

# A Cuban Bombuster.

with her much-patched boilers throbbing beneath a fearful overpressure of steam, and a curious tremor throughout her frame, the Olivet drove out to sea, faster than she had ever gone before. She was not alone, for the engine of the shattered barge rolling over and over in the flashing, screw-churned wake, and straining at the double towlines until they cut it adrift far out in the gulf.

It was long past midnight when captain and mate took counsel together in the chart room. "Have you made up your mind what to do?" asked the latter. "I've been thinking it over," was the answer, "and have decided to let well alone, and say nothing about the matter. Whether the soldiers got ashore, or were settled by the Cubans and negroes, is no concern of ours, and we've towed the launch away. Now, some of the officers on board must have known that Wilson, at least, was a British subject, and, unless they catch us on the coast, they'll say nothing for their own sakes. If we report it, there'll be a raking up of many things, and all our cables are not set down in that official log. We'll land the Cubans tomorrow night and crawl close along the coast all day out of the cruiser's sight."

On the second night Captain Armstrong stopped his engines off what one of the negroes said was the mangrove-shrouded mouth of a lagoon, and then addressed the Cubans, "Gentlemen," he said, "I'm sorry I must deprive myself of the pleasure of continuing to see you. The part of the coast is in your own friends' hands, and I wish you all good-day."

Watkins translated, and one who seemed to be a person of importance except his Panamanian hat, to his knowledge, "Gentlemen, we are your servants for life, and we will never forget."

A boat was lowered; negroes and Cubans climbed down into it, and when the mate saw the light of the boat's lantern, he was very dark, and beyond a narrow circle of dusky sea, rising and falling in glassy undulations about them until he was in a dimly haze, the phosphorescent water flamed about the oars, and fell, as it were, in a stream of fire every time the blades rose up, and even at that distance from the shore the odors of steaming forest and rotting vegetation were heavy in the air.

For a while no one spoke, and then one of the Cubans gripped the mate's arm. "Listen," he said, "a steamer comes."

"Who rowing?" cried the mate, and as he bent low toward the water, a regular, throbbing sound fell upon his ears. "The cruiser, most likely," he said, "thank goodness we carried no lights aboard the Olivet. I can't tell just where she is, but the sooner we get out of this better. Give her way there, all you're worth."

One sweltering evening the little steamer Olivet lay gently rising and falling on the oily swell of Arucas Bay. It was overpoweredly hot, with a clammy heat that made respiration difficult and exertion an impossibility, while across the tall palms ashore and the white houses of the Cuban town there rolled a mass of steamy haze.

Beneath the Olivet's poop awnings, from which the condensed moisture trickled and fell in drops, the captain, engineer and mate sat before a well-spread table, whereon flasks of red and yellow wine nestled among mangoes, crimson bananas and golden pineapples. The three were on better terms than is usually the case, for, having been engaged in a certain trade between the gulf ports and Cuba, in which they occasionally carried goods not enumerated in any manifest, the voyage had been a profitable one for all concerned.

"Well," said the mate, mopping his dripping forehead, "I never want to go ashore in Arucas again. I can see that firing squad now, and the half-dead wretches writhing upon the stones. Thank goodness, we're going out tonight. I'm sick of Cuba. This is another batch of insurgents to be done to death tomorrow, they say. Cold-blooded murder, and a disgrace to humanity, I call it. And now I suppose they're going to church proud of what they've done. Listen to them—"

From out of the mist above the town there rose the canes of bells, and when this had died away a strain of music came through the listless air as the crew of a Spanish warship lying close at hand formed up in the main-deck along her deck. The band took up its station, and the officers stood bareheaded upon her poop as the silken folds of the Spanish ensign fluttered down from the peak, a limp streak of crimson and gold.

"Music and incense in the churches, and half-dried blood on every stone in the plaza—It's a curious world. After what's I've seen I could be a rebel myself," said the mate. The captain merely nodded; he was a plain man, and rarely wasted words; but the grim old engineer glanced toward the Spanish cruiser with a flash in his keen eyes that his brethren knew and dreaded.

"With steam at a hummer" an fifty, an seventy revolutions, I would like fine to grind the old Olivet's stem right through her—just there amidships," he said. The captain smiled as he answered, "I believe you, Mr. Gordon."

night they took off a detachment of twelve men, the boatsman, who bore the Spaniards like poison, and two half-drilled conscript guards in each barge. Another batch goes off at 10 tonight; I found that out. Now, if you drop ashore, you might run foul of the speaker firing his arms over his head, as he added: "See here, Armstrong, I followed that detachment starving, and risked my life a dozen times in trying to convince my comrades' evil spirits. The rain came down as it ought to do with him. Which is it to be?"

"It's a risky business," said the skipper again, "but we'll try." The mate brought down his fist with a crash. "We'll take him out," he said, "yes, by heaven, we'll take him out, if we have to run down the cruiser, too!" The engineer said no word, but hurried away below with a grim smile upon his face, and from the vigorous language that rose up through the grating it became evident he was busily engaged. Presently the escape pipe trembled and throbbled with a vibrating rush of steam, and the mate chuckled, for he knew that Gordon's heart was in his work; as a rule he would sooner spill his blood than waste a pound of coal.

At 9 o'clock the mate stood upon the forecastle head, clad in streaming oilskins, and the cable came grinding home in time to the end of the windlass. The rain came down as it ought to do in the tropics, smiting the iron decks with a rattle and roar, and speckling the oily sea with white. The crew stood about him, and nudged one another as they noticed their officer's unusual indifference to the matter. The links hung about deck and winch-drums, for news had leaked out through the steward that something unusual was on hand.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the grizzled quartermaster, touching his hat, "but we'd take it well if you would tell the captain that it's savin' some poor wretch from the Spaniards we're with him one and all."

"Thanks," answered the mate; "I'll let him know." Then he climbed to the bridge, and when the telegraph tinkled he had used about three-quarters of a great splash and setting aft, for the Olivet was flying light and her propeller whirled round half-blade clear. With a heavy thud accompanying the clatter of the well-worn copper plates, she headed in-shore; and Captain Armstrong leaned out over the bridge rail with a very anxious face as the lights of the cruiser drew near, swinging to and fro through the rain like water balloons.

A sharp challenge rose from the Spaniard's poop, and some one cried, "Keep off with that steamer—where are you going?"

An English shout came from among the wreckage, "Will some one fling me a line?"

A rope went whistling out, and the mate swore viciously beneath his breath as the end swung slackly back against the side, while the captain, leaning over the rail, sent down a cheering cry, "Hold on, we're coming back, and we'll have you yet," as the steamer forged ahead into the darkness. Then a shadowy figure leaped up on the side-light screen, balanced itself for a moment, and, just as the mate stepped forward to lay his hands upon it, flung both arms aloft and launched out into mid-air. "The crazy fool—there's another to be fished out now," gasped the mate. "We'll stop her and back her down," said the captain, "Standy by the gangway with a lantern, and lower the Jacob's ladder."

Again the propeller churned and rattled, and presently great wreaths of white, spangled by luminous green and gold, seethed forward as the Olivet veered astern, until Watkins' voice came from somewhere near the poop, "Way enough! Stop her, or the screw will cut us up." The vibration died away; the steamer came slowly to a standstill; and the mate leaned to the lowest step of the ladder, while watery splashes, clinging like caps to trailing lines, and jamming their toes against the landings of the plates, climbed down her side. By the yellow glow of the mate's lantern the overturned and crushed-in barge became faintly visible a short distance from the quarter. Shadowy figures loomed their hold upon it, and came splashing toward the ladder. Black hands caught at the rungs and lines, and with a shout of "Up you go," a dripping negro was helped aloft, and dragged over the rail with a vigorous kindness that almost dislocated his arm. Another followed, and then some one cried in English: "Throw me the end of a line. I've got him here, but he's hurt or faint." A seaman flung a rope, and raising his lantern the mate saw an indistinct figure crawl out of the water and make the end fast to something which lay upon the wreckage, half in and half out of the sea. Then, with a cry of "Heave a little," the man slid down into the water, and, aided by the tightening line, seized his comrade by the shoulders, and with him toward the vessel. Landing down, the mate stretched out his hand; thin, sinewy fingers grasped it, and when he halted the deck above, ready hands hauled upon the rope; the half-conscious man, for such he seemed to be, swung rapidly aloft, and a hoarse hurrah rang out as he was lifted over the rail.

Watkins and two Cubans dragged themselves out upon the ladder, and, as the mate slipped aside with his toes upon the landing, a plate to his right, another head came into the circle of light, and he fancied he caught a glimmer of uniform buttons, and saw braid about the wrist as the swimmer thrust forward his hand. "Send one of the negroes back to make a stout hawser fast," shouted the captain from the bridge. "Be handy, there's no time to lose." As the mate raised his head he fancied he heard a soft thud, and a smothered gurgle behind him. When he looked down again the Spaniard soldier had disappeared. In answer to his challenging glance, a Cuban said: "He sank suddenly, and there was another hurt by your boys. But it is no matter there are too many of the kind in Cuba. The mate shuddered a little, and said no more. Whether murder had been done or not he never knew. In any case, he thought it was no business of his if the insurgent had avenged some butchered comrade and he had seen things in the night which he would not set his own blood on fire. A negro swam out with a hawser, and when he came back the mate halted the bridge. "Got them all now, sir, and the towline's fast."

Meantime, as the steamer went ahead again, a group of seamen stood in the twinkling glow of a lamp about the after-hatch, glancing compassionately at the soaked and haggard wretch who lay gasping on the tarpaulins, with his head upon Watkins' knee. Both upon the water and on the deck, a hanger, and there was something pathetic in the sight of the hollow-checked man chafing his comrade's thin wrists, and bending over him with anxiety and pity in his face. Presently the wretch moved to his feet, and made an effort to rise, but Watkins checked it gently. "Not hurt, thank the Lord!" he said. "The shock has been too much for him, half-starved as he was, and broken down with sickness. You're in good hands at last, Jim," he added softly, "and it would need all the Armada of Spain to take you from us now."

The mate, looking on silently, felt something tickling in his throat, and a grovel in which pity and reverence were strangely mingled went up to the hard-handed, weather-beaten man about him. The steward held out a flask of wine, and Watkins stretched forward his hand; but a stalwart figure in greasy dog-eared boots thrust it rudely aside, and knelt upon the deck. "Wine, that's nae drink for a sick Christian—only fit for garlicky Spaniards. Here, lift his head, this will pit fresh life into him," said a voice with the accent of the "high-side" yards; and this time a laugh went round, as Gordon, the engineer, attempted to thrust the neck of a whiskey bottle forcibly between the sufferer's teeth. "You'll choke him out of hand; sentry with it," said Watkins, presently the wretch did his work, for the man sat up, leaning against his comrade's shoulder. "That did him good," observed the latter. "It's a long time since I saw a civilized drink either, and I'm somewhat played out myself." When he handed the bottle back there was very little left inside.

"That's not bad for a start," was Gordon's comment, "and there's plenty more. When I've raised another ten pound upon the start-ard boiler we'll try the rest."

"I think you can move him now," interpreted the mate. "Stow the sick one in my berth, and help yourself to everything you want there, Watkins. See to the two Cubans, steward, and you, quartermaster, get the negroes forward. Each man to his post." Kind hands carried the rescued Englishman below, and the group broke up.

The mate climbed to the bridge again, and, thanks to the blackness, they did not see the cruiser with slowly turning engines unobserved. Then,

There was a sound like the rippling of rain, and with a mass of grey froth boiling about her bows, and one tiny jet, as it were, of green flame, creeping up her stem, a steamer swept out of the mist. There was no sign of any light about her deck, save the long tube of a pivot gun aiming faintly with a reflexing from her own what, and a trail of luminous vapor streamed from her lofty funnel. The men dared scarcely breathe, for she passed but a few fathoms away, and the mate's heart stood still as a hail came down from a look-out on the fore-top in that district. The evidence was incontrovertible, for the horny covering of a hoof had escaped digestion and showed conclusively the size of the animals generally preyed upon by pythons in a wild state, giving flat denial to some of the startling stories, unfortunately still current, that these reptiles being able to overcome horses and oxen. In a provincial museum there is a well-mounted python coiled round the trunk and fore-limbs of a tiger, but the "guide" warns visitors that the exhibit is to be taken as a specimen of the taxidermist's skill, not as a representation of whatever occurred, or is ever likely to occur.

"Thank goodness, she's gone!" said the mate; "and now let's see when she'll be back again, and the Olivet's under way."

A negro piloted them into the lagoon, and an hour later they caught the glimmer of a green port-fire and boarded the steamer again. Captain Armstrong listened again to his mate's story. "It's a pity I didn't burn that light too soon," he said. "Well, if they're looking for us down the coast, I'll head north for the open sea. It will be a long time before we see Cuba again, and I'm just as glad. This kind of a thing is a pretty good excuse for me."

Many months after Captain Armstrong found a packet awaiting him at the office of the British owners. It contained a handsome pair of binoculars, with three words and a date engraved upon them: Arucas, in recognition of the captain did not feel called upon to explain why they were sent him, but he uses the glasses still—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

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estimated at twenty feet long. This reptile was afterward deposited for some little time in the Zoological Gardens, and the late Mr. Bartlett puts its measurement at eighteen feet, which was, doubtless, much nearer the mark. That particular reptile was brought from the Sonderbunds, and while in the Gardens discharged the remains of its last meal before being captured, which was one of the young wild pigs so common in that district. The evidence was incontrovertible, for the horny covering of a hoof had escaped digestion and showed conclusively the size of the animals generally preyed upon by pythons in a wild state, giving flat denial to some of the startling stories, unfortunately still current, that these reptiles being able to overcome horses and oxen. In a provincial museum there is a well-mounted python coiled round the trunk and fore-limbs of a tiger, but the "guide" warns visitors that the exhibit is to be taken as a specimen of the taxidermist's skill, not as a representation of whatever occurred, or is ever likely to occur.

**TWO LITTLE STORIES.**  
**About Tolstol and a Policeman and a Queen and a Penman.**  
From the Sun.  
Count Leo Tolstol believes in preaching the gospel of brotherly love wherever he is and to all who will hear. About three months ago he was in Moscow. He saw a policeman lay rough hands on a drunken laborer, jerk him about the collar, and start to drag him to his station. He was horrified by the policeman's violent treatment of the case and remonstrated. "My friend," he objected, as he placed himself in front of the policeman, "have you read the Gospels?" The policeman looked over the odd figure before him, and evidently was impressed with some respect by the Count's long white beard. He answered only half gruffly: "No, I haven't."

**TWO NOVEL WRENCHES.**  
**One Made of Hickory and Steel and the Other of Aluminum.**  
From the New York Sun.  
There is a man in the city who has occasion many times in the course of a day to regulate the flow of water here and there from pipes in an establishment in which there are many streams constantly flowing. He carries a wrench in his pocket just as a man might carry a lead pencil. A wrench of the ordinary kind would obviously be too heavy to be carried conveniently, and so he made a wrench to suit himself out of hickory. On each side of the head he laid a thin steel plate, running rivets through the two plates and the head, one on each side of the eye. This wrench served its purpose perfectly, and it was light and convenient to carry.

**HAD HIS REVENGE.**  
In the days of her young womanhood the witness had filled the lawyer who was now about to cross-examine her, but there was nothing in his impressive face or calm, even tone of voice, to indicate that any recollection of her heartless cruelty in the long ago still rankled in his mind.  
"Miss Jarvis," he said, "you stated a few minutes ago that you recalled the time at which these events took place because it happened to be your birthday."  
"Yes, sir."

**THE TELEPHONE IN POLITICS.**  
From the Chicago Inner-Ocean.  
The long-distance telephone is a great boon to members of the cabinet, as it allows them to keep in close touch with their departments even when absent from the capital. Many questions are referred

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