soda lemonade."

Tony saw the fourth classman coming, and a peculiar smile crossed his lips. On the occasion on which Brimmer had pointed out the chums to the Greek the latter had understood that it was Dan who was to be the principal victim.

"Good afternoon, Tony!" was Dan's greeting, as he stepped into the shop. "Merry Christmas."

"Thank you, sare, good frien'," was Tony's reply. Then the Greek turned briefly, to hide a grin.

"Crowd seems to have left you, Tony," said Dan sympathetically.

"Save their money to buy present for girls," guessed the Greek.

"Tony, have you a small bottle of lemon soda that's good and cold?"

"Oh, yes, sare."

"Then I want it."

Tony fumbled among bottles clinking in ice under the counter. At last he found what he wanted and held the bottle up to the capping machine. Then the Greek did something unusual. Instead of emptying the bottle into a glass on the counter

he performed that service underneath the counter. Next he held the glass up full of bright, cold liquid filled with bubble and sparkle.

"It makes me thirstier to look at this," muttered Dan, picking up the glass. "I'll get it down as soon as I can."

He sipped the last out of the glass, put do a coin to pay for it, and stood, for a moment, chatting with Tony.

"Excuse me, sare," broke in the Greek, suddenly. "I hear ma wife call me."

Opening a door behind him Tony stepped into a hallway.

The short December afternoon was drawing to a close. Standing in the shop Dan saw that the light in the street was growing less.

"I'll walk a little further down the street," thought Dan. "Then I'll turn back, and keep on toward State Circle, and look for Dave."

As he took the first step away from the store Dalzell noticed a slight feeling of dizziness.

After a moment this passed off, but soon it came on again, heavier than before.

"What ails me?" wondered the astonished midshipman. "It can't be that I'm turning sick, for I've been feeling fine all along."

He tried the effect of will power, holding himself as erect as he could and trying to walk slowly in a straight line.

Then, though he did not realize it, three or four passers-by turned to look at the unsteady young man in a midshipman's uniform.

Two men passing in an auto runabout glanced quickly at Dan.

"Look at that fool midshipman, throwing away a great future for a few glasses of strong drink," he remarked to his companion. Then the auto sped on.

As for Dan Dalzell, he no longer understood clearly what was happening.

At this lower end of Main Street, on which he was now moving, there were not many people astir. One there was behind him, however---Tony, the Greek, following stealthily on his trail.

At last, as Dalzell reached the head of a short, narrow alleyway Tony caught up with him in the darkness that had now fallen.

A quick shove Tony gave the midshipman, and Dan, helpless, staggered into the alleyway, tripped and fell.

Tony passed on as though he had merely accidentally jostled another.

Then, in an instant he wheeled, went back the head of the alley and glanced in.

Dan Dalzell was lying still, in a complete stupor.

With a chuckle the Greek drew a small bottle from one of his pockets, taking out the stopper and throwing it away. Then he began sprinkling the contents on Dan's uniform coat with energy.

At that instant there was a quick step outside. Then Dave Darrin, tall, handsome, and even distinguished-looking in the uniform that he wore so well, bounded in, gripping the Greek's right arm in a tight grasp.

"You rascal!" vibrated Dave's angry voice. "What are you doing here?"

It being darker in the alleyway than it was outside, Tony did not recognize his captor. Dave towered so in his wrath that the Greek took him to be an officer of the Navy.

"Speak up, before I shake the truth out of you!" warned Darrin. "Do you understand that this is a crime, you knave, and that I can place you under arrest and have you sent to the penitentiary for years?"

Tony was now sure that he was in the clutch of a Naval officer. Moreover, Darrin's grip was one that spoke of more muscular strength held in reserve.

"Let me go, sare!" begged the Greek, squirming. "This ees all one joke. I do ze man no harm."

For answer, Dave used his left hand to snatch away the bottle that Tony still held.

"Alcohol!" detected Dave, and hurled the bottle to the other end of the alleyway. "And you have been sprinkling it on this midshipman's uniform? You are the fellow who runs the temperance drinks place? A nice business for you to be in---drugging midshipmen and trying to ruin them! To prison you go, unless you limber up your tongue. Who put you up to this miserable business? Talk quickly---or off to a cell you go!"

This was pure bluff, as Dave, being under twenty-one, had no right to make an arrest, even as a citizen. But he saw that he had the Greek scared, and he resolved to push his advantage to the limit.

"Talk this instant, or to the police station you go!" warned Dave. "Then it will be years before you are a free man again."

"Mercy, Captain!" howled the frightened Greek.

"Then out with the whole truth like lightning!" ordered Dave Darrin.

He accompanied his order with a shaking that made the Greek's teeth rattle.

"Stop, sare, stop! I tell you!" whined Tony.

"Go ahead, then, you brute."

"You know Midsheepman Brimmer?"

"I know him," repeated Dave.

"He tell me, sare, about one joke. He geev me bottle of stuff, and he tell me when this midsheepman, or his friend, come in my place I am to put half of stuff in the bottle in one glass of what the midsheepman order. Then I am to follow the midsheepman out, and watch him until he fall. I am also to have bottle of alcohol with me and sprinkle some on the midsheepman when he fall and lie still. Then I am to go away and let the midsheepman be found. It is to be one grand joke on the midsheepman."

"Give me what is left of the bottle of stuff that Midshipman Brimmer gave you to put in the drink," commanded Dave sternly.

Tony's first impulse was to deny that he had the vial with him. But Darrin's grip on the fellow's arm tightened so alarmingly that the Greek thrust his left hand down into a trousers pocket, then produced the vial, which Darrin pocketed.

"So this is Brimmer's work---and Brimmer was at one time Henkel's roommate and crony!" flashed swiftly through Darrin's mind. "Oh, the scoundrel!"

"Some one ees coming, sare," warned Tony. "Let me go, sare."

"Stay where you are, and don't dare make a move to get away," warned Darrin. "It would do you no good, anyway. I know where to find you."

Then Darrin peeped cautiously out at the head of the alley. Some one was coming, and that some one wore the Naval uniform. Dave's heart began to beat faster. Then the wearer the uniform passed the light from a store window, and his face was briefly revealed. Darrin's heart, for a few seconds, seemed almost to stop beating. For it was Brimmer himself!

Further up in the town that midshipman had heard a fleeting word, uttered by some one, about a staggering midshipman having been seen going down Main Street.

"A dollar to a doughnut it's Darrin himself! flashed exultantly through Brimmer's mind. He hurried on, though careful to avoid the appearance of haste.

"I wish Henkel were here at this moment!" thought Brimmer. "Oh, it will be great to see that sneak, Darrin---"

Just at that moment Brimmer stopped short, with something like a gasp.

For he did see Darrin, standing before him, towering in his wrath.

CHAPTER XVIII

In the days of "Old two-five"

Before Brimmer could utter a word Darrin pounced upon him, seizing him by the collar and fairly dragging him into the alleyway.

Then, still gripping his astounded, dismayed foe, Darrin demanded:

"Tony, is this the fellow who paid you to drug my friend?"

"The treacherous Greek has betrayed me!" was the thought that flashed instantly through Brimmer's startled mind.

"Let go of my collar, Darrin!" he commanded loudly. "If this lying Greek has dared to say that I---"

"Shut up!" ordered Dave tersely.

Ever since coming to Annapolis he had tried to keep his temper in the background. But now, quivering in his righteous wrath, Darrin was once more the hot-headed, impulsive, generous Dave of old---a doer of deeds, and a thrasher of scoundrels.

"No, no, no!" protested Tony, shrilly and cunningly. "Mr. Brimmer, he no tell me---he no hire me---"

"Be silent, fellow!" commanded Dave Darrin hotly. "You've told the truth once. Don't spoil it with a dozen lies! Brimmer, you dastard, you disgrace to the noble old uniform---"

By a quick, forceful twist Brimmer had freed himself from Dave's frantic clutch.

It availed the plotter but little, however.

Quick as a flash Dave let drive with his right fist, landing a blow on the chest that sent Mr. Brimmer flat to the pavement of the alley.

"You coward! You---" screamed Brimmer, as he rose.

But no sooner was he on his feet than Dave planted a terrific blow over his left eye.

Down went Brimmer again, his eyes closed "until further notice."

"Don't try to get up!" warned Darrin, crouching over his enemy. "If you make a move upward, until I'm through talking, I'll kick you clean over the town of Annapolis and far out into Chesapeake Bay. Brimmer, if you send me a challenge when we get back to Bancroft Hall, I won't pay any attention to it until after the class has passed on the merits of the case. If you want to fight here and now I'll let you up and we'll settle it right off. But no formal fight, under decent auspices. You hear me? You understand?"

Brimmer made no reply.

"All right, then," nodded Dave. "I understand that you don't want to fight here. Don't try to provoke me into a formal fight, at the Naval Academy, unless you are prepared to defend your side before a class committee. Now get up and take yourself away---you infamous hound!"

Tony, in the meantime, had swiftly vanished. The Greek's change of front, in denying his charge against Brimmer, had been prompted by craft.

"Meester Brimmer, he pay me, now, not twenty dollars, but all the money he have, and all he can get," chuckled the rascally Greek. "Otherwise, he be afraid I tell too much, and he get the double-queeck out of the Naval Acadeemy!"

Brimmer, boiling with helpless rage, got up and made off as quickly as he could. He would have fought, on the spot, but knew that with one eye closed, and giving him great pain, he would be but a football for the strenuous Darrin.

And now Dave bent over his chum, who, still unconscious, was breathing heavily.

"He's in no immediate danger," breathed Darrin, in great relief. Then, hearing wheels, he stepped to the end of the alleyway. As if in answer to his prayer the vehicle turned out to be a cab, and without a fare.

"Driver, I need you here!" called Dave, and the cab rolled in at the curb.

"Follow me," directed Darrin, leading the way up the alley

Catching sight of the prostrate midshipman the driver grinned.

"No, he's not intoxicated!" flashed out Darrin half angrily. "This is all a trick. Help me lift him into your cab. Then drive us to the best physician in the town."

Dan was propped in place on the back seat, Darrin beside him.

"Give me the card of your stable, driver," Dave requested. "I haven't money enough to pay you, but I'll write and have my father send you the amount of your bill."

"That'll be all right, sir," nodded the driver who knew the ways of midshipmen, and who also knew that such a "risk" was a safe one.

A few minutes later the cab stopped before the residence of Dr. Stewart.

"See if the doctor is in," directed Darrin.

The physician was at home, and not engaged. So Dave and the driver carried Dan into the medical man's office.

"Too bad!" murmured the physician. "Intoxicated, eh?"

"No, sir," responded Dave quietly, "and that's one of the things I wish you to note positively, so that you can be prepared to certify if necessary. This is the stuff, I believe, with which my friend was drugged."

Dave passed over the vial Tony had handed him. Dr. Stewart smelled the contents, then touched the bottle lightly to his tongue. Next he stepped over to a cabinet, poured a small quantity of the liquid into a test tube and did some hurried experimenting.

"The regulation knockout drops," he smiled grimly. "Now, help me to take off your friend's overcoat. Whew! There is the smell of alcohol here!"

"Only on the overcoat, I guess, doctor," suggested Dave. "You don't notice any on my friend's breath, do you?"

"No," replied the doctor.

"There has been a plot on foot to make it appear that my friend had been indulging in liquor. Doctor, I hope you can prove positively that such was not the case."

"I shall have to pump the young man's stomach out. That is the first step in getting him back to consciousness. That will also show convincingly whether he has been using alcoholic drinks."

Within three minutes Dr. Stewart was positive that Dan had not been using strong drink.

Soon after Dan regained consciousness. Dr. Stewart quickly gave him something to restore his faculties.

Catching sight of the office clock Dave broke in:

"Doctor, if it is barely possible, we must be back for supper formation. Can you fix it?"

"I think so," nodded the physician. "You can help. Turn on that electric fan and place your friend's uniform overcoat where the fan will play upon it. That will drive away most of the smell of alcohol."

"Alcohol?" mumbled Dan wonderingly.

"Don't try to think, now, Mr. Dalzell," ordered the physician. "Mr. Darrin will explain to you later."

Dan lay on the lounge, the physician keeping a finger on his pulse. Presently the man of medicine gave Dan another drink of restorative. "Now, get up and walk to the back of the room with me," commanded the physician. "Here, I'll throw this window up. Now, take in as deep breaths as you can."

Dave, in the meantime, was standing near fan attending to driving the fumes from his friend's coat.

A few minutes later Dr. Stewart gave Dalzell a third draught. Dan was now recovering steadily from his mental numbness.

"You can take your friend away safely, now," declared Dr. Stewart, at last. "He can thank a strong constitution for recovering so quickly under treatment."

"Shall I take him near the gate in a cab, or walk him there?" asked Darrin.

"It will bring about his recovery more completely if he walks."

"Pardon me for a moment, then, and I'll go outside and release the driver."

Then, returning, Darrin added:

"Doctor, if you'll hand me your bill, Mr. Dalzell will see that his father remits to you."

Dr. Stewart nodded, wrote the bill, and passed it over. It was not by any means the first time that the physician had done business on that basis.

"A fairly brisk walk, gentlemen, will be best," said the doctor, at the street door. "Good evening---and good luck."

"Another Naval mystery, I suppose," smiled the physician, as he turned back to his office. "But I shall never hear from it again, except when the remittance arrives from the young man's father."

Arriving at the Maryland Avenue gate of the Academy grounds Dave turned in report for both of them. Then the chums continued across to Bancroft Hall.

Midshipman Brimmer was reported absent, but accounted for, at that supper formation. At that moment Brimmer was undergoing a Naval surgeon's treatment for his eye. Brimmer's brief explanation to the surgeon was that he had run his face against something hard in a dark alleyway while in town. The surgeon noted down the explanation, smiling grimly.

That being Saturday evening, with release from studies, Dave slipped down to the door of Farley and Page, and invited them to his quarters. There sat Dan.

Both Farley and Page listened almost in stupefaction. They had always rather liked Brimmer. Yet they were convinced that Darrin spoke the truth.

"Now, help me with your advice," begged Dave. "Should I make an official report of this whole matter?"

"Not until you have stronger evidence against Brimmer," suggested Farley.

"Would it do any good to ask for a class committee, and to bring Brimmer before it?"

"Not until you have a better case to offer," replied Page.

"Then what should I do?"

"Cut Brimmer, of course," said Farley thoughtfully. "And don't let him guess that you're going to let up at any point of the investigation into the matter."

"We won't let up, either," blazed Dave, "if we can think of any way to probe the facts."

"I don't believe it will do much good to fool with Tony, the Greek," suggested Midshipman Page. "Brimmer has more money than any of us, and he'll pay blackmail to keep Tony's tongue quiet."

It was Tuesday when Midshipman Brimmer returned to formations. Immediately after breakfast Dave Darrin went up to him.

"Mr. Brimmer, I want a word with you."

"I don't want any words with you, at any time, Mr. Darrin," Brimmer retorted bitterly.

"You won't have any that are not necessary," retorted Dave. "Yet I think it will be to your advantage to step aside and hear what I have to say now."

"Make it very short, then."

"Mr. Brimmer," continued Darrin, when they were by themselves, "all I have to say is to confirm the language that I used to you the other evening. Further, I will say that you are quite at liberty to report me for having assaulted you. Or, you may ask for a class committee to investigate this affair between us. The last that I have to say is that I have the vial of knockout stuff that you gave Tony to serve to Dalzell and myself, and I have also expert testimony as to the nature of the stuff. Nor do I mind admitting to you that Dalzell and I are going to go as far as we can in getting the evidence that; will warrant our making an official report your scoundrelly conduct. If possible we shall bring about your dismissal from the Naval Academy."

Brimmer's eyes flashed. Yet in the next minute the yellow streak in him showed. His lip quivered, and he begged, brokenly:

"Darrin, show a little mercy. Would you care to be kicked out of the Academy?"

"Not any more than Dalzell would have liked it," replied Dave dryly.

"Then you must realize that it would spoil my life, too."

"Mr. Brimmer," retorted Darrin sternly, "it is no longer a question of what your feelings in the matter may be. The plain fact is that you are not a gentlemen---not honorable. You are not fit to be the comrade of gentlemen. You are a profanation of the uniform of the United States. It is for the good of the service, far more than for any personal enmity, that several of us have resolved to keep on the hunt for evidence until we get a complete enough lot to drive you away from Annapolis."

Finding that coaxing was of no avail Brimmer became surly.

At the first opportunity for liberty to go into town Dave, Dan and Farley went abruptly to Tony, the Greek, questioning him insistently. Tony, however, would not say a word beyond stolidly denying that he had had any part in the plot, and that he had ever said so.

Tony had abundant reasons for his silence. He had promptly demanded two hundred dollars from Brimmer, and the latter had sent post haste to his father for the money, explaining only that he needed it to "buy his way out of a scrape."

The money now rested in Tony's pocket.

Dave, Dan, Farley and Page tried hard, however, in other directions, to secure the need evidence. There was no druggists' label on the vial, so these four midshipmen visited all the druggists in Annapolis, seeking light on the matter. The druggists, however, denied any knowledge of the vial or of its contents.

Now, the friends appeared to be up against a dead wall of difficulty. They did not cease their efforts, however, and held many conferences behind closed doors.

Brimmer kept track of their activities as best he could. He became moody, and slackened in his studies.

After that the semi-annual examinations came on. Dave passed better than he had hoped, making two-nine as his standing.

Dalzell was forced to be content with two-seven, but as two-five was a high enough mark for passing Dan was delighted. Farley and Page got through safely, and that was all.

Fifty-nine of the men of the fourth class were dropped for failing to keep up to the two-five standard.

And one of these was Midshipman Brimmer. He and the other unlucky ones left for their homes as soon as the results had been announced.

Brimmer would have passed, in all probability, had he not been unstrung by the knowledge that four of his comrades were working to secure the evidence which should warrant his expulsion from the Naval Academy. Oppressed by dread,

this young scoundrel was not capable of doing his best work at the semi-annuals.

So Brimmer left as Henkel had done. The only difference was that Brimmer did not have to slink away to the tune of "The Rogue's March."

"You're past the worst of it, now, mister," murmured Youngster Trotter, in passing Dave. "You'll win through hereafter."

But Dave Darrin could hardly help feeling that his greatest thankfulness was over the fact that the poisonous pair, Henkel and Brimmer, were both out of the Navy for good and all.

CHAPTER XIX

The Collision on the Chesapeake

The weeks slipped by quickly now.

Athletics cannot occupy as prominent a place at Annapolis as at the universities and colleges, for the midshipmen must, above all, be sure that they stand high enough in their academic work. Dave and Dan were both invited out for baseball try-out, but both asked to be excused.

Dan, by himself, would have gone in for the Navy nine, and doubtless would have made it.

It was Darrin, the cautious, who dissuaded Dalzell.

"Better shy away from athletics, Danny boy, until you've made your academic footing secure," was Dave's advice.

"You didn't talk that way in the High School," argued Dan.

"No; there the athletics were more necessary, if we were to keep in condition. Here athletics may be regarded as the luxury, which we are not yet entitled. Here, with the gym work, the fencing, the drills under arms and the boat drills, we're kept in the pink of physical condition without need for special training."

"Next year, when we feel absolutely solid in our marks, we can go in for athletics, if we wish, Dan."

So Dalzell gave in. He was beginning to realize that his chum had a "long" head and that his advice was always good.

With the coming of spring the boat drills were resumed in earnest.

Dave, standing well in "grease," now, became captain of one of the boat crews, for he had developed unusual skill in boat handling.

One bright afternoon in the latter part of April, while half of the brigade marched off to instruction on shore, the other half marched down to the docks beyond the seamanship building.

Here the members of the third class embarked in the steam launches each craft representing a war vessel--for fleet drill.

The fourth class men embarked, by crews, in the sailboats.

As each captain gave the order to shove clear of the dock the mainsail was hoisted. Then each crew captain kept one eye on the watch for the signals of the instructor, who was aboard a boat designated as the flagship.

The sail was downstream. Beyond Annapolis some pretty manoeuvring work was done. While this drill was proceeding, however, the wind died out considerably. Then, light as the breeze was, the youthful crew captains were forced to beat back against almost a head wind.

There being no signs of squalls or puffs, the crew captains did not seem to need to exercise much caution. The members of the crews stood indolently at their stations.

Yet Dave was as alert as ever. He stood close to the midshipman tillerman, looking constantly for signals from the flagship, and at the same time watchful for any wind signs.

An hour or more they had proceeded thus. Some of Dave's boat crew, who had been making a lark of their nearly becalmed condition now began to demur over the prospect of getting back late for supper.

"The steam-launch fleet might show up and give us a tow," grumbled Farley.

Dave smiled and said nothing. He was as eager as any midshipman in the boat to have his supper on time, but he felt that the crew captain must appear above any sign of complaint untoward fate.

For a moment or so Darrin turned to look aft at the weather.

"Motor boat 'John Duncan' on the port bow, two points off and bearing this way, sir," reported the bow watch.

Darrin turned quickly, bending to glance under the boom, for the mainsail was in his way.

What he saw made him dart quickly forward, to take up his stand by the mast.

"Pass me the megaphone, Mr. Dalzell," he requested.

With this mouth-piece in hand, Dave watched the nearing craft.

The "Duncan" was a semi-speed boat, some forty-five feet over all, without cabin, and carrying only a sprayhood forward to protect its engine.

Two men appeared in the boat---Mr Salisbury, the owner, and his engineer. The latter was steering at this time.

Chug-chug-chug! came the fast craft.

Dave waited, well knowing that his hail could not carry to either engineer or owner over the noise that the "Duncan's" engine was making.

Farley stood close to Dave watching. The tillerman also had his eye on the approaching craft. The other midshipmen, telling stories or staring out over the water, paid little heed. There could be no danger from the motor boat. Both the owner and engineer were well known, in these waters, as capable boat handlers and as men of judgment.

Darrin, himself, did not believe that there was any danger.

"Throw her head a point and a half off to the starboard," called Dave Darrin evenly.

"Aye, aye, sir," responded the midshipman tillerman, and the sailboat responded slowly under the slight headway.

"Great Scott, don't those fellows know that a sailboat has the right of way over a power craft?" demanded Darrin suddenly.

"Perhaps they're going to see how close they can come to us without hitting us," remarked Farley.

Dave raised the megaphone to his lips, waiting until he judged that there was a chance of his hail being heard.

"Duncan, 'ahoy!" bellowed Darrin. "Go to port of us!"

Still the motor boat came onward, at a speed something better than fourteen miles.

"Hard-a-starboard!" Darrin roared back to his own tillerman.

Then he repeated his hail. He was almost frenzied now; for the motor boat had not yet changed its course.

Suddenly, when the two craft were almost together, the engineer, after throwing over his wheel, held up one hand.

Before Dave could guess what the gesture meant, the "Duncan" loomed up on the sail-boat's port bow, coming on at unabated speed.

There was an instant scampering of midshipmen for safety. Then bump! the motor boat's bow crashed into the sailboat, cutting a great gap in her.

The force of the shock threw most of the midshipmen into the water. The rest jumped.

Now, the "Duncan" responded to her engine by backing off. But the motor boat, too, had received her deathblow. Ere she had backed off a hundred and fifty feet she began to fill rapidly. Owner and engineer had only time to adjust life-preservers and leap overboard. Then the "Duncan" went down.

At the moment of collision there was a crash of spars and a snapping of cordage. The sailing craft's mast had gone by the board, though not much before the sailboat itself had filled.

Dave himself was pitched headlong. He sank below the water, but had no fear for himself, for he was wholly at home in the water.

Yet, as he found the water closing over him, Dave Darrin felt a great thrill of terror for others run through him.

"My boat crew is the poorest in the class in swimming!" he gasped, with a throb of agony. "Not more than half of them know how to take care of themselves! And I, as captain, am responsible for their safety!"

CHAPTER XX

IN THE LINE OF DUTY

As his head shot above the water a Dave barely paused to expel the water from his mouth.

"Boat's crew close together, to stand by the poor swimmers!" he yelled hoarsely.

The water being barely ruffled, Darrin was able to count eight heads besides his own.

That meant that five men had still failed to come up.

Midshipman Driscoll, an instant later, shot up beside Dave.

"Help!" sputtered Driscoll.

"Float on my arm, sir," ordered Dave, swimming with lusty strokes until he had thrust his left arm under Driscoll's chest.

Then the young crew captain shouted:

"Who can get here first to support Mr. Driscoll."

"Here!" called another midshipman, overtaking the pair with lusty strokes.

"Keep Mr. Driscoll up," called Dave, as he swam away. "I've got to count heads fast."

Another midshipman came above water, and Dan Dalzell was at him, like a flash, supporting the new arrival, who was one of the poor swimmers.

That left three men to be accounted for.

Further down the stream still another head appeared. Only for a moment or two, this midshipman succeeded in keeping his head above water.

"I'll get that man," cried Farley, as he and another midshipman started with powerful strokes after the man who was going down for the second time.

"There's a seat floating!" shouted Dalzell.

Darrin plunged forward for it, until he saw one of his crew nearing it ahead of him.

"Hold that as a life-buoy!" called Dave.

Hardly had he given this order when another midshipman made himself heard, as he trod water.

The board was pushed toward him, while Dave made a rapid count.

"All up but Mr. Page;" muttered Dave, but even that thought made him sick at heart.

Only a few moments had passed, but that was time enough for any man to come to the surface if his buoyancy remained.

Darrin had paid no heed to Mr. Salisbury or the latter's engineer, for he had seen them jumping for their life-preservers.

In the meantime the other boats of the sailing fleet were making for the scene of the disaster. Yet, with the light breeze, that was no easy thing to do. It would take some time yet to bring the nearest of the sailing fleet to the scene.

Signals had been sprung to the steam-launch fleet, but the launches were far down the bay, and many minutes must pass before relief could be looked for from that quarter. Two or three of the sailboats would, in fact, be at hand first.

Though there were some excellent swimmer among the wrecked midshipmen, the best of these were already standing by midshipmen who did not swim well. Dave Darrin was the only one free to go to Page's assistance should he show up.

"Every man keep his eyes peeled for Mr. Page!" shouted Dave. "We simply can't stand the loss of any member of the crew!"

"There's a hat!" cried Dan, a few moments later. "Can you make it out, sir."

Dalzell was pointing further down the bay.

"A cap, yes," called Dave, striking out lustily for the spot. "But I don't see any head there. Watch, all of you, and give me a hail if you see Mr. Page's head show up anywhere."

Midshipman Farley was in agony over the thought of the loss of his roommate. Yet Farley was at this time engaged in standing by a less-skilled swimmer.

"That looks like a face, fifteen yards west from the cap!" shouted one of the crew.

Dave Darrin made the greatest spring, he could up out of the water. It gave him a chance for a better view.

"I see the face!" he roared back. "Look after yourselves. I'll get in close to Mr. Page."

Dave swam as he had never done before, taking swift yet long, powerful strokes. He reached the spot, only to see what he had taken for a face sink slowly below the surface.

"That must be the second time going down!" throbbed Darrin, with a feeling of horror.

More powerfully than ever he surged forward. He was too late to catch another glimpse of the white face. But he had noted the point at which it had sunk.

Taking a breath, Darrin took a dive downward, duck fashion. Holding his breath, he went below, his eyes wide open, seeking as best he could.

Down where the light of day reached him poorly Darrin caught sight of something floating slowly past. It might have been a fish, for all the sense of shape that reached Dave.

With an inward prayer the young crew captain surged downward and forward. He grappled with---something---then fought his way the surface, holding that something tightly.

As they shot above the water Darrin's blood danced for joy.

It was Page---"good old Page!"---whom he had brought to the top.

"Got him safe?" bellowed Farley, over the water.

Dave was too winded to answer. He thrust one hand above his head, waving it joyfully. Then he let the hand fall that he might better attend to his work.

For a few moments they floated there. The nearest of the sailing cutters was now nearing the victims of the wreck.

The boat, however, would reach Darrin last of all.

While Darrin watched Farley and three others clambering aboard the rescuing boat, the young crew captain trod water, supporting Page at the same time.

Then Page opened his eyes, as though returning from a faint, rather than reviving from a partial drowning.

"Hold me tight!" gasped Page, almost in a whisper. "I'm a fearfully poor swimmer."

"I know," nodded Dave, "but I've got you, and I never let go of a good thing."

Darrin's heart throbbed gratefully. All of the boat crew were accounted for; not a man of his command lost.

Further off he could see Mr. Salisbury and the engineer of the foundered power boat, each held up by a life-preserve.

But, though all of the wrecked middies were afloat, they were as yet by no means safe. Some were so helpless that every man who could keep himself afloat and help another was thus engaged.

Dave, after his strong exertions, found himself rapidly "playing out." If help did not soon reach him he felt that he would be exhausted.

"Can't you help yourself a little more, Mr. Page?" he asked.

Unnoticed by Darrin, Midshipman Page had been slowly relapsing into unconsciousness. In the collision Page had been hit glancingly on the head by the gaff of the falling mainsail.

Page heard Dave's query with a muddled mind. All he grasped was that Darrin was doubtful of his ability to keep them both up.

In an agony of unreasoning, stupefied dread, Midshipman Page swiftly wound both arms around Dave Darrin.

"Here!" commanded the young captain the crew. "Don't do that!"

But Page either did not hear or did not heed. His arms clung more desperately around Dave, binding one of the latter's arms to his body.

"He'll drown both of us!" was the thought that flashed instantly through Midshipman Darrin's mind.

There was no time to think of more. Before he realized that the thing was happening Darrin felt the waters close over his head.

Both midshipmen were going down. While Darrin's mind was fully alive to the situation Page, a gallant fellow at heart, and thoroughly brave, was now unwittingly carrying his comrade down with him to death.

Nor, in the first moments, did any of the other midshipmen note the tragic happening.

It was not long, however, before Dan Dalzell's agonized query shot over the waters:

"Where's grand old Darrin?"

Dan groaned with his helplessness. For Dan was, at that instant, holding up one of the poor swimmers, to leave whom would be to abandon him to death.

CHAPTER XXI

OFFICIAL AND OTHER REPORT

When under the water, and in imminent danger of drowning, seconds count as hours.

If they perished, now, Page would be spared the deep horror of it all, for his mind was already clouded again through his recent injuries.

He retained only consciousness enough to fight like a dying wild beast.

With one of Darrin's arms pinioned Page seemed fighting to get the other in an equal state of helplessness.

Dave fought to free himself. Yet he did not struggle too hard.

"If I free myself abruptly, I may lose Page!" was the thought that rushed through his brain.

To free himself of his comrade in order to get to the surface alone and safe was furthest from the young midshipman's mind.

"It's a tough fix, but I'm going to get Page to the surface, or stay down here with him!" throbbed Dave.

They were near enough to the surface to enable Darrin to see his comrade, though not with much clearness.

Down under the water all forms looked indistinct.

While Darrin struggled cautiously his mind worked fast.

It would have been easy enough to choke Page into insensibility, but that would cause the unreasoning midshipman to open his mouth, insuring his drowning.

Suddenly Dave saw his chance! He made up his mind at once.

Swiftly moving his free hand back, he struck Page on the forehead with his clenched fist.

At that moment, Page began to fight harder to keep them both down.
But Darrin struck him again on the head with his fist.

The injured midshipman now collapsed, senseless.

Cautiously though swiftly Dave freed himself, got a left hand grip on the collar of Page's blouse, and with his right hand struck out for the surface.

His feet aided. With joy Dave saw the water overhead growing lighter and lighter. Then his face shot up into the life-giving air.

Darrin took in a great gulp of it, then turned to make sure that the unconscious Page's mouth was above water.

Close at hand one of the sailboats of the fleet was bearing down upon them.

"There are Mr. Darrin and Mr. Page!" shouted a voice.

Splash! splash! Two classmates were over in the water, swimming superbly toward the exhausted Dave.

"Keep up a moment or two longer, Mr. Darrin!" hailed the voice of Midshipman Hallam encouragingly.

All these young midshipmen were on duty. Therefore, throughout the mishap and its attendant circumstances the ceremonious use of "Mr." had been followed.

"Won't I keep up, though!" thrilled Dave, as he heard the cheering hail.

All but forgetting himself, Dave turned to make sure that Page's mouth was kept above water.

"Let me have Mr. Page!" called out Midshipman Botkin, ranging up alongside and taking charge of Darrin's burden.

"How are you, Mr. Darrin? Enjoy a little help?" queried Midshipman Hallam, throwing out a supporting arm to his classmate.

"I'm nearly all in," confessed Dave, with a ghastly smile.

"But not all in? Good enough! Get hold of my arm, and don't try to do much more than float. They're gathering the men in fast, now."

Two sailboats were now engaged in the work of rescue, and a third was heading for Mr. Salisbury and his engineer.

In almost no time, it seemed, Dave and Page, and their supporters, were hauled into one of the boats.

"Give Mr. Page first aid for the injured--quick!" urged Dave, almost in a whisper. "He has gone close to being drowned."

Hardly had he spoken the words when Darrin's own eyes closed. The strain had been too much for him.

When the steam launches came up, Dave and Page, as well as the other drenched fourth class men, were transferred, and fast time was made back to the dock.

Mr. Salisbury and his engineer were also taken back by steam power. The owner of the launch had a most satisfactory explanation to offer.

He and his engineer had both believed that they had abundant room in which to clear the sailboat. When, at last, they had tried their helm, it was found that the steering gear had broken. There was no way in which to change the course of the motor boat in time. The reversing gear was promptly used, but it was impossible to stop headway and dart back before the collision came.

It was accident, and that was all there was to it. Yet, had it not been for Darrin's prompt judgment, and the cool conduct of some of the members of his crew, there might easily have been some fatalities to report among the midshipmen.

As it was, nothing but Darrin's splendid conduct had saved Midshipman Page from speedy death by drowning.

Dave opened his eyes on his way back to Annapolis. Page, however though he was "pumped dry" of the water that he had involuntarily swallowed, remained in a stupefied condition all the way back.

An ambulance had been signaled for, and was waiting at the dock.

"I don't want to go to hospital, sir," Dave objected weakly.

"You'll come with me, Mr. Darrin," responded the Naval surgeon, without argument. "Of course we can discharge you at any time we find you strong enough for duty."

So Dave was taken to hospital, stripped, rubbed down, put to bed and dosed with hot drinks.

Midshipman Page was put on the cot next to Dave's. Now the surgeons discovered the injury that had been done Page's head by the falling gaff.

Some four hours later Commander Jephson, commandant of midshipmen, came through the hospital, accompanied by Lieutenant Edgecombe, who had been the sailing instructor of the afternoon.

"Good evening, Mr. Darrin," was the commandant's very cordial greeting.

"Good evening, sir."

"Good evening, Mr. Darrin," came from Lieutenant Edgecombe, which greeting Dave also acknowledged.

"The surgeon says, Mr. Darrin, that you a fit to do some talking," continued the commandant.

"I am certain of that, sir," smiled Darrin. "In fact, my only trouble is that the surgeon insists on my staying here tonight."

"Then it is an official order, and can't be dodged," laughed the commandant pleasantly. "But, Mr. Darrin, you were crew captain this afternoon. Lieutenant Edgecombe wishes to secure your official report of the accident. He will reduce it to writing, read it over to you, and then you will sign it."

"Very good, sir," responded Dave briefly.

The Navy lieutenant's questions drew out only the simplest account of the affair. Of all the heavy, swift work he had done for the safety of his crew after the foundering Dave gave only the barest sketch. Lieutenant Edgecombe then wrote down a brief, dry recital of fact, read it over, and Darrin signed it.

During this time the commandant of midshipmen had sat by, a quiet listener.

"Mr. Darrin," said Commander Jephson, at last, "I am obliged to say that, in some respects, your report does not agree with that of members of your crew."

"I have made a truthful statement, sir, just as I recall the incidents of the affair," replied Dave, flushing to the temples.

"Don't jump too speedily at false conclusions, Mr. Darrin," cautioned the commandant. "My remark is founded on the statement, made by other midshipmen of your crew, that you displayed the utmost judgment and coolness, with great bravery added. That you clung to Mr. Page to the last, and even went below with him at the almost certain risk of being drowned yourself."

"You didn't expect me, sir, to include any praise of myself, in my official report?" questioned Darrin.

"You have me there, Mr. Darrin," laughed the commandant, while the lieutenant turned to hide a smile. "I am quite satisfied with your official report, but I wish to ask you some questions, on my own account, about your own experience in rescuing Mr. Page."

This it took some minutes to draw out. Darrin did not balk, nor try to conceal anything, but he had a natural aversion to singing his own praises, and answered questions only sparingly at first. Yet, at last, the commandant succeeded in drawing out a story, bit by bit, that made the old seadog's eyes glisten with pride.

"Mr. Darrin," announced the commandant, "from experience and observation, through a rather long life in the Navy, I am able to state that the kind of courage which enables a man go down in drowning with a comrade, sooner than leave the comrade to his fate, is the highest type of courage known among brave men!"

"You must have been aware, Mr. Darrin," added Lieutenant Edgecombe, "that you were taking at least ninety-nine chances in a hundred of offering up your life."

"Gentlemen," replied Dave, rather restless under so much praise, "I have signed under the Flag, to give my life up for it at any time in the line of duty. Does it make very much difference in which year I turn that life over to the Flag?"

"Edgecombe," said the commandant, rather huskily, as the two officers left the hospital, "I am glad---mighty glad---that we didn't lose Darrin today. We are going to need him in the Navy of tomorrow!"

CHAPTER XXII

THE "BAZOO" MAKES TROUBLE

"Sir, the brigade is formed," reported the brigade adjutant, the next day, as the midshipmen stood in ranks, ready to march into the mess hall.

"Publish the orders," directed the cadet commander.

Then the brigade adjutant rattled off the orders, reading them in a quick monotonous voice.

"For coolness, judgment and remarkable bravery displayed in an accident encounter in the sinking and foundering of a sailboat under his command, which accident was not any way due to his own negligence or incapacity---"

Dave started, then crimsoned, as the brigade adjutant continued reading:

"Midshipman David Darrin, fourth class, is hereby specially commended, and his conduct is offered as an example to all his comrades in the brigade of midshipmen."

A moment later the crisp marching orders rang out, and the brigade was marching in by classes.

Dave's face was still flushed, his blood tingling somewhat. It was pleasing, doubtless, to be thus reviewed in orders, but Dave was not unduly elated.

In the Navy, though courage may sometimes be mentioned in orders, not much fuss is made over it. All officers and men in the Navy are expected to be brave, as a matter of course and of training.

Dan, in fact, was more pleased over that one paragraph in orders than was his chum.

"Of course everyone in the Navy must brave," thought Dalzell, to himself. "But old Dave will always be one of the leaders in that line."

In accordance with custom a copy of the order giving Darrin special commendation was mailed to his father, as one who had a right to know and to be proud of his son's record at the Naval Academy.

Not a doubt was there that the senior Darrin was proud! So many of the elder Darrin's friends were favored with a glimpse of the official communication received from Annapolis that the editor of the Gridley "Blade," heard of it. Mr. Pollock asked the privilege of making a copy of the official communication, which contained a copy of the paragraph in orders.

Mr. Pollock, however, was not contented with publishing merely a copy of the official communication from the Naval Academy authorities. The editor printed a column and a half, in all reminding his readers that Midshipman Darrin was one of a recently famous sextette of Gridley High School athletes who had been famous as Dick & Co. Not only did Dave receive a flattering amount of praise in print. Dan came in for a lot of pleasant notice also.

Dave received a marked copy of that issue of the "Blade." He fairly shivered as he read through that column and a half.

"Danny boy," shuddered Darrin, passing the "Blade" over to his roommate, "read this awful stuff. Then help me to destroy this paper!"

Dan Dalzell read the column and a half, and reddened, grinning in a sickly sort of way.

"Just awful, isn't it?" demanded Midshipman Dalzell.

"Awful?" muttered Darrin uneasily. "Why that doesn't begin to describe it. If any upper class man should see that paper---"

"He won't see this copy," proclaimed Dan, beginning to tear the offending issue of the "Blade" into small bits.

In the parlance of Annapolis the newspaper from a midshipman's home town is known as the "Bazoo." Now, the "Bazoo" has an average inclination to print very flattering remarks about the local representative at Annapolis. While the home editor always means this as pleasant service, the detection of flattering articles by any upper class man at Annapolis always means unpleasant times for the poor plebe who has been thus honored in the columns of the "Bazoo."

The torn bits of the Gridley "Blade" were carefully disposed of, but Dave still shivered. Through a clipping agency, or in some other mysterious way, upper class men frequently get hold of the "Bazoo."

Four days passed, and nothing happened out of the usual.

On the evening of the fifth day, just after the release bell had rung, there was a brief knock at the door. Then that barrier flew open.

Midshipmen Jones, Hulburt and Heath of the second class filed gravely into the room, followed by Midshipmen Healy, Brooks, Denton, Trotter and Paulson of the third class.

Dave and Dan quickly rose to their feet, standing at attention facing their visitors.

With a tragic air, as if he were an executioner present in his official capacity, Youngster Paulson held out a folded newspaper.

"Mister," he ordered Darrin, "receive this foul sheet. Unfold it, mister. Now, mister, what depraved sheet do you hold in your hands?"

"The Gridley 'Blade', sir," replied Darrin, his face crimsoning.

"The---*what*, mister?"

"Pardon me, sir---the Gridley 'Bazoo.'"

"Have you seen another copy of the 'Bazoo' lately, mister?"

"Yes, sir," admitted Dave, his face growing still redder.

"Ah! He saw it---and still he did not die of shame!" murmured Second Class Man Jones.

"Shocking depravity!" groaned Midshipman Hurlburt.

"Since you have already scanned the 'Bazoo,'" resumed Midshipman Paulson, "you will have no difficulty in finding the page, mister, on which the editor of the 'Bazoo' sings his silly praise of you. Turn to that page, mister."

Dave further unfolded the paper, coming to the page on which the fearful article was printed. As he glanced at it Dave saw that the article had been marked in blue pencil, and many of the paragraphs numbered.

"Since you admit having read the 'Bazoo's' infamous article, mister," continued Midshipman Paulson, "tell us whether any of the scurrilous charges therein are true?"

"The quotation from the official report, sir, being correct as a copy, is bound to be true---"

"Official reports at the Naval Academy are always true," retorted Paulson severely. "Proceed, sir, to the comments which the ink-slinger of the 'Bazoo' has made concerning you. Mister, read the paragraph numbered 'one.'"

In a voice that shook a trifle Dave read:

"Dave Darrin is, beyond any question or cavil, one of the brightest, smartest, bravest and most popular boys who ever went forth into the world as a true son of old Gridley."

"Mister," declared Paulson, "you may gloss over some of the slander in those words by singing them to the tune of 'Yankee Doodle.'"

Dave flushed. There was a momentary flash in his eyes. Dan, watching his chum covertly, was briefly certain that Darrin was going to balk. Perhaps he would even fight.

True hazing, however, does not aim at cruelty, but at teaching a new man to obey, no matter how absurd the order.

In another moment the grim lines around the corners of Dave's mouth softened to a grin.

"Wipe off that ha-ha look, mister!" warned Youngster Paulson.

"I'll sing, gentlemen, if you think you can stand it," Dave promised.

"You'll sing, mister, because you've been ordered to do so," reported Paulson as master of ceremonies. "Now, then, let us have that paragraph to the air of 'Yankee Doodle.'"

Dave obeyed. To do him justice, he sang the best that he knew how, but that wasn't saying much for quality. Dave had a good voice for a leader of men, but a poor one for a singer.

Somehow, he got through the ordeal.

"Now, cast your eye on the paragraph marked as number two," directed Mr. Paulson. "Mister, the 'Bazoo' in your left hand. Thrust your right hand in under the front of your blouse and strike the attitude popularly ascribed to Daniel Webster. No comedy, either, mister; give us a serious impersonation, sir!"

This was surely rubbing it in, but Dave gave his best in attitude and pose.

"Effective!" murmured Midshipman Jones. "Very!"

"Superb!" voiced Mr. Hurlburt.

"Now, for the declamation, mister, of paragraph number two," commanded Youngster Paulson.

In a deep voice, and with a ring that was meant to be convincing,
Dave read the paragraph:

"Since a school consists of pupils as well as of instructors, the brightest student minds may be said to make the life and history of a famous school. It has been so with our justly famous Gridley High School. Mr. Darrin, in the past, has aided in establishing many of the traditions of the famous school that claims him as her own son. The young man's heroism at Annapolis, under the most exacting conditions, will surprise no one who knows either Mr. Darrin or the splendid traditions that he helped establish among the youth of his home town. In the years to come we may look confidently forward to hearing the name of Darrin as one of the most famous among the newer generation of the United States Navy. David Darrin will always be a hero--because he cannot help it."

As Dave, his face flushing more hotly than ever, read through these lines he was conscious of the jeering gaze of the upper class men. He was interrupted, at times, by cries of fervid but mock admiration.

"I feel," announced Mr. Hurlburt, wiping his eyes with his handkerchief, "that I am indeed honored in being one of the humbler students at this great school on which our beloved comrade has shed the luster of his presence."

"It seems almost profane to look at such a young man, except through smoked glasses," protested Midshipman Heath.

"What's your name, mister?" demanded Midshipman Brooks.

"Darrin, sir," Dave answered, with the becoming meekness of a fourth class man.

"Any relative of the Darrin mentioned in the elegy you have just been reading?"

"I hope not, sir," replied Dave, fighting to stifle a grin, though it was a sheepish one.

"Mister," stormed Midshipman Denton, "you are attempting to deceive us!"

Dave gazed meekly but inquiringly at the last speaker.

"You are trying to evade the fact that you are the real Darrin, the identical hero whom the 'Bazoo' so lovingly, so reverently describes. Deceit fills your system, mister! You will stand on your head long enough to let it run out of you."

Midshipman Paulson, though an inveterate "runner" of fourth class men, had some regard for the dangers of overstaying the visit, and kept his left eye on the time.

Darrin, standing on his head, became redder of face than ever, for all the blood in his body seemed to be running downward. At last he became so unsteady that twice his feet slipped along the wall, and he had to return to his attitude of standing on his head.

"Better let up on the beast, Paulson," murmured Midshipman Brooks.

"Yes," agreed Paulson. "The warning bell will go in a minute more. Mister, on your feet!"

Dave promptly returned to normal attitude, standing respectfully at attention.

"Mister," continued Paulson, "you will be allowed to retain this marked copy of the 'Bazoo.' You are warned to keep it out of sight, ordinarily, that none of the discipline officers may find it. But you will continue to refer to it several times daily, until you are sure that you have committed all of the marked paragraphs to heart, so that you can reel them off in song or in declamation. And you will be prepared, at all times, to favor any of the upper class men with these selections, whenever called for. Good night, mister!

"Good night, sir."

Dave returned the salutations of each of the departing visitors. Just as Brooks, the last of the lot, was passing through the doorway, the warning bell before taps sounded.

For a moment Dave Darrin, his face still red, stood behind the closed door, shaking his fist after the departing visitors.

"Why didn't you shake your fist while they were in the room?" asked Dalzell bluntly.

"That would have started a fight, as the least consequence," replied Dave, more soberly.

"A fight, eh?" chuckled Dan. "Dave, I don't know what has come over you lately. There was a time when you didn't mind fights."

"I have fought three times since coming here," Darrin replied soberly.

"And I have fought seven times," retorted Dan.

"Puzzle: Guess which one of us was found the fresher," laughed Darrin.

"I never thought you'd stand anything such as you've endured at Annapolis, without pounding your way through thick ranks of fighters," mused Dalzell aloud. "Dave, I can't fathom your meekness."

"Perhaps it isn't meekness," returned Darrin, wheeling and looking at his chum.

"If it isn't meekness, then what is it? And, Dave, you used to be the hothead, the living firebrand of Dick & Co.!"

"Danny boy, if hazing has lived nearly seventy years at Annapolis, then it's because hazing is a good thing for the seedling Naval officer. I believe in hazing. I believe in being forced to respect and obey my elders. I believe in a fellow having every grain of conceit driven out of him by heroic measures. And that's hazing---long may the practice live and flourish!"

"Why, what good is hazing doing you?" insisted Dalzell.

"It's teaching me how to submit and to obey, and how to forget my own vanity, before I am put in command of other men later on. Danny boy, do you suppose it has cost me no effort to keep my hands at my trousers-seams when I wanted to throw my fists out in front of me? Do you imagine I have just tamely submitted to a lot of abuse because my spirit was broken? Danny, I'm trying to train my spirit, instead of letting it boss me! Many and many a time, when the youngsters have started to guy me unmercifully I've fairly ached to jump in and thrash 'em all. But, instead, I've tried to conquer myself!"

"I reckon you're the same old Dave---improved," murmured Midshipman Dalzell, holding out his hand.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SPECTRE AT THE FIGHT PARTY

"On your head, mister. Now, let us have paragraph number four, with tragic, blank-verse effect."

That was Jennison's command

Brooks manifested a fondness for paragraph number one, to the air of "Yankee Doodle."

Others dropped in on Dave, after release at 9.30, evenings, and called for other paragraph rendered in various ways. He was also overhauled, out of doors, in the brief recreation period after dinner, and made to do various stunts with the unfortunate paragraphs from the "Bazoo."

By the time the first week of this was over Dave Darrin wished most heartily that Mr. Pollock had never founded the Gridley "Blade."

It is rare that second class men take any part in hazing; it is almost unheard of for a first class man to take any really active part in running a plebe.

Midshipman Henley, first class, proved an exception to this rule. Regularly, once a day, he met Darrin and ordered him to sing paragraph number one to the tune of "Yankee Doodle."

If Dave resented any part of the torment, he was especially annoyed by Henley's unusual conduct.

Naval needs brought a strange revenge.

Reports had reached the Navy Department from commanders of warships in commission that many of the graduates of the Naval Academy serving with the fleets did not possess sufficient knowledge of the command of boat crews.

In the past first class men had not been bothered with rowing drills, which they were supposed to have thoroughly mastered earlier in their course.

Acting on word from the Navy Department the superintendent of the Naval Academy had the first class men ordered out for rowing drills. All who showed sufficient skill were released from such drills. The others were sent to drill with the fourth class men.

Four of Dave's boat crew of fourth class men were transferred to another crew, their places being taken by four first class men who had been found sadly deficient in rowing drill.

"Will one of the first class men serve as crew captain, sir?" asked Darrin.

"Certainly not," replied Lieutenant Edgecombe. "You will still keep command of your crew, Mr. Darrin. And you will be expected to see that these first class men are most thoroughly grounded in the boat drill. Do no spare any of them in the least because they are upper class men."

"Very good, sir," Darrin answered, saluting.

Midshipman Henley was one of the four assigned to Dave's crew.

There was a deep scowl on Henley's face when he reported for the first boat drill under a plebe crew captain.

As the boat was pushed off, after the crew had embarked, Darrin was alert only to his duty as the man in charge of the boat.

Before the boat had gone a hundred yard Dave called crisply:

"Number four, handle your oar with more energy and precision!

"Don't get too stiff, mister," growled Midshipman Henley.

Darrin returned the black look coolly.

"Number four, when addressing the crew captain, you will employ the word, 'sir.' And you will pay strict attention to criticisms of your work."

"Beats all how these plebes think they're men!" growled Mr. Henley disgustedly, without looking at Dave.

"No talking in the crew," called Dave

Henley subsided, for he had been trained to habits of obedience. Had the man in command been a member of his own class there would have been no trouble whatever, but Henley resented being at the orders of a fourth class man.

"Number four, you are lounging," rebuked Darrin quietly, but firmly. "Correct your deportment, sir."

Dave gazed so steadily at Midshipman Henley that the latter, though he colored, took a more seamanlike attitude for a while. Bitter thoughts, however, were seething in the mind of this first class man. After a few minutes Henley again struck his improper attitude.

"Mr. Henley, upon your return put yourself on the report for taking an unseamanlike attitude after having been once corrected," directed Dave, in a businesslike tone.

The hot blood leaped to Henley's face and temples. He opened his mouth, intent upon making a stinging retort.

But Dave was glancing at him so coolly, compellingly, that the older midshipman now realized that he had gone as far as was safe.

During the rest of the drill Mr. Henley performed his work well enough to escape further rebuke.

When the crew was dismissed, however, Henley wore a blacker look than ever as he stalked along to the office of the officer in charge.

Here Henley picked up one of the report blanks, filled it out as briefly as possible, and signed his name, next turning in the report.

Immediately after supper that night, and before the signal sent the midshipmen to their studies, Henley stepped up to Dave.

"Mister, I want a word in private with you."

"Certainly, sir," replied Dave. He was no longer crew captain on duty, but a fourth class man answering a first class man.

Henley conducted Dave out of earshot of any one else before he turned to say, hissing:

"Mister, you used an upstart's privilege of abusing your authority this afternoon."

"I think not, sir," replied Dave quietly.

"You put me on report for no other reason than that I had made you sing extracts from the 'Bazoo,'" charged the first class man.

"That reason or thought never entered my head, sir."

"I say it did!"

"Then I am very sorry to have to reply that you are entirely in error."

"You tell me that I am making a false statement?" demanded Midshipman Henley, more angrily.

"If you choose to consider it in that light, sir."

"Mister, you are touge, ratey, impudent and worthless!" declared Henley hotly.

"Then I infer, sir, that you do not wish to waste any more time upon me?"

"Oh, you will not get off as easily as that," sneered Midshipman Henley. "You are a good-sized fellow, and you have some fourth class reputation as a fighter. We shall not be so badly or unevenly matched, mister, I shall send a friend to inform you that I have called you out."

"Then, sir, your friend will save time by seeking Mr. Dalzell, of the fourth class, who will be informed that he is to represent me."

"Very good, mister."

"That is all you wish to say to me, sir?"

"You may go, mister."

Dave Darrin walked away, his mind full of mighty serious thoughts.

In the first place, for a midshipman to call out another, for reporting him for breach of discipline, is about as serious an offense as a midshipman can ordinarily commit. It insures, if detected, the instant dismissal of the challenger. And the

challenged midshipman, if he accepts, held to be equally guilty. So are the seconds.

In accepting this challenge, which he had done instantly, Dave Darrin well knew that he placed his chances of remaining at the Naval Academy in great peril. He was also aware that he ran Dan's head into equal danger.

Yet tradition and custom would not allow Darrin to dodge the fight thus thrust upon him. It was equally true, that, if he failed to ask Dan to act as his second, he would put a serious slight on his chum.

Dave hurried to Dalzell, who listened with more glee than might have been expected.

"Good enough, David, little giant!" approved Dalzell. "When you meet Henley on the field just close in and pound off the whole of his superstructure!"

"Dan, I'm afraid I'm letting you in for a tough risk."

"You wouldn't be my friend if you kept me out of it," retorted Dalzell significantly.

Rollins proved only too glad to have the privilege of being the other second. He, too, ran a risk of being dismissed, if caught at this fight; but in adventurous youth the love of risk is strong.

The time was set for Saturday evening at 8.30; the place as usual.

Darrin, as usual, was the first principal to show up. He always liked to have plenty of time for stripping, and he also found it to his advantage to look the ground over.

Mr. Bailey, of the second class, was to serve as referee, and Mr. Clafflin, of the second class as time-keeper. It was against custom to have any of the officials from the first class since member of that class was to be one of the principals.

"I wonder what sort of fellow Henley is with his fists," mused Rollins, after they had reached the ground.

"Darrin will find out for you," replied Dan.

"I'm not as afraid of seeing my principal thrashed as I might have been earlier in the year," went on Rollins.

"Hm! Any fellow that thrashes Dave is almost certain to carry away a few mementos himself!"

As soon as Henley and his seconds were seen to be approaching, Dave slipped off his blouse.

Within five minutes after that both men were ready and faced each other. The word was given.

"Now, Mr. Touge," warned Henley, "guard that striking face of yours!"

"Oh, I don't do any striking with my face," retorted Dave dryly. "I do all my killing with my hands."

"Stop that one," urged Henley, feinting cleverly with his left, then following it up with a right hand crusher.

Dave stopped both blows neatly enough, then sidestepped and passed over a fist that grazed Mr. Henley's face.

"I just wanted to find out where your face is," mocked Darrin.

"Talk less and fight more, Mr. Touge!" warned the referee.

"Very good, sir," Dave retorted. "But it's going to be hard on Mr. Henley."

"Bah!" sneered Henley. "Woof!"

The latter exclamation followed when Dave's fist cut Henley's lip a bit. But that indignity stirred the first class man to swifter, keener efforts. He failed to score heavily on the fourth class man, however; but, just before the call time for the first round Henley's nose stopped a blow from Darrin's fist, and first class blood began to flow.

"Mr. Touge is a hard fighter," muttered the time-keeper to the referee, while the seconds attended their men.

"We've plenty of fellows at Annapolis who can punish Darrin," replied Midshipman Bailey.

Time was called for the start-off of the second round. The two principals were intent on their footwork around each other, when there came hail that froze their blood.

"Halt! Remain as you are for inspection!"

It was the voice of Lieutenant Hall, one of the discipline officers, and the fighters and their friends had been caught!

CHAPTER XXIV

CONCLUSION

Blank dismay fell over the whole of the fight party.

Three first class men, two second class men and three members of the fourth class stood on the brink of almost instant dismissal.

It was bitter for all of them, but it seemed especially hard to the first class men, who had survived the four years of hard grilling and were on the eve of graduation.

However, there was no thought of running. Though it was too dark for the discipline officer to have recognized any of them at the distance from which he had hailed them, yet, in a flight, it would be easy enough for Lieutenant Hall, who was an athlete, to catch one or two of them and then the names of all present could be obtained.

It was an instant of utter terror.

Then another voice broke in on the stillness.

"All hands to the fire apparatus! Fire in Bancroft Hall!"

The fight party felt another thrill. If the big Academy building was in danger they must rush to do their share.

The officer's running footsteps were already heard. He had turned and was speeding away.

"Get on your clothes, quickly, you two fellows!" ordered Midshipman Bailey crisply "We've got to turn in with the rest for fast work!"

Just then another figure darted up to them. It turned out to be Midshipman Farley.

"Yes; get on your clothes with some class speed," chuckled Farley. "Lieutenant Hall will be back here with a bunch of watchmen, the marine guard, or any other old crowd, when he finds that he has been lured on the reefs by false signals!"

"Mister, did you give that call of fire?" demanded Midshipman Bailey sternly.

"Yes, sir."

"And there's no fire?"

"None that I know of, sir."

"Mister, what's your name?"

"Farley, sir."

"Then, Farley, sir, come and get hugged."

In truth a lot of fuss was made over that young midshipman within a few seconds.

"It can't do much harm to use you something like a human being and a comrade, anyway," declared Time-keeper Clafflin, as he wrung both of Farley's hands. "Within a few days you'll be a youngster now."

Farley explained that an itching interest in the fight had tempted him to be close at hand, and this had given him his chance to save the fight party.

Darrin and Henley were dressing like lightning, and the others would not flee until the principals were ready to take part in the flight.

"Henley," broke in Midshipman Bailey decisively, "you can't risk your graduation again by resuming this fight at some other time. As far as the mill had gone Mr. Darrin had the best of it. I award the fight to him."

"I'm glad you do, Bailey," replied Henley heartily. "And, as soon as I'm dressed, and my cap is set on square, I'm going to apologize and ask Mr. Darrin to shake hands with me."

"Will you do me a favor, sir?" inquired Dave.

"A dozen," agreed Henley instantly.

"Then, sir, cut the apology and confine it to the hand-shake."

In another moment they were ready for hasty departure. But Dave had to wait for a quick, hearty handclasp from each of the upper class men. Then all divided into three groups, by classes, and thirty seconds later found these midshipmen too far from the scene to be identified with any fight party.

"It was a remarkably good and cheeky piece of work, sir," Lieutenant Hall reported, twenty minutes later, to Commander Jephson, commandant of midshipmen. "I had a fight party right under my hands when that call of fire sounded. It was so natural that I bolted away and lost my party before I discovered that it was a hoax."

"Did you recognize any of the fight party, Mr. Hall?"

"No, sir; I was not close enough, and the night is dark."

"Did you recognize the voice of the man who gave the fire-call?"

"No, sir; at any rate, I believe that the voice was disguised."

"The young men have discovered a new one, and have tried it on you, Mr. Hall."

"I realize that, sir," replied the lieutenant, in a voice of chagrin.

It was now the time of annual examinations, of daily dress parade and the incoming of the first of the hosts of visitors who would be on hand during graduation week.

Of the annual examinations the poor fourth class men thought they had more than their share. Of the dress parades they had their full share. In the graduating exercises they took no part; they were not even present.

"What does a mere fourth class man know about the Navy, anyway?" was the way Midshipman Trotter asked the question.

Twenty-two of the fourth class men stumbled in their annual examinations. These went home promptly. They would not return again, unless their Congressmen reappointed them for another try. In case that happened to any of the young men they would return to take up life with the new fourth class, and would henceforth be known as "bilgers."

A man who has been dropped is a "bilger," whether he comes back or not. A "bilger" is further described as "one who used to be in the game, and is now only on the outside looking in."

Dave Darrin's standing for the year was two-eighty-seven. Dan's was two-eighty-two. Farley and Page came close to that figure.

None of these young men were in the "savvy" section, but all had passed with sufficient credit for the first year.

While the graduating exercises were going on the fourth class men were divided between drills on land and on water.

Dave and Dan were in a squad that marched up from the steam building just in time to catch a distant glimpse of the crowds surging out from the graduating exercises.

Both young men, and probably a lot of others in the same squad throbbed with a swift flash of thought.

As soon as the ranks were broken Dalzell seized his chum's hand, and began wringing it strenuously.

"David, little giant," murmured Dan ecstatically, "we are no longer fourth class men. From the instant that the tail-ender of the old first class received his diploma we became transformed into third class men."

"Yes," smiled Dave. "We're youngsters. That's going some."

"Poor fourth class men!" sighed Dan. "I'm alluding to those who will have to look up to and reverence me as a youngster!"

As soon as the chums had made a shift from their working clothes to the uniform of the day, and had stepped outside, they saw Mr. Henley coming their way, looking wholly proud and happy.

Then, of a sudden, Mr. Henley bent a keen look upon the new youngsters.

Just in the nick of time Dave Darrin recalled one of the regulations to which he had hitherto paid little heed for lack of use.

Graduate midshipmen are entitled to be saluted by mere midshipmen as though they were already officer.

Swiftly Darrin brought his heels together with a click, bringing his hand smartly up to the visor of his uniform cap.

Henley gravely returned the salute with a new sense of existence.

Dan Dalzell caught the drift of the thing just in time, and saluted also.

"May we congratulate you, Mr. Henley?" asked Dave.

"I was hoping that you both would," replied the graduate. "And, one of these days, I may have the pleasure of congratulating you, as an officer, when you first come up over the side to start in with your real sea life."

"I'm thinking, now, of our first taste of sea life," murmured Darrin, a dreamy light coming into his eyes.

"Yes; just as soon as we graduates are gotten out of the way you new youngsters will join the two upper classes on the big battleships and start on your first summer practice cruise."

"I feel as if I couldn't wait," muttered Dan, as Henley moved away.

"You'll have to, however," laughed Dave. "Don't be impatient. Think what a very small insect on shipboard a youngster midshipman is!"

The chums were through with their first year at Annapolis. But, all in a moment, they had entered the next year. Many things befell them on that summer practice cruise, and many more things in the new academic year that followed. But these will be appropriately reserved for the next volume, which will be entitled: "*Dave Darrin's Second Year at Annapolis; Or, Two Midshipmen as Naval Academy 'Youngsters.'*"

Having left the fourth class behind Dave and Dan at last entered fully into the life of the midshipmen. They "counted" now; they were "somebodies," and a host of new and exciting experiences were ahead of them.