

# TEN MUTINEERS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### "LOFTY" RANKIN AND HIS GRIEVANCE.

**I** HAVE been cheated out of my rights, and my just complaints have been punished as 'rebellious utterances,' and threats against the 'discipline' of the Westbrook Military and Naval Academy. I have been snubbed, insulted, and I don't propose to stand it!"

Cornelius Loftus Rankin—known to the faculty and officers of the Westbrook Academy as Cadet Rankin, and to his intimates as "Lofty" Rankin—was angry. He was so angry that he couldn't sit still, and just now he was pacing back and forth with short turns to the green sward in the rear of the academy grounds, beating the air with his clenched fists, and making himself altogether as picturesque and uncomfortable as a young gentleman ordinarily of pompous demeanor would do.

He had for his only auditor and beholder a stocky youth with a freckled face and dull blue eyes, who sat on a rustic bench near by, propped up on one elbow, with his cap tilted down on his nose and his legs sprawled out in a fashion that suggested the imminent danger of his falling asleep where he sat.

Thaddeus McPherson—Cadet McPherson, of Company B—had been listening to the point-less ravings of the victim of Westbrook discipline for the last half-hour, and as he was a youth easily wearied he had grown very tired of them indeed. He now sat up, and, pushing back his cap, raised one finger and spoke impressively.

"Lofty, don't be an idiot! Because you didn't get a berth on the school-boat, don't go and lose your berth in the barracks and get one in the guard-house. I've been here in this State prison Academy longer than you have, and I've learned to be wise. I've learned that it's no use to bang your head against a stone wall, which is the discipline of the school. If you've got it in your head to do anything to square yourself with the profs, don't swell around so much, I employ you, as a friend. You've learned that you don't do any good to bluster, that you can't bluff the superintendent, and only get a taste of extra duty and a public reprimand when you try it. If you've got any notion of doing anything, I repeat, be foxy!"

Lofty Rankin stopped abruptly, and stood gazing at the speaker with an expression first of surprise and then of commendation. "That's the first bit of wisdom that ever fell from your lips in my presence. I believe, if the truth were really known, that you are wiser than you look."

McPherson mumbled a recognition of this doubtful compliment, and then relapsed into his first attitude of drowsy indolence.

His companion came over and sat down beside him. Lofty was not an ill-looking youth, and just now, his face being flushed a little, and his eyes brightened by the emotions that had lately mastered him, he might have been called good-looking.

He was Thad's remark had implied, comparatively a new recruit in the ranks of the cadets of Westbrook. This was his first year in the school—a year which had now nearly been completed; for it is in early June that this story has its beginning, and with the last of June the school year at Westbrook would come to an end.

With the end of the school year, moreover, a certain important event was to be inaugurated, the announcement of which had been more or less responsible for placing Lofty Rankin in the situation in which we now see him, a proper understanding of which statement can only be conveyed by telling, in as few words as possible, just what the Westbrook Military and Naval Academy was.

To begin, then, the Westbrook Military and Naval Academy was an institution modeled in a general way, though on a much less pretentious scale, naturally, upon those of the West Point and Annapolis schools, and the Westbrook institution embodying all the essential scholastic principles of both. It was a private institution, owned by a stock company, and governed by a board of directors. It had first been established as a military academy, pure and simple, but owing to its location, and to the sort of patronage it drew, it in course of time became a naval school as well.

The school was located on the shore of Little Traverse Bay, an indentation in the Western coast of the lower peninsula of Michigan. This body of water, which is about eight miles long and four miles wide, is a favorite summer resort, and the whole coast line thereabouts is dotted with towns which derive their being in the main from the periodical sojourns of summer visitors.

Of these towns, Petoskey and Spring Harbor are the most pretentious, Petoskey on the southern shore, and Spring Harbor on the northern shore.

The Westbrook Academy occupied four acres of cleared territory in the midst of a pine forest at the head of the bay. From the upper windows of the "barracks," as the cadets called their neat two-storied dormitory at the top of the slope back from the water's edge, a view was to be had of the length and breadth of the bay, and the broad expanse of Lake Michigan beyond. To the right, across a curve in the shore, appeared the town of Spring Harbor. On the left, encoiled by a wooded promontory, stood the village of Petoskey.

The beginning of the school year at West-

brook, made memorable in history by the accession of Cornelius Loftus Rankin to the ranks of the cadets installed there, had witnessed the change in the economy of the institution by which it became a naval as well as a military school.

This was effected by the purchase of a handsome steam yacht, which, in the parlance of the school and of all persons acquainted with the institution, became the "school-boat."

On the school-boat such of the pupils of the academy who should elect to pursue marine studies were to put their theoretical knowledge to the test of a practical application.

Every species of craft on the Great Lakes, it may be remarked, from a twelve-foot dory to the largest liner, is called a "boat." The Venture—which was the distinctive appellation of the academy "school-boat"—was a ninety-foot craft, flush-decked, and rigged in the fashion of a topsail schooner—a rig not often seen on the lakes, where the gaff topsail prevails almost exclusively.

Over and above all else, however, the Venture was a steam vessel. Her engines were of the latest and most approved pattern of that date, and were capable of propelling the craft at an average speed of fourteen miles an hour, which was a sufficiently remarkable fact at that time to make the Venture one of the best known vessels on the lakes.

She had been built at the shipyards at Ma-



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rine City, below Detroit, by a wealthy citizen of the latter place, and was modeled for an extensive cruise on the Atlantic coast—a fact which serves to account for her peculiar make-up, differing as it did, both in build and rig, from any other known craft on these inland seas.

Financial reverses had compelled the Venture's owner to sell his boat, and he was glad to find a purchaser in the directors of the Westbrook Academy, for there was nobody else, probably, in that part of the world that could use such a craft.

A little remodeling of the interior sufficed to transform this gentleman's yacht into a school-boat, with accommodations for a crew of thirty, all told, five of whom were teachers or other attaches of the school.

From where they sat, on the rustic bench in a shady part of the academy grounds, Lofty Rankin and his intimate, Thad McPherson, could look down almost upon the deck of the Venture, as she lay at anchor off the academy wharf, apparently deserted, except for the solitary deck-watch, who was patrolling the deck amidships.

Affairs connected with the Venture that had furnished the animus of Lofty's speech marks the opening of this story. A Lofty's roving glance, as he gazed with a dissatisfied and thoughtful expression of countenance from his seatmate out over the bay, naturally rested upon the yacht, and became fixed there.

His next remark was about the school-boat, and it opened a way to a discussion of matters which will throw whatever additional light may be needed, after the explanations above given, to apprise the reader of what the existing status of affairs in the academy was, and to prepare him for the important episodes that are to follow as a result of it.

## CHAPTER II.

### LOFTY THINKS HE HAS AN IDEA.

**I** SUPPOSE, if there is one thing more than another that I lack, it is discretion," observed Lofty, speaking rather to himself than to his companion. "When anything goes against me, I flare up, and cheat myself of my revenge."

"That has always been the way ever since I have known you," answered McPherson,

with exemplary candor. "You got into trouble the first day you came here, and you've kept a kettle of hot water boiling for yourself most of the time ever since."

"That's because I don't approve of being treated like a slave, and bossed around by funkneys in gold lace and shoulder straps, who are no older nor better than I am," retorted Lofty, rather nettled.

"Well, it's best to keep cool and watch your chances," replied Thad, emphasizing the sentiment with a yawn. "Now, there was that brilliant little scheme of yours for running away. You talked so much about it that the faculty got wind of your intention, and you were overtaken and arrested by an orderly and a squad before you could reach the railroad station at Petoskey."

"As that trip cost me ten demerits and a public reprimand, I'm not likely to forget it."

"Then, when it was given out that, on account of the large number of applications for berths on board of the Venture, places would be granted only according to class record and deportment, you braced up for a few weeks and became a good boy."

"And a lot of good it did me, didn't it? I say they were bound to rule me out, anyway, and I gave it up."

"You'd have got your berth if you hadn't relapsed from grace, as the chaplain puts it," affirmed McPherson.

"I didn't get it, though. When the names of the lucky ones who are to go cruising this

had been the worst-behaved fellow in the school?"

Lofty's air, as he propounded this question, made McPherson laugh again.

"By 'Salisbury,' Lofty meant the superintendent of the academy."

Among the cadets, who composed the coterie generally spoken of by Rankin and McPherson and their ilk, as "our fellows," this was the customary way of alluding to that gentleman among themselves.

"Supposing I had been the worst fellow in the school, ain't I as good today as Dick Brant is?" asked Lofty, with emphasis. "Wasn't Brant the worst fellow in the school, one?"

"He was," assented Thad, retrospectively; "and he was a good friend of mine, then. We're strangers now."

"How did Brant come to be a favorite with the faculty, I'd like to know?" said Lofty, as though he believed he had propounded a "clincher."

"By turning over a new leaf and becoming a good boy," was Thad's pithy response. "No, sir! By favoritism—nothing but favoritism! It is favoritism that rules this school!"

"You don't know the story about Brant, or you wouldn't say that," averred McPherson, in a tone of voice he had not used heretofore, and which made Lofty look hard at him. "You never really did hear the story, did you? No? Well, I'm not surprised. The most of the fellows that are familiar with it have left the academy—graduated, you know. I was to have been graduated, but I lost a year. Brant is taking a post-graduate course—that's how he happens to be back here this year."

"Tell me about it," said Lofty, sitting down again.

"It isn't a long story, but you may be able to pick a moral out of it that will do you good. Brant was the worst fellow in the school in those days—I believe he'd tell you that himself. He was always hatching some plot or other, just like you. He got up a rebellion, and broke away one night and captured a vessel over at Petoskey. We sailed back to the Fox Islands, out yonder, pointing lazily down the bay. We fortified one of the islands, threw up an abatis across a narrow neck of land on the top of a bluff, and pitched camp."

"And Brant concocted this scheme and carried it through?" observed Lofty. "I never gave Brant credit for so much brains and spunk. He seems now just like the rest of the lambs, that run to the fold every time Salisbury or any of the profs are heard to bleat."

"Brant didn't carry the scheme through. We had a gang of town fellows aboard—they had hid in the hold of the schooner—and one night they stole all of our provisions."

It was Lofty's turn now to laugh, and he did not miss the opportunity. "I'm willing to acknowledge that there is a funny side to the story," said McPherson, "but it didn't end funny at all. We had a fight with the villagers, and got the worst of it. They, with the help of two officers from the academy, who happened along just at the right time, took Brant prisoner and made off with our vessel. Then a storm came up, and the vessel was wrecked, and Brant came very near being drowned. One of the funkneys saved his life."

"And then Brant reformed, and became a good boy ever after," said Lofty, with a sneer in his voice. "A very interesting story! But why didn't you reform too? You might have won a berth on board the Venture yourself, if you had."

"I didn't exactly reform, that's a fact," acknowledged McPherson, seriously, "but I didn't get into any more scrapes right away—in fact, that was my last one."

"I took all the nerve out of you, then? I wouldn't let one failure take the nerve out of me, I can tell you. And I'll bet if I had the backing of twenty, or even a dozen, good fellows, I would get up a scheme that would discount Brant's. I would make it a success, too."

"That's just the way Brant used to talk, but he never did succeed. I don't believe that 'schemes' are any good, anyway. You only get brought up with a round turn if you go into them, and get the laugh from everybody in the school."

"But if the scheme did work?" persisted Lofty.

"What scheme?" demanded Thad, sharply. "What are you driving at, Lofty Rankin? I didn't tell you that story about Brant and his failure to get you at work concocting another one like it. Then a storm came up, and so many questions today, anyhow?"

"I was thinking about something that occurred to me just now," was the evasive answer.

"You started in awhile ago to take my advice; you'd better continue to do so. And my advice is, to quit plotting, and do as I do—take things easy, and have as good a time as you can without getting caught at it."

Saying which, McPherson stood up, straightened his cap squarely on his head, and buttoned up his jacket.

The clock in the tower over the barracks had just struck the half-hour, and it was time for them to go to a recitation.

"Come on," said he, moving off. "Aren't you going in to trigonometry?"

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