EDWARD BEACH

AN ANNAPOLIS FIRST CLASSMAN

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Содержание

CHAPTER I 6
CHAPTER II 16
CHAPTER III 26
CHAPTER IV 33
CHAPTER V 44
CHAPTER VI 55
CHAPTER VII 63
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. 67

Lt. Com Edward L. Beach
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Introduction

This is the fourth and last book of the "Annapolis Series." It has been the purpose of the author faithfully to portray the conditions in which our midshipmen live at the Naval Academy. The training given at Annapolis is regulated by the needs of the Fleet, and the Naval Academy in all of its departments is entirely directed and controlled by seagoing naval officers. After the Fleet's world-encircling cruise, many of the officers attached to it were sent to the Naval Academy to instruct midshipmen in navigation and electricity and gunnery and seamanship.

In the navy it is believed that the officer who is fresh from drilling a twelve-inch turret or a battery of broadside guns at record and battle target practice, should be well qualified to initiate midshipmen in the beginnings of naval gunnery. It is for this reason that the training at Annapolis reflects the needs of the Fleet, and every officer on duty there has either seen recent sea service or is looking forward to an early sea assignment.

Stonewell and Robert Drake by name never existed, but the same thoughts and ambitions that animate them have animated many hundreds of midshipmen; and incidents similar to those

described have happened countless times. From this point of view these stories are true stories. The names of their chief characters may be found in no navy list, but the truth of the Annapolis books does not depend upon that. Stonewell and Robert Drake have actually lived many times, and to-day are living at Annapolis.

The author hopes he has presented in this book and its three predecessors, "An Annapolis Plebe," "An Annapolis Youngster," and "An Annapolis Second Classman," a fair picture of the life of American midshipmen; and not only of the naval atmosphere which surrounds them, but of that inner life which for the time dominates their relations to each other and to the institution made famous as the alma mater of many names illustrious in naval history.

Edward L. Beach,

Lieutenant-Commander, U.S. Navy

CHAPTER I
GLASSFELL, DRAKE AND STONEWELL

"Hello, Stone! Hello, Bob! By George, but I'm glad to see you!"

"Hello, Glass, you old sinner, I can just imagine you've led those dear old aunts of yours a lively life the last two weeks."

"You'll win, Stone, but you ought to get them to tell you about it; ha, ha, ha! the dear old ladies never dropped once."

Explosively enthusiastic greetings were exchanged between three stalwart young men in the Union Station, Chicago, on the twentieth of September, of the year nineteen hundred and something. Passers-by noticed them and smiled, and in approving accents said, "College boys!" All three were tall, broad-shouldered, bronzed in face, and possessed a lithesomeness of movement that betokened health and strength.

Glassfell, Drake and Stonewell were midshipmen on leave from the United States Naval Academy. It was evident that they had met in the Union Station by appointment. Glassfell had just arrived from Wisconsin, and Drake and Stonewell were to leave in two hours for Annapolis.

"You two chaps are martyrs!" exclaimed Glassfell; "here you are giving up ten days of glorious leave just to go and train for

the football team. Now here I am, cheer leader, head yeller, or whatever you call me, far more important than either of you, you'll admit, and I'm not due at Annapolis until October first."

"'Daily News,' last edition," droned a newsboy near by.

"Don't bother me, boy; Chicago news doesn't interest me. Some new sandbagging on Wabash Avenue, I suppose, and nothing else. Get out."

"A fine cruise, wasn't it, Glass?" remarked Robert Drake. "By George! I'd had some troubles on my previous cruises, but this went like clockwork; not a single thing happened to worry me, and I certainly had troubles enough on my plebe and youngster cruises."

"You did indeed, Bob," remarked Stonewell, "but you'll have to admit you were fortunate in the wind up. Now Glass, here – "

"'Daily News,' last edition," was shouted close to their ears.

"Stuff that boy. Put a corn-cob down his throat," said Glassfell with an amused glance at the persistent newsboy. "Say, fellows, wasn't that a good one I worked on old 'I mean to say'? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Which one, Glass?" asked Robert Drake.

"Oh, the best one, the time I hoisted up two red balls to the masthead when he was on watch in charge of the deck, during drill period. And didn't the captain give him the mischief?"

An outburst of wild hilarious laughter greeted this reminiscence, as evidently a very humorous episode was recalled. In seagoing language two red balls means that the ship carrying

them is not under control; and at the time referred to by Glassfell the red balls had no business to be hoisted, and their presence brought down upon Lieutenant-Commander Gettem, nicknamed "I mean to say" by the midshipmen, a wrathful reprimand from his captain.

"That was pretty good, Glass," laughed Stonewell, "but you had to own up, and got sanded well for it."

"'Daily News,' last edition!" screamed a voice interrupting the midshipmen.

"Look here, boy, how many papers have you to sell?" inquired Glassfell.

"Twenty-five, boss; here's yours, and only one cent."

"All right. I'll buy your twenty-five papers and give you twenty-five cents besides if you'll make a hundred yard dash for the outside. Give me your papers; here's fifty cents."

"I'm your man, boss," cried the newsboy, handing over his papers, grabbing the fifty-cent piece and making a tremendous bolt toward the exit.

"He's afraid of a recall," laughed Robert. "Say, Glass, are you going to start a wholesale newspaper business?"

"Let's see what the news of the day is," replied Glassfell, unfolding one of the papers and laying the others down on a seat.

"Here's an alderman up for graft; a bank cashier has gone wrong; hello! My heavens, here's a naval war-ship goes to the bottom with all on board."

"What ship? what ship?" simultaneously cried out Stonewell

and Robert, in affrighted tones.

"The submarine boat 'Holland'! Ha, ha, ha, I got you both that time, didn't I? You chaps will nab any bait that comes along."

All three laughed heartily. "You're an incorrigible wretch," smiled Robert; "I shudder at the idea of spending another year with you at the Academy." But the friendly hug that accompanied these words left no doubt of the affection Robert bore to the jovial Glassfell.

"By George, fellows, here is an interesting item, 'New cadet officers at the Naval – '"

"You don't sell me again to-day, Glass," grinned Robert. "You'll be giving yourself five stripes and Stone a second class buzzard."

"Pick up a paper and read for yourself," cried out Glassfell excitedly. "Farnum gets five stripes!" Glassfell read no further, but with an expression of intense disgust threw the paper down and stamped on it.

Stonewell and Robert were now eagerly reading the paper. "Cadet Commander, commanding the Brigade of Midshipmen, Farnum," read Robert. "Cadet Lieutenant-Commanders, commanding first and second battalions, respectively, Stonewell and Sewall; Cadet Lieutenant and Brigade Adjutant, Ryerson. Cadet Lieutenant, commanding first company, Blair – "

A look of blank astonishment mingled with disdain was to be seen on Robert's face. "Well, Stone," he said, "the officers have done it again, and I guess they can be relied upon to make chumps

of themselves as regularly as they assign the brigade officers. You should be our cadet commander, Stone, our five striper; you know it, every midshipman in the brigade knows it, the officers ought to know it! You are number one man in the class, the leader in Academy athletics, head and shoulders above us all. And here they've picked out a regular 'snide,' a sneak, and have given him the place that belongs to you." Robert spoke passionately; he was intensely disappointed.

"You are entirely wrong about Farnum, Bob," remarked Stonewell quietly; "he's a far better man than you give him credit for. You don't understand Farnum; he'll do credit to his five stripes. I'm entirely satisfied with my four stripes; to be cadet lieutenant-commander is as much as I have any right to expect."

"You know why you don't get five stripes, don't you?" asked Robert vehemently; "it's because you took French leave a year ago, and reported yourself for it! And didn't Farnum jump ship at the same time? Only he didn't get spotted for it. You reported yourself for the purpose of explaining my deliberate neglect of duty last year. You were reduced to ranks as a result and Farnum was then given your position as acting senior cadet officer of the summer detail. If he'd had any sense of fitness he would have reported himself rather than have accepted it; that was only a temporary affair, however, and didn't amount to much; but because of that same report it's outrageous that you should be shoved out of the five stripes you've earned by a man who was equally guilty, but didn't have the manhood to report himself

when you did."

"It's rotten," remarked Glassfell. "Well, Stone, old chap," he continued, "I'm sorry; everybody will be; we all thought you had a cinch on five stripes. But I wouldn't be in Farnum's shoes; everybody will know he is a fake. But as long as they didn't make Stonewell cadet commander I'm rather surprised they didn't give the job to me."

"Look here, Bob," said Stonewell, "I have been hoping you would get three stripes – but I'm sorry not to see you down for anything."

"That's too bad; isn't Bob down for anything?" inquired Glassfell.

"Not even for a second class buzzard, the lowest thing in cadet rank at the Naval Academy," replied Stonewell.

"I'm sorry to hear that," remarked Glassfell, much concerned. "Bob ought to have three stripes, anyway."

"Don't you worry, fellows," said Robert, cheerily, "I haven't expected a thing and am not a bit disappointed. A midshipman cannot live down a 'deliberate neglect of duty' report in one year."

"Yes, Bob, I know, but I had hoped that your conduct at the fire a year ago and that remarkable trip of yours last June would – "

"Now, Stone, please don't; you know that is not to be talked about."

"Of course, but at the same time in spite of that report you ought to get three stripes."

"That's right," commented Glassfell. "The officers only see one side of a midshipman's character; here I am, another martyr to their ignorance; I'm one of the best men in the class, the band master thinks so, and he's the grandest thing I've ever seen at Annapolis; and I'm a private in ranks for another year. But perhaps this report isn't authentic; let's see, the paper says that it is likely that these recommendations will be made to the superintendent by the commandant; the former is away, will not arrive at Annapolis for two days yet – hurrah, I may still get five stripes."

"Stone, I still hope you may command the brigade of midshipmen our last year," said Robert thoughtfully. "This newspaper account does not pretend to be official; it says 'it has leaked out' that the commandant of midshipmen's recommendation of the assignment of cadet officers of the brigade will be so and so. Now the superintendent evidently has not seen these recommendations, so they are not as yet finally decided upon. Probably this newspaper list is correct in the main, but it is not final; the superintendent is away on leave and has not yet acted; he has not even seen the commandant's recommendations. If either the superintendent or the commandant were to know that Farnum had been guilty of the same offense which is now to deprive you of the five stripes you otherwise, by every count, had earned, you would never be set aside in favor of a man equally guilty but not so square. It's shameful, that's what it is."

Robert boiled over with angry thoughts. Strong feelings dominated his expressive features, and it was with difficulty that he controlled himself. His classmate Stonewell was at once his joy and pride, and he loved him with brotherly affection. Stonewell in his studies towered above all of his classmates; he was the leader in athletics, captain of the football team, and captain of the Academy crew. He was class president and his own class and all midshipmen confidently expected he would be cadet commander in his last year at the Naval Academy.

But Robert Drake more than wished for it. Until this moment he had not realized how he longed for it. In the preceding three years at Annapolis Robert had had perhaps more than his own share of troubles, and in them all Stonewell had been to him a mountain of strength and a deep well of affectionate wisdom.

"Farnum for our five striper! Faugh! The thought of it makes me sick! I'll not stand for it," cried Robert.

"How can you help it, Bob?" queried Glassfell, himself much disappointed, though not nearly so vehement as Robert.

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do," almost shouted the latter; "Stone and I will be in Annapolis the day after to-morrow, and I'm going straight to the commandant and convince him that he's made a big bust. That's what I'm going to do!"

"No, you're not, Bob," said Stonewell, quietly, yet determinedly; "you'll do nothing of the kind. The commandant isn't going to give me five stripes just because you want me to have them. You've had some troubles at the Academy, partly due

perhaps to a sort of unrestrained impetuosity. Sometimes you are apt to mix up in matters that other people don't admit concern you. You'll do me more harm than good if you're not careful; and as a friend of mine I demand you do nothing whatever about this matter."

Robert knew that Stonewell meant exactly what he said, yet he could not give in at once. "Look here, Stone," he doggedly maintained, "some one ought to do this, and I'm the man. Why don't you wish me to?"

"I've given you one good reason, Bob, and I'll give you another. It wouldn't be fair to Farnum."

"It wouldn't be fair to Farnum!" ejaculated Robert. "It wouldn't be fair to Farnum," he again repeated, in astonished accents. "Will you please tell me why it would be unfair to that sneak? How could it be unfair to him for me to make a plain statement of facts to the commandant, a statement that would prevent Farnum from being put into a high position which is utterly undeserved?"

"I'll tell you, Bob; to begin with you've made a mistake about Farnum; he's not at all the poor character, the sneak, you think him to be. You don't know him. You've good reason to know how unfair it is to be misunderstood. Your action would be particularly unfair to Farnum because the first thing he will do when he gets to Annapolis will be to go to the commandant and tell him just what you have said you intended doing."

"You've a better opinion of Farnum than I have, Stone,"

rejoined Robert, shortly. "If he does that I'll apologize to him. But if he doesn't – well, he'll have a mighty uncomfortable year, in spite of his five stripes, that's all I've got to say."

CHAPTER II
THE COMMANDANT OF MIDSHIPMEN

Drake and Stonewell reached Washington the next morning, and the following morning took a train bound for Annapolis. They were ahead of the yearly rush of midshipmen returning from September leave; members of the Naval Academy football team are expected to sacrifice part of their precious vacation in order to commence football practice early. Hardly were they aboard their train when a tall, fine-looking young man, of perhaps twenty-one or twenty-two years, approached them. In his hurried glance at Robert and Stonewell one might have seen an expression of pleasure combined with uncertainty, the pleasure when looking at Stonewell, the uncertainty when his gaze rested momentarily upon Robert.

"How do you do, Stonewell?" he said, in a rather precise way, extending his hand to him. "I'm glad to see you and Drake; have you seen any others of the football squad?"

"Hello, Farnum, how are you, old chap? I'm real glad to see you," said Stonewell, heartily. "No, I haven't seen any midshipmen but you yet."

"How are you, Drake?" continued Farnum, rather pointedly, and stood with hand outstretched toward Drake. Apparently the

latter did not see Farnum's hand; he made no effort to take it, but with his own right hand he touched his hat and said: "Hello, Farnum." Farnum's hand dropped to his side, and he said impulsively, "Why won't you shake hands with me, Drake? I would like to be friendly with you, and I don't know why we shouldn't be friends. Perhaps you are thinking of the time when most of us misjudged you, a matter that no one has more regretted than I have."

"Farnum," said Robert, "you remember our second class summer, don't you, when I was reported for deliberate neglect of duty?"

"Surely," answered Farnum.

"And you remember why I neglected my duty? I was on as 'midshipman in charge of floor' when you and Stone and Pete and some others were Frenching, and I left my post so as not to have to report you all."

"I remember that very well indeed," rejoined Farnum; "what of it?"

"Stone and the rest of them, except you, reported themselves for the purpose of helping me out, as much as they could, of the trouble I was in. Stone was broken as acting senior cadet officer, and you, guilty of the same offense, were given his place. I hope you enjoyed it." Robert spoke warmly.

"Look here, Drake, suppose you let me ask you a few questions. When you left your post that night was it to avoid reporting me? Would you have deliberately neglected your duty

for me, or was it to benefit your own particular chums, Stone, Pete and Glass?"

"I'd do more for them than for anybody else at the Academy."

"Of course you would; I'd blame you if you wouldn't. But you wouldn't have done it for me alone, would you?"

"I don't know – I'd got sick of reporting classmates. I hope I won't have to face that question again."

"Drake, I wouldn't either have asked or expected you to do that for me. I didn't report myself because you didn't do it for me; I took my chance and was not reported. It was all right for Stone to report himself if he wanted to. As for being shoved into his position as acting senior cadet officer, that didn't amount to a hill of beans, and you know it. It was a very temporary matter, and it didn't make any difference to Stone or me or you or anybody else. At the same time I don't mind saying that I was sorry at the time I supplanted Stone. I'm also sorry you have seen fit to brood over this matter. I suppose I can get along without your friendship, though I was perfectly sincere in offering you mine."

"Do you know who's going to have five stripes?" asked Robert sharply.

"Why Stone, of course – I haven't seen the stripe list yet, but I don't imagine anybody else will be considered for that job."

Without saying anything more, Robert took a newspaper clipping from his pocket and handed it to Farnum. Stonewell, who had been silent during the talk between his two classmates, now said, offering his hand to the latter, "I congratulate you,

Farnum; I'm sure you'll have a good brigade; you may depend on my helping you to the best of my ability."

Though Farnum was ordinarily a very self-contained young man, his eyes bulged when he saw himself gazetted as cadet commander. He hesitated for a moment, seemingly lost in perturbed thought; then turning to Stonewell, he took his hand and said, "Stone, this is very kind of you," and without another word passed out of the car.

"Bob," said Stonewell rather sharply, "I have a request to make of you, and if you are the friend I take you to be you'll heed it. I want you to drop this matter of five stripes. You'll make a nuisance of yourself and will make me ridiculous. I want you to promise me you will not go around and tell people Farnum shouldn't have five stripes and that I should."

"Stone, I boil over every time I think about it; I can't help it. It just makes me mad to see Farnum smirking and grinning, and usurping the place that belongs to you. But I don't think he'll enjoy his job, feeling in his heart that everybody knows he's an impostor. The idea of his saying to you 'this is very kind of you.' I'm disgusted!"

"Well, Bob, don't think about him, and as you feel so strongly try to avoid talking about the matter. Let's talk of something else. The entire squad should arrive by to-morrow, and we ought to get in some good practice – "

Here Stonewell received a violent interruption. A sudden lurch of the train threw a passing youth right on top of the two

midshipmen. The young man immediately recovered himself and then broke out into a hearty peal of laughter. "I beg your pardon, I'd no idea I was so clumsy. You chaps are going to Annapolis, aren't you? So am I. I'm a midshipman." The speaker seemed to take it for granted that he was both important and interesting. He was full of apparent good nature and friendliness and wanted to talk; he was about nineteen years old, and was tall and strongly built. A great shock of tawny yellow hair surmounted a rather handsome, freckled, healthy face. He had a thick neck and his shoulders were heavy. His appearance betokened great good nature, and there were health, strength and quickness in every movement.

"You don't look like a midshipman," said Robert shortly.

"Oh," said the young man with a laugh, "I've only been one for twenty days; I was sworn in September first, and then got leave, a grandmother died and the estate had to be settled – ha, ha, ha, – any excuse would have done – but I'm going to go back to-day for football. I know something about the game, and expect to make the team from the start. My name is Henry Bligh. What are yours?"

"Young man," said Stonewell, in forbidding tones, "after you've been a midshipman for a while you will notice that other midshipmen are a bit slow in proclaiming who they are to strangers in public places. You are excused."

A blank expression spread itself over Mr. Bligh's face. He looked from Stonewell to Robert. Neither took any further notice

of him, and in a hesitating way he walked to the rear of the car.

"A bit fresh, isn't he, Stone?" smiled Robert.

"Yes, Bob; like you and I were when we first came here, and like most midshipmen are at first. He's a well-built plebe, and looks like good football material. Well, here's old Annapolis once more – what a pleasure it is to get back to the old town."

The train slowed down and stopped and the passengers impatiently crowded to the door, anxious to be off.

"Hello," exclaimed Robert, "Farnum must be in a hurry; he's taken a carriage; I'm glad I'm not in a hurry, for I'm busted, as usual."

Farnum had jumped into a carriage and gave directions to be driven to Bancroft Hall; on his arrival there he went immediately to the commandant.

"I'm glad to see you, Mr. Farnum," said the commandant, greeting him warmly. "I suppose you've come back early for football practice?"

"Yes, sir." Farnum paused for a moment and then began abruptly, "Captain, I have here a list of midshipmen which it is said you are to recommend as cadet officers. I am slated, according to this list, to be cadet commander. I wish permission to speak to you frankly about this."

"Go ahead, Mr. Farnum. Those are the recommendations I shall submit to the superintendent within an hour. The list was not made public by me; it leaked out somehow; but I guess no harm has been done. But it will not be final until the superintendent

approves it. He has just returned from leave, and so has not acted upon it."

"Will you please tell me frankly why I am recommended to be cadet commander, and Mr. Stonewell is not?"

"This is unusual, Mr. Farnum, but as you are recommended for the highest cadet rank I don't mind being perfectly frank. Mr. Stonewell is number one in your class, and in pretty nearly everything at the Academy. The summer cruise officers and the ordnance and seamanship and discipline officers have recommended that he be made cadet commander; and you were recommended pretty nearly unanimously to be the senior cadet lieutenant-commander. But last summer Mr. Stonewell committed a most serious breach of Academy regulations. He took French leave one night."

"Is that the only reason he doesn't get five stripes, sir?"

"Frankly, yes."

"Then, sir, I must report I was also guilty, at the same time, of the same offense. Mr. Stonewell and all the others of the party, except myself, reported themselves for being absent, for the purpose of helping Mr. Drake. I didn't at the time feel called upon to do so, though I have since keenly wished I had. You can see, sir, it will be impossible for me to hold five stripes with any degree of self-respect. My classmates know all the circumstances. I would feel that I was an impostor and my classmates would have contempt for me. I could never have the respect nor exert the moral authority that should go with five

stripes."

"Mr. Farnum, I'm entirely surprised. You should have reported yourself last summer."

"Yes, sir, but as I didn't do so then I must now."

"Of course; however questionable your notions of last summer were your present action is commendable. Well, Mr. Farnum, you will hardly get five stripes, but, I assure you, you have my entire respect. Good-morning, sir," and Farnum was bowed out.

"By George," reflected the commandant, "that young man has a sense of duty; he's pointed right. I shouldn't wonder but what it would be a good thing to call in the leading midshipmen of a class before cadet officers are assigned and talk it over with them. Well, I think the best thing I can do about this list is to recommend Stonewell for the brigade commander and Farnum for command of the first battalion. They will simply shift places and the other recommendations will not be disturbed."

After making this change in the list the commandant left his office and was soon with the superintendent, Rear-Admiral Wentworth. After a cordial greeting and some preliminary talk the commandant, Commander Dalton, said: "Admiral, the most pressing thing I have is to get your approval for the assignment of the cadet officers. I have the recommendations here; I am entirely satisfied we'll have the brigade of midshipmen well officered this year."

"Let me have your list," said the superintendent, reaching out for it. "I see you have recommended Mr. Stonewell for cadet

commander. Hum. I had almost decided to put another young man in that position, but I think I'll let that stand. Farnum and Sewall are to be the cadet lieutenant-commanders. Well, let that go. Ryerson, senior cadet lieutenant; he'll make an ideal brigade adjutant. Pass him; but where does my young friend come in?"

"Who is he, admiral? What's his name?" queried Commander Dalton.

The superintendent did not reply, but read the list over hurriedly, and then said, impatiently, "Why, Dalton, his name doesn't figure here at all, but I can fix that easily; he goes in right after Ryerson, and will be cadet lieutenant, commanding the first company of midshipmen."

The admiral seized a pen, interpolated a name between Ryerson and Blair, and then signed the roster of cadet officers. He handed this to the commandant, saying, "Dalton, Mr. Drake will command the first company; shove everybody after him on your list down a peg."

"Why, admiral," remonstrated the commandant, "Mr. Drake isn't entitled to this; it is true he was unanimously recommended by all but the discipline officers to be cadet lieutenant, but he most deliberately neglected his duty when he was a second classman when on a special detail. He is a very attractive young man, but we cannot forget such a serious blot as that."

The superintendent smiled. "Dalton," he said, "I was here on duty twenty-five years ago, when I was a lieutenant, in the department of seamanship."

"Yes, sir, I well remember your being here, for I was at that time here also, as a midshipman."

"Well, one year I was among those detailed to make the recommendation for new cadet officers. There was one midshipman, high in his class, a splendid fellow, that would have had high cadet office except he was constantly kicking over the regulations. He was the leader of every mad excursion that occurred within these walls; his exuberance of spirits brought him continual trouble. So when we came to make our recommendations we pursed our lips and passed over the midshipman I'm speaking of. We made a mistake I've regretted ever since. Well, that midshipman became an officer that the whole navy ever since has been proud of, and when I was ordered here as superintendent I asked the Navy Department to send him here as commandant. By the way, his name is Dalton."

Commander Dalton became very red in the face, and then in a husky voice much affected said, "Admiral, I'd no idea you had this opinion of me – I can't express my feelings; you have touched them deeply. I am glad Mr. Drake is to be cadet lieutenant. I'll have the list copied and published this afternoon."

CHAPTER III
A HAPPY SURPRISE

Robert and Stonewell spent the first day of their return in getting settled and in seeing the football coaches and talking about the football material of the new fourth class. A number of the regular players had already returned, and the afternoon train brought in about twenty midshipmen who had been in the squad the previous year, all of whom were now eager to commence practice.

"We'll start in to-morrow, fellows, good and hard," said Stonewell; "be on the field at eight in the morning; we'll get the whole fourth class out later, after they've finished their morning drill, and we'll size up and pick out the likely ones and give them a tryout. Come on, Bob, let's go to quarters. Come along with us, Farnum, if you're walking that way."

The three walked toward Bancroft Hall together. "What do you think of the fourth class, Stone?" asked Farnum. "Are there any good men in it?"

"There are indeed, I should say, from just looking at them, but we will know better to-morrow, after we've given them a try on the field. There's a plebe named Bligh who has told me he expects to make the team."

Farnum laughed. "He told me the same thing. I hope he'll

make good; if he does we'll pardon his freshness. What do you hear of West Point? No midshipman now at Annapolis has ever seen the Academy beat West Point at football. George! I do hope we'll win; we ought to, we have twice as many men here as there are at West Point."

"It would seem so. And yet when we had many less midshipmen than there were cadets at West Point we used to beat them right along, and since we have had more West Point has beaten us. You can depend on one thing, both academies will have strong teams this year and both will make strenuous efforts in the great battle to be fought in Philadelphia next fall. I hope you'll make the team this year, Farnum; you tried hard enough last year," added Stonewell kindly.

"I'll get it if desperate work on my part will bring it to me."

Neither Farnum nor Robert addressed remarks directly to one another, and after a while the three midshipmen had reached the steps leading to Bancroft Hall.

"Let's see if there are any new orders posted," suggested Robert, and the three young men directed their steps toward the bulletin-board. In an instant Robert set up a great shout. "Hooray," he cried, "Stonewell has five stripes." Robert had looked no further than the head of the list and was wild with unexpected happiness. Then he suddenly grabbed Farnum by the arm and said: "Stone told me that I wasn't fair to you; that you were a better man than I took you to be; that the first thing you would do when you got to Annapolis would be to go to the

commandant and report yourself for that affair of last summer. Did you do that?"

Farnum looked pleased. "Yes, Drake, I did, but it makes me feel mighty good that Stone thought well enough of me to predict that I would. I'd rather have that confidence on his part than five stripes, any day of the week."

"Farnum, I'm not as wise as old Stone; I apologize to you for my unkind judgment and for not taking your hand in the train. I hope you will forgive me and accept my friendship," and a warm handclasp and a happy reconciliation followed.

"Why don't you chaps read the rest of this list, and see who the remaining cadet officers are?" asked Stonewell.

"They're just the same as in the list we saw published, aren't they?" queried Robert.

"Well, Farnum gets the first battalion – "

"Good, I'm delighted," burst out Robert.

"They've a good man commanding the first company, haven't they?" continued Stonewell.

"Yes, Blair is one of the best men in the class; he'll make a splendid three striper; he – "

"Oh, it isn't Blair; take a look for yourself, Bob."

Robert glanced at the written order assigning the brigade officers.

"Drake, cadet lieutenant, commanding first company."

Robert's heart commenced to thump, the blood rushed to his head and he felt a surging of happiness within that seemed almost

overwhelming. He was like a thirsty man in a desert unexpectedly finding water. Until this moment he had never known how much cadet rank meant to him.

"Oh, Stonewell," he cried, "I can't believe it; isn't it likely to be a mistake?"

"Not a bit of it. The superintendent's name is signed to it. This is better news to me than the five stripes, even," rejoined Stonewell. "Bob, I'm pleased beyond expression."

"I'm delighted, Bob," cried Farnum.

It was indeed a happy trio that congratulated each other and tried to realize their good fortune.

"Come on, Bob," said the practical Stonewell at last, "let's go to our room and straighten it up a bit. Will you come along, Farnum?"

"No, I've my own room to fix up. Bob, old chap, you're my senior three striper, and I'm ever so glad of it," and Farnum's expressive eyes confirmed this feeling.

Once in their room Robert was in no hurry to do anything but talk. Boisterous jubilance exuded from his every movement and every expression. "Stone, the first company is going to win the flag this year," he suddenly exclaimed. "We're going to have the best drilled, the best all around company of the brigade. Just keep your eye on the first company this year, old fellow."

"Bully for you, Bob, I believe you'll win it," replied Stonewell. "Now I wonder," he continued with a laugh, "if you have already decided which pretty girl you will ask to present the flag to your

company after you have won it."

Robert's face reddened, and then he said, smiling happily, "We'll talk about that later."

The young men now busied themselves in unpacking their trunks and stowing their clothes in their wardrobes, placing aside their civilian clothing to be sent to the basement. After this was finished they commenced to talk. "This is a fine room, Stone," commented Robert. "Here, out of this window, is Chesapeake Bay, and from the other we can look over at the Armory across the lawns, and into the city of Annapolis. I tell you, it's worth while to room with the five striper. And it's worth while to be a five striper, too. You can visit during study hours, you can come and go as you please; no officer would ever think of questioning the cadet commander. You'll have a good brigade, Stone; discipline here depends pretty much on the cadet officers, and every one of us will do his level best that your brigade shall be the best of our time."

"That's right, Bob, we'll all do our best. We'll try to make every man feel that what he does is important. If all the units are earnest the grand result is bound to be satisfactory."

"Stone, you and I are the best of friends, aren't we?"

"That's been my idea, Bob, for several years."

"Well, I've been thinking it's surprising that in spite of our intimate friendship I should know so little of your family; you know all about mine."

"Why, Bob, what's put that into your head. You've been to

my home in Chicago and have met my people – and they think everything of you."

"Well, it just came over me that you never speak of them. Do you remember three years ago, at about this time, how you Frenched from the 'Santee' and how I followed you out into Annapolis, and how Captain Blunt caught us and reported us?"

"I do indeed; pretty hard luck, wasn't it? Say, Captain Blunt is a fine fellow, isn't he? I've just read that his ship, the 'New Orleans,' now on the Asiatic station, is to come home in a few months. I trust his hopeful son will not be bilged by that time; that young man is in constant danger of getting into trouble." Stonewell picked up his cap and continued, "I'm going down the corridor; I'll be back in a little while."

"Hold on, Stone, I want to talk about that time we Frenched. Now I've never asked you any particulars; you told me you had to go out to see a brother who was in some terrible trouble, and you've never said a word about him since – and I've never asked you. Now can't you tell me something about him, Stone? It isn't mere idle curiosity, but you are so much in my thoughts that I can't help but be interested in your brother. Is he like you?"

Stonewell sat down, saying: "Bob, you were very good to me at that time and were most considerate then and have been ever since in not asking questions. I went out that night to see my brother Frank. Frank is entirely unlike me in character, though people say we resemble one another very much in appearance; from his earliest boyhood he has constantly been getting into

scrapes, and some of these have been serious. He is wild and impulsive. Frank wouldn't intentionally do a low or a wrong thing, but has done some crazy acts which have resulted badly.

"Now, the day I Frenched, when you followed me, I had received word that Frank had passed a forged check, and the same day I learned he was hiding in Annapolis; I was beside myself. You see I didn't know but what if it was true. Well, it came out all right. Frank hadn't passed a bad check, but an older man with whom he spent much time had, and Frank's name was brought in. He was badly scared; he was only sixteen at the time, and he came here to me. You see there was no real occasion for his being scared and coming here or for my being so upset. But I didn't know how bad it was and I was nearly crazy until the next morning, when I received word that everything was all right. Still, it isn't a very pleasant recollection, and I have never felt inclined to talk about it. Now, Bob, I think I've answered your question. Do you want to know anything more about Frank?"

"Yes, where is he now?"

"He's a sophomore at Princeton," returned Stonewell.

"Well, you are the greatest fellow, Stone; if I had a brother at Princeton I couldn't help but talk about it; all my friends here would know it."

Stonewell smiled. "Come on, Bob," he said, picking up his cap again. "Let's go out and see what fellows have come back. The entire squad should be here by this time."

CHAPTER IV
ACADEMY LIFE BEGINS

The next morning the returned football squad were all out on the athletic field, and everybody was busy with preliminary practice in passing, kicking, tackling the dummy and running with the ball. At eleven o'clock the entire fourth class were assembled on the field. Each one of these three hundred young men was looked at and questioned as to previous football experience, and about forty of them were advised to come out for practice. Of these forty, ten appeared to be likely candidates and were told to find football uniforms, and to practice for the time being with the squad. The most promising of these ten was Bligh, and this promise did not suffer from excessive modesty on the part of Mr. Bligh.

"Oh, yes, I can play football – a little," he said, with a smile that intended to convey the idea that "the little" was in reality a great deal.

"Where have you played?" asked Stonewell.

"Oh, two years on the University of Minnesota's team, and before that at St. Paul High School," drawled Mr. Bligh.

"What have you played?"

"Quarter, half and end. Look up the 'St. Paul Pioneer Press's' All Northwestern team for last year; I guess you'll find they know

who I am out there, mister."

"We'll give you a chance to show what you can do, Mr. Henry Bligh. Now take a ball and punt for a while."

It wasn't long before Stonewell said: "That fellow knows football; he's a find. We need a good quarter and will try him for it. You can see by the way he handles the ball that he's an old hand at it. But I don't like his manners, though we'll forget that if he plays good football. He's a good deal of a brag."

"Good-morning, Mr. Drake," said a pleasant voice behind Robert. The latter turned around and then enthusiastically cried:

"Hello, Sexton, I'm glad to see you back. I hope you'll make it a go this time. Why have you those togs on?"

"I'm going to try for the squad," replied Sexton.

"Look here, Sexton, take my advice and don't go into football; math comes hard to you, and football takes up a lot of time on one hand and tires you out; makes it hard to study, on the other. Now you don't want to bilge again, and you don't want to take up anything that will interfere with your studies." Sexton had failed in his studies and had been dropped from the Academy in consequence the previous year.

"I want to play," replied Sexton, "and if I get low in my studies and it is known I play football the instructors will help me out; will give me easy subjects and high marks."

"Not unless you're a star player. You'd better give it up, Sexton. Hello, Blunt," Robert continued to another young man who just came up, "so you're out for football, too, are you?"

"You bet, and I'm going to make quarter on the first team, too. Last year's quarter graduated in June, and I'm the boy to take his place."

"Do you see that plebe over there, kicking the ball?" interrupted Stonewell, who, while watching different players, had half listened to the talk going on about him.

"That fellow with a thick bunch of hair, that one who has just kicked?"

"Yes, watch him a bit. He knows the game; he has played quarter on Minnesota's team. You'll have to get up and dust to beat that fellow out of quarter-back."

"Do you think I'm going to let a plebe beat me?" cried out Third Classman Blunt, indignantly. "I'll stand him on his head. I'll – "

"Blunt, leave the football field immediately and turn in your clothes," interposed Stonewell, sharply. "I'll be in my room at half-past seven to-night if you care to discuss with me your future conduct on the football field."

"Mr. Stonewell, I'm not going off the field. I didn't mean anything – I – I – " stammered the dismayed Blunt.

"Is your delay in obeying my order due to ignorance or insubordination?" demanded Stonewell severely. Blunt had been somewhat insolent in his manner to Stonewell, and was being disciplined on the spot.

Without another word Harry Blunt turned and slowly left the field.

"Stone, aren't you a little hard on him?" asked Robert.

"Purposely so, Bob; it's the only kind of treatment he understands. He's an irrepressible youngster, well meaning, but it's best in dealing with him to temper justice with cruelty. He'll be around to-night in a contrite spirit with sincere promises to be good, and to-morrow he'll be on the field again and he'll play for all that's in him. He'll be wild to beat that plebe, and this lesson will be good for him."

Blunt did as Stonewell predicted he would, and was out on the field next day. Two teams were formed and at the end of each day's practice these were lined up against each other and a fierce scrimmage occurred. Robert Drake was put at right end of the first team; opposing him was Farnum. Stonewell played left tackle; Bligh was quarter-back of the first team, Blunt quarter of the second. These positions were subject to constant change, and many midshipmen were tried in different positions. A common spirit animated them. First a winning team must be developed, and a winning team meant but one thing; it meant West Point's defeat. After that each player was anxious either to hold his own place on the first team or by superior playing on the second team to earn a place on the first. Bligh sprang into immediate popularity because he played well from the start. Harry Blunt did not have Bligh's previous experience, but gave promise of developing into a good quarter-back.

Robert Drake found Farnum a formidable opponent. The latter played with an impetuosity and spirit that took no heed of

possible injury, and before October first he was regularly playing on the first team, much to his satisfaction. The midshipmen of the football squad by October first had had much exercise and were pretty well hardened; most of them were old players, and in the first real game, against Lehigh, the Naval Academy team played with a dash and spirit that delighted the hearts of hundreds of midshipmen on the bleachers as well as scores of officers.

By this time everybody, midshipmen and officers, had returned from leave, and in a day Academy life had settled down to its regular routine. One day was allowed the midshipmen to get ready for the year's work, and the next day midshipmen were marching to recitations and drills with monotonous regularity.

The first formation of the brigade was a thrilling moment to Robert Drake. The warning bugle blew and eight hundred midshipmen scampered to their places in ranks, laughing and talking, some in desperate efforts to "beat the bugle." With the last blast of that unmusical instrument came complete quiet; then in front of each of the twelve companies into which the midshipmen were divided was to be seen a young man rapidly calling his company roll; and as names were called vociferous "heres" were to be heard coming from all parts of the long line of midshipmen; when the midshipman in front of the first company on the extreme right had finished calling his roll, he came to an about face, and saluted an impassive midshipman, his company commander, Cadet Lieutenant Drake.

"First company, three absent, sir," reported First Petty Officer

Peters.

"Take your post, sir," ordered his captain, Cadet Lieutenant Drake. First Petty Officer Peters smartly stepped off to the right of the company, Cadet Lieutenant Drake at the same time going to the company's left. Down the line could be heard shouts of different company officers, aligning their companies. And then the midshipmen of the first company heard a ringing order, not too loud, but in a tone that before the end of the year became entirely familiar to them and in which each man learned to have entire trust.

"First company, left step, march. Company halt. Left dress. Back in the centre, up on the right, carry it along, back extreme right. Steady. Front." Each of the twelve companies had been similarly aligned by its cadet lieutenant, and the brigade, stretching along the terrace for over five hundred feet, was now as straight as a taut string.

In front of the brigade, facing it, all alone, stood a tall, erect, manly-looking midshipman, entirely self-possessed, apparently not carried away by the distinguished position he occupied. Triumphant feeling must have had a place in his heart, but of this there was no external evidence.

Such formations as these occur innumerable times in the midshipmen's career; they are held before every meal, before every drill, and on many other occasions; and each time every midshipman at the Academy is accounted for.

Six hundred and sixty-five permanent regulations, besides

special orders, control the lives and actions of each of the eight hundred midshipmen at our national Naval School. There are many officers on duty there for instruction purposes, and a few have special disciplinary duties concerned with the inspection and regulation of the conduct of the midshipmen. But it is only by the effective coöperation of the cadet officers that discipline is maintained. The commandant inspects the midshipmen and their quarters Sunday morning; the lieutenant-commander on duty for the day as "officer-in-charge" makes several inspections during his twenty-four hours' time; but the cadet officers have multifarious disciplinary duties over midshipmen in their control, and as stated, it is the efficient execution of these duties by the cadet officers and the carrying out by them of the commandant's and officer-in-charge's orders, that largely controls the actions and conduct of individual midshipmen.

Robert Drake realized all this; what midshipman does not who has been at the Naval Academy for three years? And now came to him, as comes to all cadet officers, a determination to do his part with all the ability he possessed. He was indeed happy to be cadet lieutenant, and was proud of the three stripes on each sleeve that indicated that rank. As cadet lieutenant he had many daily routine inspections and reports to make and was assisted in these by two cadet officers, a cadet junior lieutenant and a cadet ensign, and by eight petty officers, a number of the latter being second classmen.

"Well, Stone," Robert remarked as they commenced their

studies, "I certainly have a busy eight months cut out for me. Just look at these formidable lessons assigned us for to-morrow. Here are twenty pages in seamanship, and about the same amount in gunnery and in electricity. We've got an awful lot to do this year in steam engineering, and look at those five hundred pages in navigation. Whew! I don't see how we're going to do it well. Then I'm sure to be constantly busy with my company duties; this ought to be enough, but on top of this is an hour and a half's drill each day, and after that, football till it is too dark to see. Jimmini! If we get more than a smattering out of those books I'll be surprised. And you'll be busy too; you're editor of the 'Lucky Bag'[1] and chairman of the hop committee!"

"Yes, we'll have no spare minutes," replied Stonewell. "Let's get to work."

The next morning, as the gunnery recitation commenced, the instructor, Lieutenant Clement, said: "Gentlemen, your theoretical book work has been all planned, and by looking through your ordnance and gunnery books you can see just what it will be. For practical work during winter drill periods we will take torpedo mechanisms apart and put them together, and we'll go aboard the monitor 'Nevada' and study her turret and her guns. In the last of May a crew of first classmen from each company will go out into the bay and will fire at a regulation target with the 'Nevada's' six-pounder guns under the regular

[1] Each year the senior class publishes a book called "The Lucky Bag," which is illustrative of midshipman life.

target practice conditions. Each company six-pounder crew may practice as much as it can find time to with the six-pounder gun in the armory gun shed. The head of the department instructs me to tell you that you are encouraged to make any devices or innovations so long as the gun is in no way disabled, though any suggested change must be submitted to him before firing the gun. The record made in gun-firing is entirely competitive. The crew making the best record will do a good deal toward winning the flag for the company it belongs to; a poor record will certainly defeat any such chance. Now we will proceed to our day's lesson in ballistics. Mr. Drake, take the first problem."

The drill assigned to the first company that afternoon was infantry. The drill call sounded after the last study period was over, and by four o'clock Robert was marching his company across lawns to the drill grounds. He marched them in columns of squads, changing to company front, and felt very important indeed in his position as company commander. Upon arrival at the drill grounds he ordered:

"Company – halt! Unfix bayonets. Stand at ease." Then, sheathing his sword he said: "Fellows, since I've been at the Academy the first company has always been among the best companies of the brigade. I want it to keep its reputation as such this year, and I'm sure you'll all have the same desire. The company had the honor of carrying the brigade colors a year ago, but it lost it last June by a narrow margin. You all know the company that has the best record for the year wins the flag,

and carries it for the next year. The record is made up of many things, excellence in the various drills, excellence in the different forms of athletics, target practice, boat sailing, sharp-shooting, etc. Any man that does well individually in anything adds to his company's multiple and helps just that much. I'm going to do the very best I can to help win the flag for the first company. I take it for granted every one of you is with me and each will do his best for the same purpose. And we may be certain that each of the other eleven companies will do its utmost to win the colors." Bob paused.

"Company attention! Shoulder arms! Rear rank, fourth file, last squad, step to the front."

A diminutive midshipman, seemingly hardly five feet tall, but fat, happy and careless looking, assisted by some vehement whispered advice of the left guide, shambled awkwardly to the front of the company, with his rifle on his right shoulder.

"That chap over there said you meant me, mister," said the small midshipman, in an engaging manner.

"Salute," ordered Cadet Lieutenant Drake, severely.

"Certainly, mister," replied the young man, eagerly taking off his cap and bowing.

"Put on that cap. Don't you know the rifle salute? Have you had any drill? What's your name?"

"Reginald Mumma. These chaps call me Mama's Darling, mister; I wish you'd have it stopped."

"When did you enter the Academy?"

"A month ago, but I've been sick in the hospital; just got out yesterday."

"Third petty officer, fall out of line of file closers. Drill Mr. Mumma as a recruit every day this week, and whenever the company has infantry, till he can take his place in ranks. Squads right, full step, march."

CHAPTER V
A MYSTERIOUS CRY

The football season opened auspiciously for Annapolis. About fifty midshipmen were members of the football squad; these were excused from drills except on two afternoons of the week. Of those selected to play in regular games all were seasoned players, and except Bligh, all had played on the Naval Academy team the previous year. And so Stonewell and Robert and others were quite hopeful.

The head coach was Professor Danton, the field coach Gates, a famous old Yale player.

After several hard games on successive Wednesdays and Saturdays Stonewell was called into special consultation by Danton and Gates.

"Stonewell," began Gates, "I've been watching our team, and I'm convinced we have a fine lot of men here; not only good football players but real trustworthy chaps, men who will keep their promise, whose word can be depended upon."

"We don't want any other kind," replied Stonewell, thinking by Gates' manner that there was something in the wind.

"I've been trying to size up each man's character," continued Gates, "and I've decided to put personal trust in every one of them. But I will exact an individual promise of secrecy from

every member of the squad for something I'm going to give them. The matter is this: I have devised a forward pass which if it isn't expected and is properly executed is practically certain to bring a touch-down to the team that works it. I've sent it to Yale, where it has been tried out in secret practice, and the people there are wild over it. I've told them I wanted to give it to the midshipmen. They don't like that idea, but it's my own play, and I can do so if I wish to. They've asked me, if I give it to the midshipmen, to take every precaution for secrecy and not to use it until after Yale plays Harvard. Annapolis plays West Point the same day that Yale meets Harvard, and you could work the trick against the soldiers. It's a beauty. Now what do you say, Stonewell?"

"We will most certainly agree to secrecy," replied Stonewell, much impressed. "I will get the individual promise you require from every member of the squad to observe entire secrecy about this play, and we'll never practice it except in secret practice and will never play it in a game until we meet West Point. Is that what you require?"

"Yes; I'll give it to you. We'll suppose our men have come down the field and are within an easy place-kick of the goal; we'll then make all preparations apparently for a goal from the field, and turn the play into a forward pass. We'll station our men as follows – " and a lot of technical football talk followed.

Stonewell was delighted. "By George," he said, "that's great! We'll work that on Franklin Field, and we'll certainly make the 'Army blue.' We'll try it to-morrow afternoon. I'll let only the

first team know of it and get your required promise from them, and we'll work it on the unsuspecting second team; we'll have everybody, officers and all, kept away."

"Secret practice" for the football squad was ordered for the next day; at the beginning of the practice the first and second teams were ordered at first to keep in different parts of the field.

"What's up?" queried Harry Blunt, the ambitious quarter-back of the second team, to a group of players about him. "One would think the Only Stonewell had something up his sleeve. Come along, fellows; if we keep up our work of yesterday this team will be the first team before long."

After half an hour's practice the two teams were called together for a scrimmage. Bucking the line, running around the ends and punting were employed until the ball was fifteen yards from the second team's goal and in the possession of the first team. Then quarter-back Bligh gave the regular signal for a goal from the field. The second team knew, of course, the first team's signals, but it did not know that an apparent stumbling in the numbers he called out was a signal that the Gates forward pass was now to be played.

The first team players took their places for a goal from the field, Stonewell, as usual, dropping back, and before the second team players knew what had happened Robert Drake was sitting on the ball between the goal posts.

Everybody was crazy with delight. One would have imagined West Point had been scored upon. The play had worked

perfectly. The squad was now all gathered together and was talked to by Gates and Stonewell; it was evident that Gates was well satisfied that his confidence in the midshipmen was not misplaced.

In the next few weeks this play was repeatedly practiced, and Gates was satisfied that if the midshipmen had the opportunity they would play it successfully on the day of the great West Point game.

It was Stonewell's purpose to develop the team as a whole, not individual star players. As right end Robert became famous among midshipmen for getting down the field promptly under kicks, and for tackling and downing in his tracks the opposing player who caught the ball. The two finds of the season were Bligh and Farnum. The former knew the game and played with intelligent skill. As quarter-back his position was most important and at different critical moments he ran the team with unerring judgment.

Farnum played with desperate valor. His tackling was fierce, and in running with the ball and interfering when one of his own side had it he took every chance. His impetuosity brought him into prominence as a sure ground gainer. In close places the ball was generally given to Stonewell. There was something peculiarly invigorating in Stonewell's personality. When his signal was made there was a penetrating intensity that affected every Annapolis player. The danger was in working him too much.

One Saturday early in November, Annapolis was matched against Bucknell. Bucknell had always been a formidable antagonist of the midshipmen; the year previous it had defeated them. Up to now Annapolis had not lost a game, and the midshipmen were particularly anxious to defeat Bucknell, which on this occasion had brought a stalwart lot of players. They were strong, heavy, and confident. Before the game Stonewell called Farnum aside and said: "Now, old chap, be a little careful of yourself. You are bound to get badly hurt at the rate you are going, and we want you to save yourself for the West Point game. You're going to be given the ball a good deal to-day; Bob Drake is a bit stale, and my knee is bothering me. Now look out for yourself."

"I'll try to remember, Stone," was the reply; "but when I get started I'm not apt to think of anything but the game. But I'll try to be careful."

Bucknell kicked off and Drake caught the ball. He was down the field with a tremendous start, dodging one player, smashing by another, making twenty-five yards before he was downed.

Bligh believed in quick action. The Annapolis team was lined up immediately and in a second the ball was in play. Farnum banged through the line between guard and tackle, making over fifteen yards for Annapolis.

"Take it easy, Farnum," cautioned Stonewell. In an instant Farnum had the ball again and was around the end and speeding for Bucknell's goal. Ten yards before he got there he was brought

to earth with terrific violence, and he lay there still and limp.

On the side lines, leading the cheering, Glassfell was executing all kinds of crazy antics; the midshipmen on the bleachers, full of joy, shouted themselves hoarse. But poor Farnum lay there unheeded, entirely unconscious. And in vain did the appreciative midshipmen shout: "Farnum! Farnum! Farnum!" for that young man was carried off the field on a stretcher without regaining consciousness.

Two more plays, Stonewell carrying the ball, brought a touchdown to Annapolis and Stonewell kicked a goal. This was the only scoring done during the game. In vain did each team hurl itself against the other; all for nothing did prodigies of violence occur. When time was finally called the score stood Annapolis 6, Bucknell 0.

And then thoughts turned to Farnum, now in the Academy sick quarters. When questioned Surgeon Pickron looked grave and said, "Mr. Farnum has had a terrible blow on the head – he has had many recurring spasms ever since – I regard his condition as very serious."

Such news travels fast, and on Saturday night the whole Academy, officers and midshipmen, were much perturbed. Sunday brought no change for the better and Surgeon Pickron advised an operation. Farnum had not regained consciousness. Surgeon Welton, who was in command of the hospital, insisted on delaying, against Dr. Pickron's advice, and on Monday morning everybody was much cheered up by hearing that

Farnum's spasms had ceased and that he had come to himself. It was decided not to perform the operation, though Dr. Pickron believed that a clot of blood had formed and that Farnum's skull should be trephined.

From now on Farnum continued to improve and in two weeks he was discharged from sick quarters and sent back to Bancroft Hall, though it was ordered that he was to play no more football. But it was not the same Farnum. In place of the cheery, wideawake youth who had battled so valiantly against Bucknell, was a slow-moving, hesitating young man. He seemed afraid. The slightest unexpected noise or untoward incident seemed to startle him, sometimes to frighten him badly. "I can't help it, Bob," he said one time, with half a laugh and half a sob; "it's my nerves, I suppose; I'm sure there's something wrong with me; I know I'm acting like a baby, and I guess it will pass after a while; but I can't help it, I can't help it," and then Farnum broke down.

Stonewell, Robert and some of the others had long talks with him. They were all drawn to him and were much concerned. One of Farnum's peculiarities was that he didn't dare to go out at night. The entire first class were now devoted to him. His popularity had come late in his midshipman career, but it was now strong and abiding. And his sufferings were so acute and so constant that he had the warm sympathy of all.

And Academy life went on apace, and Academy life at this period of the year is mostly concerned with football. True, there are study hours and recitations; long hard lessons must be

read over and officers must hear recitations; formations must be attended, drills undergone, and examinations prepared for. This football spirit infected the officers as it did midshipmen. Football was the one topic of conversation, the one purpose in life during this epoch, and those that didn't play shouted vociferous advice, admonition and encouragement from the bleachers.

One Friday night in the middle of November, at five minutes before ten, the bugles in Bancroft Hall rang out their customary discordant warnings that all midshipmen were to repair to their rooms immediately. In five minutes the midshipmen were to be in bed and all lights out. And instantly hundreds of midshipmen rushed through the corridors to get to their own rooms; for they are given the time from nine-thirty, the end of their study period, to ten for visiting.

On this Friday night the midshipmen ran to their rooms as usual at the warning signal. Until the last minute of the allowed time there was to be heard the scurrying of hurried feet resounding through the corridors and a babble of shouting and laughter. Eight hundred midshipmen seemed to have something to say that couldn't keep till the morrow.

Ten o'clock came, and with it complete silence save for the measured tread of cadet officers going from room to room to see the occupants thereof were all in bed. And now sounded forth the clock, with its ominous tick-tock, as though it had been silent all day, and there came the oppressive silence which reigns each night after ten o'clock. So it was this Friday night. Four bells,

indicating ten o'clock, were struck, the lights were put out and a solemn hush was upon the eight hundred occupants of Bancroft Hall.

And then, in the stillness of the night, there arose an awful heart-terrifying shriek. It was plainly in the armory wing and evidently from one of the upper floors. Startled, affrighted midshipmen jumped from their beds and stood in listening attitudes. Again came a cry that permeated every nook and corner of the armory wing, and hundreds of midshipmen listening with painful intensity plainly heard the words:

"Help, help, Stonewell, help; I'm going down, going down, down." The tones were those of one in fearful agony. The midshipmen jumped to the doors of their rooms and into the corridors, all with unspeakable dread in their hearts, waiting for a leader to direct their actions.

Stonewell, rooming on the first floor, dashed into the corridor, followed by Drake.

"Where's that cry?" he demanded in strident tones.

"The top floor, sir," cried little Mr. Mumma, with trembling voice. Up the stairway bounded Stonewell and Robert.

Hardly had this occurred when the cry was again heard. It seemed now to be in the corridor of the third floor, which by this time Stonewell had reached. Stonewell stood perplexed and worried; in a second the fearful scream was again heard, but now evidently from the floor below, the second floor. Stonewell ran to the stairway at one end of the corridor, followed by the other

midshipman. "Where is that cry?" he again demanded of the startled midshipmen standing about, much bewildered.

"It was here a minute ago, right here, right here," replied Harry Blunt. "But what's the matter? what's happened?" he asked. Again they were silenced by the awful cry: "Help, help, Stonewell, save me!" which arose from the floor below. It was twice repeated, each time seeming farther away, and then it ceased entirely. By this time Stonewell and Robert had run down two flights to the ground floor. Midshipmen here had heard the frightful shrieks and many scared faces were to be seen.

"Turn out, everybody; get into ranks. Company officers, muster your companies," shouted Stonewell. "Pass the word to the upper floors, Bob," he called out. "Muster on the first and ground floors," and Robert was off in a flash.

"You have anticipated my orders, Mr. Stonewell," remarked the officer-in-charge. "Make a careful muster; we'll investigate; what do you think it was?"

"I can't imagine, sir; I'm entirely bewildered; the cry was undoubtedly heard at the top of the building, and it was heard later on each floor. I followed it down from the third floor. But nobody came down on the stairways, I'm certain of that, and the cry seemed near the centre of each floor, where no stairway leads down. If it wasn't that I believe everything on earth is explainable I would say it is uncanny."

While Stonewell and the officer-in-charge were talking Bancroft Hall had burst into life. The cries had ceased.

In going along the ground floor Stonewell came across Bligh, half supporting Farnum. The latter was shivering with unconcealed fright.

"What is it, Stonewell?" he half whispered. "Oh, what has happened? Hasn't something dreadful occurred?"

Farnum had the appearance of a sick man. He was agitated in manner, and seemed weak and trembled; without Bligh's assistance he would have fallen.

"Just a joke, old chap," replied Stonewell kindly; "nothing to worry about; but you're sick, I can see that. Man, you have a raging fever!"

"Get to your company, Bligh; I'll take care of Farnum."

Stonewell reported Farnum as being sick, and received permission to take him to sick quarters, at some distance from Bancroft Hall.

The result of the muster was that Bligh and Farnum were reported as not being present but the absence of both was explained, Farnum being sick and Bligh being with him when the latter's company was mustered.

The midshipmen, tremendously interested and impressed, were now waiting to be dismissed. All sorts of conjectures were ventured to explain the mystery, and some had superstitious fears in their hearts. Mr. Henry Bligh listened with a queer expression to a great many theories of this remarkable episode, but offered none himself. But after he was dismissed he chuckled and laughed, being apparently much pleased with something.

CHAPTER VI
THE GATES FORWARD PASS

The commandant was inclined to make little of the incident of that Friday night. "Just a midshipman's joke," he said next morning to the officer-in-charge.

"I don't feel that way at all," replied that officer. "I don't believe anybody could have simulated the horror of those tones. I confess I have no theory about the matter and I'm at an utter loss in attempting to account for the way the cry descended from the upper to the lower floor, for it certainly did do that. It couldn't have been anybody running downstairs, for the midshipmen in charge of floors were at their desks at the foot of the stairways, and they say that nobody except Mr. Stonewell and Mr. Drake came down, and it wasn't either of them."

"Oh, I'll tell you how it was done," said Commander Dalton. "Some jokers got some rubber hose in some way and fixed up a plant to bewilder the officer-in-charge. I can imagine sections of hose were led to the different floors and were triced up overhead and acted as speaking tubes. You didn't think to look overhead, did you?"

"No, I didn't, but I don't think that could be the explanation."

"Perhaps not, but some joking midshipman was at the bottom of it. If it happens again just look overhead."

For several days following Stonewell appeared much preoccupied and was to be seen wandering about the corridors in the central part of the armory wing. Facing the corridors were long lines of midshipmen's rooms; the only communication between the floors were the stairways, two to each floor. Finally Stonewell went to the top floor and after looking about, disappeared into a small doorway leading to the tower, where the ventilating blower was in operation. This was on Wednesday afternoon just after study hours were over. At this time Robert Drake was standing by the stairway of the ground floor, leading to the basement. Harry Blunt came by and said: "Hello, Drake, come along, if you're going to football practice to-day; Stonewell said he wanted us on the field as early as we could get there."

"I'm just waiting for Stone; he's gone up to the fourth floor, and said he would be down directly."

Then to Robert's great surprise, Stonewell came up the stairway from the basement.

"How in the world did you get into the basement?" he exclaimed. "I saw you start for the top of the building and you came out of the bottom. How did you do it?"

"I'll let you know later, Bob," Stonewell said quietly, and Robert knew he didn't care to talk before Blunt. "Come along, fellows."

They started off at a brisk pace; near sick quarters, Stonewell said: "I'm going to drop in to see Farnum; an operation was performed on him Saturday afternoon, and Dr. Pickron said I

might see him to-day. He is getting along finely."

"That's splendid news," exclaimed Robert; "just tell him how sorry we all are that he has been sick."

"May I see Mr. Farnum for a few minutes?" asked Stonewell of Dr. Pickron, in sick quarters.

"Yes, top floor back on the right. Don't stay too long with him."

"Thank you, doctor, I'll only be with him a moment."

Stonewell found Farnum lying in bed with his head bandaged. "Hello, Stone," cried the latter happily, as Stonewell came in, in a different tone of voice than Farnum had had for some weeks. "By George, Stone, I'm feeling a lot better; I've got rid of that miserable feeling I had for such a long time. Dr. Pickron is all right; he cut my head open and I'm going to be well and out in ten days or two weeks. I knew there was something wrong with me, but Dr. Pickron has fixed it all right. I'd been in bad shape ever since that Bucknell game."

"I'm delighted, old fellow," replied Stonewell enthusiastically; "that was a hard bump you got that day, but you're looking ever so much better. Everybody will be awfully glad to hear you are getting along so nicely; the squad, particularly."

"I'm afraid I'll play no more football this year."

"Don't worry about that, Farnum. You played a slashing game, and had much to do in getting that six against Bucknell; but you played too hard, as I was afraid you would. Say, old chap, you were pretty sick the night I brought you over here, weren't you?

Do you remember much about it?"

"I've been worrying about that, Stone; I remember coming over with you, but I'm a good deal bewildered as to what happened before I saw you. I'd been feeling sick all day and turned in early. I went to sleep and had a horrible nightmare; I hate to think about it."

"Where were you when you woke up?"

"That's what has been bothering me. Stone, I found myself in the basement. How in the world I got there, what I was doing, I have no idea. I woke up with the most awful feeling of terror a man ever had, and I didn't know where I was. If it hadn't been that young Bligh was down there I'd have lost my grip; I didn't have much of one as it was. Bligh saw I was in bad shape, and grabbed me and half carried me to the floor above."

"What was Bligh doing there at that time?"

"I don't like to say, Stone; you must remember he did me a good turn."

"Well, I know what he was doing, he was breaking training; I suspected that; I detected the odor of tobacco on him that night, and I've had this same notion before. If I learn that he's breaking training I'll fire him off the team. Do you know, Farnum, I've heard you were seen going up on the fourth floor a little before ten that night. Have you any recollection at all of that, any dream even?"

"None except a most horrible dream; I shudder to think about it. Say, Stone, I hope you won't talk about this; I'd hate to have

the notion get among the fellows that I had been crazy."

"I won't speak of it, old chap, to anybody; but I can tell by your very appearance you're going to have no more trouble. Say, our next game is with the University of Virginia, and after that we play Harvard; by George, I hope we make a good showing. Good-bye, old chap; I'll drop in to see you every day or so until you're back with us."

On his way out Stonewell stopped in to see Dr. Pickron. "Doctor," he said, "Farnum is doing well. What was the operation you performed?"

"We trephined his skull. He received a hard blow on the right side of his head in the Bucknell game; this caused a rupture and resulted in a hemorrhage or blood clot, which was formed between the membranes of the brain and the skull; and there was a slight depression of the skull over this area. I wanted to operate at the time he was first hurt, but the blood clot was mostly absorbed, and apparently Mr. Farnum regained his normal condition. But actually there remained a thickening of the membrane over this area, and this, with the slight depression of the skull, caused a constant pressure. This resulted in a certain form of epilepsy, which was his condition when you brought him over last Friday night."

"Doctor, while in this condition could Mr. Farnum have walked about, unaware of what he was doing, as if he were asleep, and later know nothing about what had happened?"

"Yes, indeed; it's quite likely that very thing happened to Mr.

Farnum."

"Thank you very much, doctor," and Stonewell left and went to the athletic field, where football practice had already commenced.

"Bligh," called out Stonewell sharply, "I believe you've been breaking training. I give you fair warning that if you are caught at it you'll be kicked off the team without ceremony."

Bligh looked uncomfortable and commenced to bluster. "Who says I've broken training; just let me know who it is! Don't I play quarter well enough for you, Mister Stonewell?" he continued sneeringly.

"Blunt can take your place any time," replied Stonewell shortly. "He's playing better every day, and your playing is at a standstill. Now get busy."

"Oh, you're one of the mighty Stonewell's pets," muttered Bligh to Harry Blunt. "Your bootlicking begins to draw interest."

This uncalled for and unexpected insult was too much for Harry Blunt's uncertain temper; full of rage he jumped at Bligh and struck him heavily in the face. The two lads clinched, but were immediately separated, Harry's face aflame with angry indignation, and Bligh furious with mortification. Stonewell called them sternly to time, threatening summarily to dismiss both from the team if they didn't bury their personal differences: nor would he listen to any explanation from either.

"Shut up, both of you, and get to work," he ordered peremptorily.

After this the rivalry between Bligh and Blunt became bitter. Blunt secretly was tremendously encouraged by Stonewell's remark that he could take Bligh's place any time. In the next game, against the University of Virginia, Blunt was put in at quarter, and won golden opinions. Virginia was beaten 10 to 0, and there were many that now openly said: "Blunt is every bit as good as Bligh, and with another season's experience he will be better."

Bligh was aware of this sentiment, and it exasperated his already bitter feeling against his rival; he had much enjoyed the reputation of being the Naval Academy's best quarter-back. He showed this bitterness by a sullen behavior that was evident to everybody and which brought down upon him severe criticism and reprimand. But he did not change.

On the next Wednesday, Annapolis was matched against Harvard. The wearers of the crimson came to the field smiling and confident, but it wasn't long before they commenced to look worried. Annapolis immediately commenced to tear great holes for steady gains through the Harvard line. To the enthusiastic midshipmen on the bleachers it seemed like a regular walk down the field. When ten yards from Harvard's goal, Lumsden, a second classman, took the ball. No one knew just how it happened, but the ball slipped from Lumsden's grasp, and quick as a flash the Harvard captain emerged from the scuffle with the ball under his arm and an apparently clear field before him. Robert Drake downed him on the Annapolis fifteen yard line.

Harvard now tried rushing tactics, but to her dismay could make no headway, and on the third down kicked a goal from the field. From now on Annapolis played with wild desperation. Chances looked bright for them, but without realizing it the team was exhausting itself. Toward the close of the second half Annapolis had the ball seventeen yards from the Harvard goal line, and now Stonewell realized, too late, that his men were exhausted, that Harvard had better staying powers. Twice Stonewell threw the entire strength of his team against Harvard, but the latter stood the shock easily. The midshipmen were worn out. And then on the third down, Stonewell whispered to Bligh, the quarter-back, to try a goal from the field. "Our best and only hope is to tie the score," he said.

Once more the two teams were lined up, Annapolis bracing itself for a final effort, Harvard doggedly determined. And then Bligh gave the signal.

"Thirteen, twenty-one, ninety-seven, forty-six."

"Time, time," called Stonewell, suddenly, running out and holding up his hand. "Blunt, oh, Blunt!" he shouted to the side lines.

"Get off the field, you hound," Stonewell said in tones of contempt to Bligh.

The latter had given the signal for the Gates forward pass.

CHAPTER VII
THE WEST POINT GAME

In another moment, but for Stonewell's quick action, the ball might have been put in play.

All the Naval Academy players instantly realized what Bligh had intended, and every one was intensely angry.

Gates, who had heard the signal, came running out on the field from the side lines; the Harvard players were tremendously surprised and did not know what to make of the commotion among the midshipmen, and the umpire was angrily ordering the midshipmen to play and Gates to get off the field. Short shrift was given to Bligh; the latter's attempted expostulation was cut short, and Stonewell passionately ordered him away. Blunt took his place as quarter. A place-kick was attempted, but was blocked, and time was soon called. The game ended with the score Harvard 3, Annapolis 0.

The midshipmen players ran to their dressing rooms, and much hot and angry talk followed. Some were for reporting Bligh and having him dismissed. Others were for giving him a physical beating; others proposed that he be put into complete "coventry."

"None of this will do, fellows," said Stonewell, after listening to a lot of angry proposals for Mr. Bligh's discomfiture. "Not one of us here will ever speak to the man; that goes as a matter

of course; but we must be very careful to avoid doing anything that will tend to create discussion. Bligh's leaving the field was not understood by anybody but our own players. If he be put in 'coventry' or thrashed or reported or disciplined for what he did to-day the matter might leak out. West Point scouts were present watching our play, and Harvard plays Yale soon. The only thing to do is to keep absolutely mum; in this case the ends of justice and of discipline must give way to football necessities. We must keep faith with our friends of Yale."

"But is such a hound to be permitted to remain a midshipman?" burst out Harry Blunt. "I've been brought up to believe a midshipman could not do a dishonorable thing and remain a midshipman; is Bligh to do a scoundrelly act and not only go unpunished but also to have the secret of it kept by us who would have been disgraced if he had succeeded in his purpose?"

"Just so, Blunt," replied Stonewell. "There's nothing else to do. Should we report Bligh it is quite possible the whole thing would come out, and Gates' forward pass from a fake kick formation would become a matter of common knowledge. We may win the West Point game through it. Yale plays Harvard the same day we play West Point. Each of us must avoid doing a thing in regard to Bligh that will cause comment or discussion. His leaving the field at that time and his being put off the squad is bound to cause talk in the brigade. If anybody asks why, just say he didn't suit, and change the subject."

"That's right," broke in Professor Danton, who had been an

interested listener, "but I just want to add one thing; in the many years I've been here, there have been at different times bad characters entered as midshipmen; but they're invariably found out and dismissed. Mark my words, Mr. Bligh will be no exception – he's undoubtedly a dishonorable character – don't worry about him; he'll not last a year here."

Much discontented grumbling followed, but all realized there was nothing to do except follow Stonewell's directions. As a natural result impotent rage was felt by the midshipmen players against Bligh. In spite of Bligh's dastardly act they were to be powerless to show their contempt for him or their resentment of his conduct, nor could the midshipmen of the brigade be told until after the football season had ended.

"And just think of the brigade giving Bligh the 'four N yell,' fellows, as he left the field," grumbled Harry Blunt.

The members of the team talked of Bligh's conduct rather than of the game in which they had just been defeated. Before the game they had hardly dared to hope for victory against Harvard, and all had now a satisfactory feeling that a good battle had been fought, and that no apology was necessary.

Amongst the midshipmen of Bancroft Hall much enthusiasm was felt for their team, but great surprise was exhibited when at supper Bligh was seen to go to his regular seat in the mess hall instead of going to the training table. It became instantly known that Bligh was off the football squad, and "Why?" was the question asked everywhere.

Bligh was very quiet, and in reply to numerous questions said he could not talk about the matter. Then all knew that he had been dismissed from the squad.

"Pass the word, Pete," said Glassfell to Peters, "that Stone says that no questions are to be asked, and Bligh's leaving the football squad is not to be talked about." It was wonderful how loyally this mandate was observed. It soon got to every midshipman of the brigade and in spite of the intense curiosity that existed every midshipman felt it a duty to the team to carry out Stonewell's wishes.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.