

BY STEPHEN CRANE.

I.



TAND by!"

Shackles had come down from the bridge of the *Adolphus* and flung this command at three fellow-correspondents who, in the galley, were busy with pencils trying to write something exciting and interesting from four days' quiet cruising. They looked up casually. "What for?" They did not intend to arouse for nothing. Ever since Shackles had heard the men of the navy directing each other to stand by for this thing and that thing, he had used the two words as his pet phrase, and was continually telling his friends to stand by. Sometimes its portentous and emphatic reiteration became highly exasperating, and men were apt to retort sharply: "Well, I *am* standing by, ain't I?" On this occasion they detected that he was serious. "Well, what for?" they repeated. In his answer Shackles was reproachful as well as impressive. "Stand by? Stand by for a Spanish gun-boat!—a Spanish gun-boat in chase! Stand by for *two* Spanish gun-boats—*both* of them in chase!"

The others looked at him for a brief space, and were almost certain that they saw truth written upon his countenance. Whereupon they tumbled out of the galley and galloped up to the bridge. The cook, with a mere inkling of tragedy, was now out on the lower deck, bawling, "What's the matter? What's the matter? What's the matter?" Aft, the grimy head of a stoker was thrust suddenly up through the deck, so to speak. The eyes

flashed in a quick look astern, and then the head vanished. The correspondents were scrambling on the bridge. "Where's my glasses, curse it? Here—let me take a look. Are they Spaniards, captain? Are you sure?"

The skipper of the *Adolphus* was at the wheel. The pilot-house was so arranged that he could not see astern without hanging forth from one of the side windows, but apparently he had made early investigation. He did not reply at once. At sea, he never replied at once to questions. At the very first Shackles had discovered the merits of this deliberate manner, and had taken delight in it. He invariably detailed his talk with the captain to the other correspondents. "Look here. I've just been to see the skipper. I said, 'I would like to put into Cape Haytien.' Then he took a little think. Finally he said, 'All right.' Then I said, 'I suppose we'll need to take on more coal there?' He took another little think. Finally he said, 'Yes.' I said, 'Ever ran into that port before?' He took another little think. Finally he said, 'Yes.' I said, 'Have a cigar?' He took another little think. See? There's where I fooled 'im."

While the correspondents spun the hurried questions at him the captain of the *Adolphus* stood with his brown hands on the wheel and his cold glance aligned straight over the bow of his ship.

"Are they Spanish gun-boats, captain? Are they, captain?"

After a profound pause, he said: "Yes." The four correspondents hastily and in per-

fect time presented their backs to him and fastened their gaze on the pursuing foe. They saw a dull, grey curve of sea going to the feet of the high green and blue coastline of north-eastern Cuba, and on this sea were two miniature ships, with clouds of iron-coloured smoke pouring from their funnels.

One of the correspondents strolled elaborately to the pilot-house. "Aw—captain," he drawled, "do you think they can catch us?"

The captain's glance was still aligned over the bow of his ship. Ultimately he answered, "I don't know."

From the top of the little *Adolphus's* stack thick, dark smoke swept level for a few yards, and then went rolling to leeward in great, hot, obscuring clouds. From time to time the grimy head was thrust through the lower deck, the eyes took the quick look astern, and then the head vanished. The cook was trying to get somebody to listen to him. "Well, you know, hang it all, it won't be no fun to be ketch'd by them Spaniards. By Jove, it won't. . . . Look here, what do you think they'll do to us, hey? Say, I don't like this, you know. I'm blessed if I do." The sea, cut by the hurried bow of the *Adolphus*, flung its waters astern in the formation of a wide angle, and the lines of the angle ruffled and hissed as they fled, while the thumping screw tormented the water at the stern. The frame of the steamer underwent regular convulsions as in the strenuous sobbing of a child.

The mate was standing near the pilot-house. Without looking at him, the captain spoke his name: "Ed!"

"Yes, sir," cried the mate, with alacrity.

The captain reflected for a moment. Then he said, "Are they gainin' on us?"

The mate took another anxious survey of the race. "No—o—yes, I think they are—a little."

After a pause the captain said, "Tell the chief to hook her up more."

The mate, glad of an occupation in these tense minutes, flew down to the engine-room door. "Skipper says hook 'er up more!" he bawled. The head of the chief engineer appeared—a grizzly head, now wet with oil and sweat. "What?" he shouted, angrily. It was as if he had been propelling the ship with his own arms. Now he was told that his best was not good enough. "What? Hook 'er up more? Why, she can't carry another pound, I tell you! Not another ounce! We——" Suddenly he ran forward and climbed to the bridge. "Captain," he cried, in the loud, harsh voice of one who

lived usually amid the thunder of machinery, "she can't do it, sir! By Heaven, she can't! She's turning over now faster than she ever did in her life, and we'll all blow to blazes——"

The low-toned, impassive voice of the captain suddenly checked the chief's clamour. "I'll blow her up," he said, "but I won't get ketch'd if I can help it." Even then the listening correspondents found a second in which to marvel that the captain had actually explained his point of view to another human being.

The engineer stood blank. Then suddenly he cried: "All right, sir!" He threw a hurried look of despair at the correspondents, the deck of the *Adolphus*, the pursuing enemy, Cuba, the sky, and the sea; he vanished in the direction of his post.

A correspondent was suddenly re-gifted with the power of prolonged speech. "Well, you see, the game is up, curse it. See! We can't get out of it. The skipper will blow up the whole bunch before he'll let his ship be taken, and the Spaniards are gaining. Well, that's what comes from going to war in an eight-knot tub." He bitterly accused himself, the others, and the dark, sightless, indifferent world.

This certainty of coming evil affected each one differently. One was made garrulous; one kept absent-mindedly snapping his fingers and gazing at the sea; another stepped nervously to and fro, looking everywhere as if for employment for his mind. As for Shackles, he was silent and smiling, but it was a new smile, that caused the lines about his mouth to betray quivering weakness. And each man looked at the others to discover their degree of fear, and did his best to conceal his own, holding his crackling nerves with all his strength.

As the *Adolphus* rushed on the sun suddenly emerged from behind grey clouds, and its rays dealt titanic blows, so that in a few minutes the sea was a glowing blue plain, with the golden shine dancing at the tips of the waves. The coast of Cuba glowed with light. The pursuers displayed detail after detail in the new atmosphere. The voice of the cook was heard in high vexation. "Am I to git dinner as usual? How do I know? Nobody tells me what to do! Am I to git dinner as usual?"

The mate answered, ferociously: "Of course you are! What do you s'pose? Ain't you the cook, you blessed fool?"

The cook retorted in a mutinous scream: "Well, how would I know? If this ship is goin' to blow up——"

II.

THE captain called from the pilot-house: "Mr. Shackles! Oh, Mr. Shackles!" The correspondent moved hastily to a window. "What is it, captain?" The skipper of the *Adolphus* raised a battered finger and pointed over the bows. "See 'er?" he asked, laconic, but quietly jubilant. Another steamer was smoking at full speed over the sunlit seas. A great billow of pure white was on her bows. "Great Scot!" cried Shackles; "another Spaniard?"

"No," said the captain; "that there is a United States cruiser."



"THAT THERE IS A UNITED STATES CRUISER."

"What?" Shackles was dumfounded into muscular paralysis. "No! Are you sure?"

The captain nodded. "Sure. Take the glass. See her ensign? Two funnels; two masts with fighting-tops. She ought to be the *Chancellorville*."

Shackles choked. "Well, I'm blowed!"

"Ed!" said the captain.

"Yessir!"

"Tell the chief there is no hurry."

Shackles suddenly bethought him of his companions. He dashed to them, and was full of quick scorn of their gloomy faces. "Hi, brace up there! Are you blind? Can't you see her?"

"See what?"

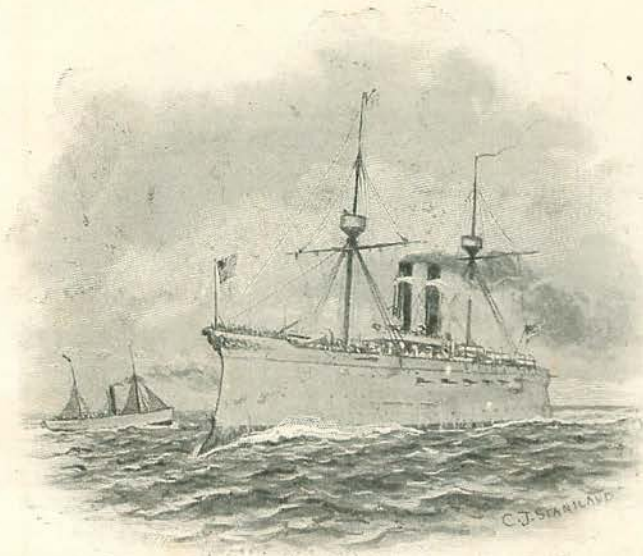
"Why, the *Chancellorville*, you blind mice!" roared Shackles. "See 'er? See 'er? See 'er?"

The others sprang, saw, and collapsed. Shackles was a madman for the purpose of distributing the news. "Cook!" he shrieked. "Don't you see 'er, cook? Good Heaven, man, don't you see 'er?" He ran to the lower deck and howled his information everywhere. Suddenly, the whole ship smiled. Men clapped each other on the shoulder and joyously shouted. The captain thrust his head from the pilot-house to look back at the Spanish ships. Then he looked at the American cruiser. "Now, we'll see," he said, grimly and vindictively, to the mate. "Guess somebody else will do some runnin'." The mate chuckled.

The two gun-boats were still headed hard for the *Adolphus*, and she kept on her way. The American cruiser was coming swiftly. "It's the *Chancellorville*!" cried Shackles. "I know her. We'll see a fight at sea, my boys! A fight at sea!" The enthusiastic correspondents pranced in Indian revels.

The *Chancellorville* — 2,000 tons—18.6 knots—ten 5in. guns—came on tempestuously, sheering the water high with her sharp bow. From her funnels the smoke raced away in driven sheets. She loomed with extraordinary rapidity, like a ship bulging and growing out of the sea. She swept by the *Adolphus* so close that one could have thrown a walnut on board. She was a glistening grey apparition, with a blood-red water-line, with brown gun-muzzles and white-clothed, motionless Jack-tars; and in her rush she was silent, deadly silent. Probably there entered the mind of every man on board of the *Adolphus* a feeling of almost idolatry for this living thing, stern but, to their thought, incomparably beautiful. They would have cheered but that each man seemed to feel that a cheer would be too puny a tribute.

It was at first as if she did not see the *Adolphus*. She was going to pass without heeding this little vagabond of the high seas. But suddenly a megaphone gaped over the rail of her bridge, and a voice was heard, measuredly, calmly intoning: "Halloa—there!



"THE 'CHANCELLORVILLE.'"

Keep—well—to—the—north'ard—and—out of my—way—and I'll—go—in—and—see—what—those—people—want." Then nothing was heard but the swirl of water. In a moment the *Adolphus* was looking at a high grey stern. On the quarter-deck sailors were poised about the breech of the after-pivot gun.

The correspondents were revelling. "Captain," yelled Shackles, "we can't miss this! We must see it!" But the skipper had already flung over the wheel. "Sure," he answered, almost at once, "we can't miss it."

The cook was arrogantly, grossly triumphant. His voice rang on the lower deck. "There, now! How will the Spinachers like that? Now, it's *our* turn! We've been doin' the runnin' away, but now we'll do the chasin'!" Apparently feeling some twinge of nerves from the former strain, he suddenly demanded: "Say, who's got any whisky? I'm near dead for a drink."

When the *Adolphus* came about, she laid her course for a position to the northward of a coming battle, but the situation suddenly became complicated. When the Spanish ships discovered the identity of the ship that was steaming towards them, they did not hesitate over their plan of action. With one accord they turned and ran for port. Laughter arose from the *Adolphus*. The captain broke his orders, and instead of keeping to the northward, he headed in the wake of the impetuous *Chancellorville*. The correspondents crowded on the bow.

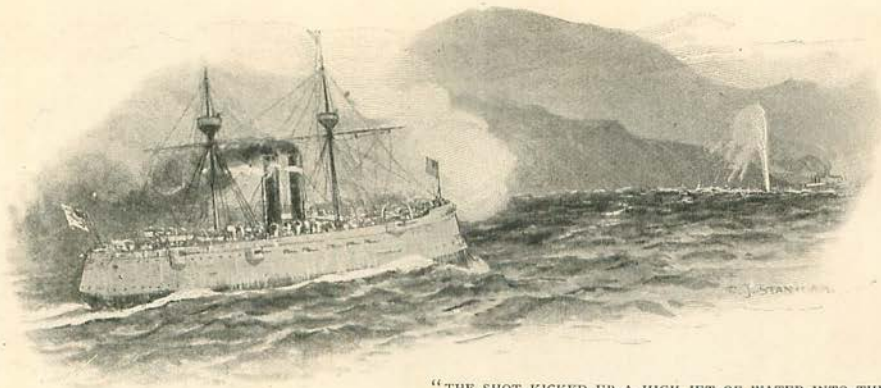
The Spaniards, when their broadsides became visible, were seen to be ships of no importance—mere little gun-boats for work in the shallows at the back of the reefs; and it was certainly discreet to refuse encounter with the five-inch guns of the *Chancellorville*. But the joyful *Adolphus* took no account of this discretion. The pursuit of the Spaniards had been so ferocious that the quick change to heels-over-head flight filled that corner of the mind which is devoted to the spirit of revenge. It was this that moved Shackles to yell taunts futilely at the far-away ships. "Well, how do you

like it, eh? How do you like it?" The *Adolphus* was drinking compensation for her previous agony.

The mountains of the shore now shadowed high into the sky, and the square white houses of a town could be seen near a vague cleft which seemed to mark the entrance to a port. The gun-boats were now near to it.

Suddenly white smoke streamed from the bow of the *Chancellorville*, and developed swiftly into a great bulb which drifted in fragments down the wind. Presently the deep-throated boom of the gun came to the ears on board the *Adolphus*. The shot kicked up a high jet of water into the air astern of the last gun-boat. The black smoke from the funnels of the cruiser made her look like a collier on fire, and in her desperation she tried many more long shots, but presently the *Adolphus*, murmuring disappointment, saw the *Chancellorville* sheer from the chase.

In time they came up with her, and she was an indignant ship. Gloom and wrath were on the fore-castle, and wrath and gloom were on the quarter-deck. A sad voice from the bridge said: "Just missed 'em." Shackles gained permission to board the cruiser, and in the cabin he talked to Commander Surrey, tall, bald-headed, and angry. "Shoals," said the captain of the *Chancellorville*. "I can't go any nearer, and those gun-boats could steam along a stone side-walk if only it was wet." Then his bright eyes became brighter. "I tell you what! The *Chicken*, the *Holy*



“THE SHOT KICKED UP A HIGH JET OF WATER INTO THE AIR.”

Moses, and the *Mongolian* are on station off Nuevitas. If you will do me a favour—why, to-morrow I will give those people a game!”

III.

THE *Chancellorville* lay all night watching off the port of the two gun-boats, and, soon after daylight, the lookout descried three smokes to the westward, and they were later made out to be the *Chicken*, the *Holy Moses*, and the *Adolphus*, the latter tagging hurriedly after the United States vessels.

The *Chicken* had been a harbour tug, but she was now the U.S.S. *Chicken*, by your leave. She carried a six-pounder forward and a six-pounder aft, and her main point was her conspicuous vulnerability. The *Holy Moses* had been the private yacht of a Philadelphia millionaire. She carried six six-pounders, and her main point was the chaste beauty of the officers' quarters.

On the bridge of the *Chancellorville* Commander Surrey surveyed his squadron with considerable satisfaction. Presently he signalled to the lieutenant who commanded the *Holy Moses* and to the boatswain who commanded the *Chicken* to come aboard the flag-ship. This was all very well for the captain of the yacht, but it was not so easy for the captain of the tug-boat, who had two heavy lifeboats swung 15ft. above the water. He had been accustomed to talking with senior officers from his own pilot-house through the intercession of the blessed megaphone. However, he got a lifeboat over-side, and was pulled to the *Chancellorville* by three men—which cut his crew almost into halves.

In the cabin of the *Chancellorville* Surrey disclosed to his two captains his desires concerning the Spanish gun-boats, and they were glad of being ordered down from the Nuevitas station, where life was very dull. He also announced that there was a shore battery

containing, he believed, four field guns—three-point-twos. His draught—he spoke of it as *his* draught—would enable him to go in close enough to engage the battery at moderate range, but he pointed out that the main parts of the attempt to destroy the Spanish gun-boats must be left to the *Holy Moses* and the *Chicken*. His business, he thought, could only be to keep the air so singing about the ears of the battery, that the men at the guns would be unable to take an interest in the dash of the smaller American craft into the bay.

The officers spoke in their turns. The captain of the *Chicken* announced that he saw no difficulties. The squadron would follow the senior officer's ship in line ahead, the senior officer's ship would engage the batteries as soon as possible, she would turn to starboard when the depth of water forced her to do so, and the *Holy Moses* and the *Chicken* would run past her into the bay and fight the Spanish ships wherever they were to be found. The captain of the *Holy Moses*, after some moments of dignified thought, said that he had no suggestions to make that would better this plan.

Surrey pressed an electric bell; a marine orderly appeared; he was sent with a message. The message brought the executive officer and the navigating officer of the *Chancellorville* to the cabin, and the five men nosed over a chart.

In the end Surrey declared that he had made up his mind, and the juniors remained in expectant silence for three minutes while he stared at the bulkhead. Then he said that the plan of the *Chicken's* commander seemed to him correct in the main. He would make one change. It was that he should first steam in and engage the battery, and the other vessels should remain in their present positions until he signalled them to



"A MARINE ORDERLY APPEARED."

forget to come out all right."

When the captains of the *Holy Moses* and the *Chicken* came upon deck they strode it with a new step. They were proud men. The marine on duty above their boats looked at them curiously and with awe. He detected something which meant action, conflict. The boats' crews saw it also. As they pulled their steady stroke they studied fleetingly the face of the officer in the stern-sheets.

run into the bay. If the squadron steamed ahead in line, the battery could, if it chose, divide its fire between the S.O.P.'s ship and the vessels constituting the more important attack. He had no doubt, he said, that he could soon silence the battery by tumbling the earthworks on to the guns and driving away the men, even if he did not succeed in hitting the pieces. Of course, he had no doubt of being able to silence the battery in twenty minutes. Then he would signal for the *Holy Moses* and the *Chicken* to make their rush, and of course he would support them with his fire as much as conditions enabled him. He arose then, indicating that the conference was at an end. The boatswain, who captained the *Chicken*, looked uncomfortable for a moment and then withdrew. He was not used to this cabin. In the few moments more the four men remained in the cabin the talk changed its character completely. It was now unofficial, and the sharp badinage concealed furtive affections, academy friendships, the feelings of old-time shipmates, hiding everything under a veil of jokes. "Well, good luck to you, old boy! Don't get that valuable packet of yours sunk under you. Think how it would weaken the navy. Would you mind buying me three pairs of pyjamas in the town yonder? If your engines get disabled, tote her under your arm. You can do it. Good-bye, old man, don't

In both cases they perceived a glad man, and yet a man filled with a profound consideration of the future.

IV.

"BEAT to quarters!"

Bugles and drums stirred the decks of the *Chancellorville*. There was the noise of rushing feet, a clanging of scuttle-plates, a rattling of ammunition hoists, followed directly by the sinister, deep note of locking breech-plugs. As the cruiser turned her bow toward the shore she happened to steam near the *Adolphus*. The usual calm voice hailed the despatch-boat: "Keep—that—gauze under-shirt of yours—well—out of the—line of fire."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

The cruiser then moved slowly toward the shore, watched by every eye in the smaller American vessels. She was deliberate and steady, and this was reasonable, even to the impatience of the other craft, because the wooded shore was likely to suddenly develop new factors. Slowly she swung to starboard, smoke belched over her, and the roar of a gun came along the water.

The battery was indicated by a long, thin streak of yellow earth. The first shot went high, ploughing the chaparral on the hill-side. The *Chancellorville* wore an air for a moment of being deep in meditation. She flung another shell, which landed squarely on the earthwork, making a great dun cloud. Before

the smoke had settled there was a crimson flash from the battery. To the watchers at sea it was smaller than a needle. The shot made a geyser of crystal water, four hundred yards from the *Chancellorville*.

The cruiser, having made up her mind, suddenly went at the battery hammer and tongs. She moved to and fro casually, but the thunder of her guns was swift and angry. Sometimes she was quite hidden in her own smoke, but with exceeding regularity the earth of the battery spurted into the air. The Spanish shells for the most part went high and wide of the cruiser, jetting the water far away.

Once a Spanish gunner took a festive side-show chance at the waiting group of three ships. It went like a flash over the *Adolphus*, singing a wistful, metallic note. Whereupon the *Adolphus* broke hurriedly for the open sea, and men on the *Holy Moses* and the *Chicken* laughed hoarsely and cruelly. The correspondents had been standing excitedly on top of the pilot-house, but at the passing of the shell they promptly eliminated themselves by dropping with a thud to the deck below. The cook again was giving tongue. "Oh, say, this won't do! I'm cursed if it will! We ain't no armoured cruiser, you know. If one of them shells hits us—well, we finish right there. 'Taint like as if it was our *business*, foolin' 'round within the range of them guns. There's no sense in it. Them other fellows don't seem to mind it, but it's their *business*. If it's your *business*, you go ahead and do it; but if it ain't, you—look at that, would you?"

The *Chancellorville* had set up a spread of flags, and the *Holy Moses* and the *Chicken* were steaming in.

V.

THEY on the *Chancellorville* sometimes could see into the bay, and they perceived the

enemy's gun-boats moving out as if to give battle. Surrey feared that this impulse would not endure, or that it was some mere pretence for the edification of the townspeople and the garrison, so he hastily directed that signals be made ordering in the *Holy Moses* and the *Chicken*. Thankful for small favours, they came on tumultuously. The battery had ceased firing. As the two auxiliaries passed under the stern of the cruiser, the megaphone hailed them: "You—will—see—the—en—em—y—soon—as—you—round—the—point. A—fine—chance—Good luck."



"THEY PROMPTLY ELIMINATED THEMSELVES."

As a matter of fact, the Spanish gun-boats had not been informed of the presence of the *Holy Moses* and the *Chicken* off the bar, and they were just blustering down the bay over the protective shoals to make it appear that they scorned the *Chancellorville*. But suddenly from around the point there burst into view a steam-yacht, closely followed by a harbour tug. The gun-boats took one swift look at this horrible sight, and fled, screaming.

Lieutenant Reigate, commanding the *Holy Moses*, had under his feet a craft that was capable of some

speed, although before a solemn tribunal one would have to admit that she conscientiously belied almost everything that the contractors had said of her originally. Boatswain Pent, commanding the *Chicken*, was in possession of an utterly different kind. The *Holy Moses* was an antelope; the *Chicken* was a man who could carry a piano on his back. In this race Pent had the mortification of seeing his vessel outstripped badly.

The entrance of the two American craft had a curious effect upon the shores of the bay. Apparently everyone had slept in the assurance that the *Chancellorville* could

not cross the bar, and that the *Chancellorville* was the only hostile ship. Consequently, the appearance of the *Holy Moses* and the *Chicken* created a curious and complex emotion. Reigate on the bridge of the *Holy Moses* laughed when he heard the bugles shrilling, and saw through his glasses the wee figures of men running hither and thither on the shore. It was the panic of the china when the bull entered the shop. The whole bay was bright with sun. Every detail of the shore was plain. From a brown hut abeam of the *Holy Moses* some little men ran out waving their arms and turning their tiny faces to look at the enemy. Directly ahead, some four miles, appeared the scattered white houses of a town, with a wharf and some schooners in front of it. The gun-boats were making for the town. There was a stone fort on the hill overshadowing, but Reigate conjectured that there was no artillery in it.

There was a sense of something intimate and impudent in the minds of the Americans. It was like climbing over a wall and fighting a man in his own garden. It was not that they could be in any wise shaken in their resolve; it was simply that the overwhelmingly Spanish aspect of things made them feel like gruff intruders. Like many of the emotions of war time, this emotion had nothing at all to do with war.

Reigate's only commissioned subordinate called up from the bow gun, "May I open fire, sir? I think I can fetch that last one."

"Yes." Immediately the six-pounder crashed, and in the air was the spinning wire noise of the flying shot. It struck so close to the last gun-boat that it appeared that the spray went aboard. The swift-handed men at the gun spoke of it. "Gave 'em a bath that time, anyhow. First one they've ever had. Dry 'em off this time, Jim." The young ensign said: "Steady." And so the *Holy Moses* raced in, firing, until the whole town, fort, water-front, and shipping, was as plain as if it had been done on paper by a mechanical draughtsman. The gun-boats were trying to hide in the bosom of the town. One was frantically tying-up to the wharf, and the other was anchoring within a hundred yards of the shore. The Spanish infantry, of course, had dug trenches along the beach, and suddenly the air over the *Holy Moses* sang with bullets. The shore-line thrummed with musketry. Also some antique shells screamed.

VI.

THE *Chicken* was doing her best. Pent's posture at the wheel seemed to indicate that

her best was about thirty-four knots. In his eagerness he was braced as if he alone were taking in a 10,000-ton battleship through Hellgate.

But the *Chicken* was not too far in the rear, and Pent could see clearly that he was to have no minor part to play. Some of the antique shells had struck the *Holy Moses*, and he could see the escaped steam shooting up from her. She lay close in-shore, and was lashing out with four six-pounders as if this was the last opportunity she would have to fire them. She had made the Spanish gun-boats very sick. A solitary gun on the one moored to the wharf was from time to time firing wildly, otherwise the gun-boats were silent. But the beach in front of the town was a line of fire. The *Chicken* headed for the *Holy Moses*, and, as soon as possible, the six-pounder in her bow began to crack at the gun-boat moored to the wharf.

In the meantime the *Chancellorville* prowled off the bar, listening to the firing, anxious, acutely anxious, and feeling her impotency in every inch of her smart steel frame. And in the meantime the *Adolphus* squatted on the waves and brazenly waited for news. One could thoughtfully count the seconds, and reckon that in this second and that second a man had died—if one chose. But no one did it. Undoubtedly the spirit was that the flag should come away with honour, honour complete, perfect, leaving no loose, unfinished end over which the Spaniards could erect a monument of satisfaction, glorification. The distant guns boomed to the ears of the silent blue-jackets at their stations on the cruiser.

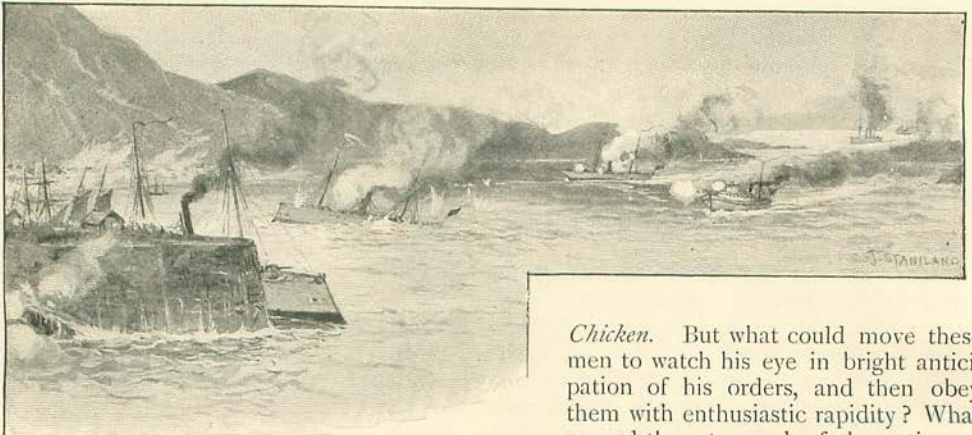
The *Chicken* steamed up to the *Holy Moses* and took into her nostrils the odour of steam, gunpowder, and burnt things. Rifle bullets simply streamed over them both. In the merest flash of time, Pent took into his remembrance the body of a dead quartermaster on the bridge of his consort. The two megaphones uplifted together, but Pent's eager voice cried out first:—

"Are you injured, sir?"

"No, not completely. My engines can get me out after—after we have sunk those gun-boats." The voice had been utterly conventional, but it changed to sharpness: "Go in and sink that gun-boat at anchor."

As the *Chicken* rounded the *Holy Moses* and started in-shore a man called to him from the depths of finished disgust. "They're takin' to their boats, sir." Pent looked and saw the men of the anchored gun-boat lower their boats and pull like mad for shore.

The *Chicken*, assisted by the *Holy Moses*,



"THE 'CHICKEN' ROUNDED THE 'HOLY MOSES' AND STARTED IN-SHORE."

began a methodical killing of the anchored gun-boat. The Spanish infantry on shore fired frenziedly at the *Chicken*. Pent, giving the wheel to a waiting sailor, stepped out to a point where he could see the men at the guns. One bullet spanged past him and into the pilot-house. He ducked his head into the window. "That hit you, Murry?" he inquired, with interest.

"No, sir," cheerfully responded the man at the wheel.

Pent became very busy superintending the fire of his absurd battery. The anchored gun-boat simply would not sink. It evinced that unnatural stubbornness which is sometimes displayed by inanimate objects. The gun-boat at the wharf had sunk as if she had been scuttled, but this riddled thing at anchor would not even take fire. Pent began to grow flurried—privately. He could not stay there for ever. Why didn't the blessed gun-boat admit its destruction? Why—

He was at the forward gun when one of his engine-room force came to him, and after saluting, said, serenely: "The men at the after-gun are all down, sir."

It was one of those curious lifts which an enlisted man, without in any way knowing it, can give his officer. The impudent tranquillity of the man at once set Pent to rights, and the man departed admiring the extraordinary coolness of his captain.

The next few moments contained little but heat, an odour, applied mechanics, and an expectation of death. Pent developed a fervid and amazed appreciation of the men, his men: men he knew very well, but strange men. What explained them? He was doing his best because he was captain of the *Chicken*, and he lived or died by the

Chicken. But what could move these men to watch his eye in bright anticipation of his orders, and then obey them with enthusiastic rapidity? What caused them to speak of the action as some kind of joke—particularly when they knew he could overhear them?

What manner of men? And he anointed them secretly with his fullest affection.

Perhaps Pent did not think all this during the battle. Perhaps he thought it so soon after the battle that his full mind became confused as to the time. At any rate, it stands as an expression of his feeling.

The enemy had gotten a field-gun down to the shore, and with it they began to throw three-inch shells at the *Chicken*. In this war it was usual that the down-trodden Spaniards, in their ignorance, should use smokeless powder, while the Americans, by the power of the consistent, everlasting, three-ply, wire-woven, double-back action imbecility of a hay-seed Government, used powder which on sea and on land cried their position to Heaven, and, accordingly, good men got killed without reason. At first Pent could not locate the field-gun at all; but as soon as he found it, he ran aft with one man and brought the after six-pounder again into action. He paid little heed to the old gun-crew. One was lying on his face apparently dead; another was prone, with a wound in the chest; while the third sat with his back to the deck-house holding a smitten arm. This last one called out, huskily, "Give it 'em hot, sir."

The minutes of the battle were either days, years, or they were flashes of a second. Once Pent, looking up, was astonished to see three shell-holes in the *Chicken's* funnel—made surreptitiously, so to speak. "If we don't silence that field-gun she'll sink us, boys." The eyes of the man sitting with his back against the deck-house were looking from out his ghastly face at the new gun-crew.

He spoke with the supreme laziness of a wounded man. "Give it 'em hot." Pent felt



"GIVE 'EM HOT!"

a sudden twist of his shoulder. He was wounded—slightly. The anchored gun-boat was in flames.

VII.

PENT took his little blood-stained tow-boat out to the *Holy Moses*. The yacht was already under way for the bay entrance. As they were passing out of range the Spaniards heroically redoubled their fire—which is their custom. Pent, moving busily about the decks, stopped suddenly at the door of the engine-room. His face was set and his eyes were steely. He spoke to one of the men. "During the action I saw you firing at the enemy with a rifle. I told you once to stop, and then I saw you at it again. Pegging away with a rifle is no part of your business. I want you to understand that you are in trouble." The humbled man did not raise his eyes from the deck. Presently the *Holy Moses* displayed an anxiety for the *Chicken's* health.

"One killed and four wounded, sir."

"Have you enough men left to work your ship?"

After deliberation, Pent answered: "No, sir."

"Shall I send you assistance?"

"No, sir. I can get to sea all right."

As they neared the point they were edified by the sudden appearance of a serio-comic ally. The *Chancellorville* at last had been unable to stand the strain, and had sent in her launch with an ensign, five seamen, and a number of marksmen marines. She swept hot foot around the point, bent on terrible slaughter; the one-pounder of her bow presented a formidable appearance. The *Holy Moses* and the *Chicken* laughed until they brought indignation to the brow of the young ensign. But he forgot it when with some of his men he boarded the *Chicken* to do what was possible for the wounded. The nearest surgeon was aboard the *Chancellorville*. There was absolute silence on board the cruiser as the *Holy Moses* steamed up to report. The blue-jackets listened with all their ears. The commander of the yacht spoke slowly into his megaphone: "We have—destroyed—the two—gun-boats—sir." There was a burst of confused cheering on the forecastle of the *Chancellorville*, but an officer's cry quelled it.

"Very—good. Will—you—come aboard?"

Two correspondents were already on the deck of the cruiser. Before the last of the wounded were hoisted aboard the cruiser the *Adolphus* was on her way to Key West. When she arrived at that port of desolation Shackles fled to file the telegrams and the other correspondents fled to the hotel for clothes, good clothes, clean clothes; and food, good food, much food; and drink, much drink, any kind of drink.

Days afterward, when the officers of the noble squadron received the newspapers containing an account of their performance, they looked at each other somewhat dejectedly: "Heroic assault—grand daring of Boatswain Pent—superb accuracy of the *Holy Moses's* fire—gallant tars of the *Chicken*—their names should be remembered as long as America stands—terrible losses of the enemy—"

When the Secretary of the Navy ultimately read the report of Commander Surrey, S.O.P., he had to prick himself with a dagger in order to remember that anything at all out of the ordinary had occurred.