

A SEA CHANCE.

By MORGAN ROBERTSON.

A Tale Told BY a Mate and a Cook.

At the age of twenty-five, John Dorsey possessed few attributes of mind or body that would distinguish him from other seafaring men, unless it was the deep resonance of his voice and a strong memory for faces, facts, and places—which latter made him a wonderful pilot, his mind retaining a vivid picture of every harbor, island, rock or shoal that he had once seen. His strong lungs, with his pilotage and a general intelligence, raised him early to the quarter-deck.

Born at Nassau, in the Bahamas, where his mother still lived, he had obtained such education as the island schools afforded, had followed "wrecking" until his brain was a comprehensive chart of the whole West India group, and had then made four long voyages—one in the engine room. The closing years of the Civil War found him engaged in blockade-running, which had grown to be a prosperous—though risky—and, from his insular standpoint, a legitimate business. Long, low, speedy steamers were built, painted slate color, loaded with munitions of war, and sent to dodge their way past Federal cruisers into Southern ports, to return with cotton. In one of these—the "Petrel"—he occupied the position of first mate, and stood off near the taffrail, one dark night, watching the indefinite loom of a sloop-of-war about a mile astern.

At intervals a gleam, as of heat lightning, would light up the darkness. Then could be heard the humming and "cheep, cheep" of ricochetting solid shot, followed by the bark of the gun. They were firing low.

The chase, commencing with the wind abeam, ended with the wind ahead; for the quarry, with large engine and small sail power, had edged around in a wide curve until the sails of the pursuer no longer drew. The cruisers of that time were at best but auxiliaries, unfitted to chase to windward, and had not this one, as though to voice her disgust to the night, discharged a broadside as she squared away, the fleeing steamer might have escaped.

It is this broadside, or, particularly, one round, nine-inch shot of it, that concerns us. The rest of them, with the screaming shells, flew wide or short. This shot, unaimed and unhoped for, struck a sea at a quarter of the distance, another three-quarters, arose in the air, and crashed through the rudder and stern posts of the "Petrel," forward through the boiler, and then on through the length of the steamer, making holes for itself where necessary, from the last of which—in the port bow—it dropped into the sea. The "Petrel" was successfully raked and disabled.

When the shot had entered the stern, an iron belaying pin, jolted from its place in the taffrail by the impact, had spun high as the cross-trees. Before it came down, and coincident with the roar of escaping steam from the punctured boiler, the mate noted the damage done in his department, and, to apprise the captain on the bridge, roared out: "Hudder post!" But the descending belaying pin, striking him a glancing blow on the head, cut short the sentence, and he fell to the deck.

The escaping steam brought the cruiser back to the chase, and the "Petrel" was captured, towed to a Northern port, and condemned. Here John Dorsey, still unconscious, though breathing, was placed in the hospital of a military prison. In a week he opened his eyes and smiled—as a baby smiles. Then as a baby looks at his hands, he looked at his, and cooed softly. His skull had not, apparently, been injured, and the lump raised had disappeared so he was told to get up and dress. He only smiled, and was then assisted.

It could hardly have been said that John Dorsey had recovered consciousness. While physically healthy, a negative, non-combative good-humor, indicated by his smile, was the only mental attribute apparent. He even seemed to lack some of the instincts of self-preservation which the human, in common with other animals, inherits from parents. Feeling hunger, he would not eat food placed before him until

shown how; and then not with a knife and fork, or even by intelligent use of his fingers, but by lowering his head in the manner of brutes. Hustled aside by a harsh attendant, he felt pain, and cried out—with no articulation. But he felt no fear at the next meeting; he could not remember.

An inner sub-consciousness directed necessary physiological function, and he lived and gained flesh. But, though far below the level of brutes in intellect, he differed from them and idiots in his capacity for improvement. For he learned—to dress himself; to use a knife and fork; to make his bed, sweep, carry water, etc. The first sign of memory he displayed was in his avoidance of the nurse who habitually abused him. He learned the names of things one by one, and, in time, essayed to speak them. But only with the progress of a gurgling infant did he acquire a vocabulary sufficient for his wants; and this he used, not in the breezy, quarter-deck tone of John Dorsey, but in accents soft and low, as became the gentleness of his new nature. Not being a prisoner of war, he was discharged—cured; but being useful, and not a stickler for salaried, was allowed to remain in the hospital until it was officially abolished, six months after the close of the war. Then he was turned adrift—a man in physique but a child in experience, for his life now dated from the awakening in the hospital, and what he knew he had learned since then. Not a glimmer or shadow of memory as to his past remained. It was as though the soul of John Dorsey had gone from him, and in its place had come another—but a limited, a weakling soul: one that could neither love, nor hate, nor fear, in a human sense.

Poorly equipped as he was, he naturally became a beggar, but would work when told to. He wandered, associating with tramps; and under the tutelage of tramps, his mind expanded, but only to the limit of his soul. Some things he could not understand.

In a measure the embargo on his faculties impressed its stamp on his face; but the features of the intelligent John Dorsey did not at once yield to the new conditions, and while a fit candidate for an asylum, the strange mixture of expression, resembling care-worn candor, saved him from commitment as weak-minded, though he was often sent to jail as a vagrant.

For thirty years he was a homeless wanderer on the face of the earth, at the end of which time he had learned much, considering his limitations. He could talk fairly well in the slang of tramps, his mind expanded, but only to the limit of his soul. Some things he could not understand.

It is this broadside, or, particularly, one round, nine-inch shot of it, that concerns us. The rest of them, with the screaming shells, flew wide or short. This shot, unaimed and unhoped for, struck a sea at a quarter of the distance, another three-quarters, arose in the air, and crashed through the rudder and stern posts of the "Petrel," forward through the boiler, and then on through the length of the steamer, making holes for itself where necessary, from the last of which—in the port bow—it dropped into the sea. The "Petrel" was successfully raked and disabled.

When the shot had entered the stern, an iron belaying pin, jolted from its place in the taffrail by the impact, had spun high as the cross-trees. Before it came down, and coincident with the roar of escaping steam from the punctured boiler, the mate noted the damage done in his department, and, to apprise the captain on the bridge, roared out: "Hudder post!" But the descending belaying pin, striking him a glancing blow on the head, cut short the sentence, and he fell to the deck.

The escaping steam brought the cruiser back to the chase, and the "Petrel" was captured, towed to a Northern port, and condemned. Here John Dorsey, still unconscious, though breathing, was placed in the hospital of a military prison. In a week he opened his eyes and smiled—as a baby smiles. Then as a baby looks at his hands, he looked at his, and cooed softly. His skull had not, apparently, been injured, and the lump raised had disappeared so he was told to get up and dress. He only smiled, and was then assisted.

man understanding. And it won him universal good-will, though not always good treatment.

In the autumn of 1895 he was in New York, penniless; and overhearing from a group of South Street loungers that the "Avon," at Pier No. 9, wanted a cook hurried there and met her captain, stepping over the rail to find him. "I heard you had no cook," he began.

"You a cook?"
"I kin cook plain grub."
"Ever been to sea?"
"No."
"Where'er your clothes?"
The applicant looked down at himself.

"Tramp, aren't you?" said the captain, good-humoredly.

"Yes, kinder," he answered and smiled.

"Come aboard, I'm in a hurry. Thirty dollars a month. Say 'Sir' when you speak to me or the mate."

The "Avon" was a two-masted, schooner-rigged, five-hundred-ton, iron screw steamer, with an old-fashioned oscillating engine, which her old-fashioned engineer patted lovingly for the wonderful bursts of speed he could induce from it. Against his name on the Avon's articles, the new cook placed his mark for the highest rate of pay he had worked as Jack Shiven. He was seasick the first day out, but recovered, and gave satisfaction. Quiet, good-humored, and obliging, he smiled on all hands and won hearts.

"He's a daft man, but a good 'un," said the engineer.

At Cedar Keys, Florida, the captain brought aboard, one evening, a tall, dark man, with whom he consulted locked in his cabin. As they parted at the rail, he said, in a low tone: "We're speedy enough to get away from any cutter on the coast, and, I think, any cruiser the Spanish have over. This was a blockade dodger in war times, named 'Petrel' Still, as I said, Doctor, I must consult my crew. It's risky work."

"Did you own the 'Avon' then, when she was the 'Petrel'?" asked the other, speaking with an accent that stamped him a foreigner.

"No," answered the captain; "I bought her years afterward. But," he added proudly, "I sailed in her 'fore the mast when she was captured. They judged us for a while; then let us go. 'Twas curious about the mate, a fellow named Dorsey. Got a rap on the head somehow, and came to the hospital, but lost his bearings—didn't know his name, and couldn't understand when told. They let him out 'fore they did us, and we lost all track of him. It's pitiful, the way his old mother sits up on the rocks over at Nassau and watches the channels. She expects her boy back; says she knows he'll come. I've got so I hate to bring the 'Avon' there; for every time I've done it, she's recognized the old 'Petrel,' and waved her shawl aboard. And I've always had to give her the same old story: 'Haven't heard from him.' Its heart-breaking. But John Dorsey's dead, sure."

In a couple of days the "Avon" sailed, with the dark stranger below in the hold. Two hours later a revenue cutter, primed with information of a purposed breach of the neutrality laws, lifted her anchor and followed, a menacing speck on the horizon. He knew the use of money, and what his day's labor was worth, though his lack of skill at the simplest tasks prevented his holding a job; hence, his ever-reactive tendency to beggary. But latterly he had worked in a hotel kitchen, and liking the shelter and warmth, cultivated the industry to the extent of becoming, in spite of himself, a fairly good third-rate cook.

At the hospital he had been number seven. Asked his name later, he had given this number, which his tramp companions corrupted to "Shiven" and prefixed with "Jack"—their hall-mark of fellowship. His beard had grown, and with his hair, was of a soft shade of brown; with no vices to age him, and tormented by no speculations as to his origin or destiny—the impressions of a year back being forgotten unless renewed by friction—his face, though changed, was even more youthful than the sailor Dorsey's. In repose it was stumped; but when he was pleased and smiled—with the infantile smile that marked the birth of his new existence—it lighted up with the ineffable glory of an angel's. It was the mute expression of an innocence of soul which approached the divine—beyond hu-

man understanding. And it won him universal good-will, though not always good treatment.

Then, leaving the dark man on the bridge to watch the horizon, and a negro fireman in the boiler-room to keep up steam, every other man in the crew from the captain to the mess boy went ashore in the next boat, for the last and hardest lift of all. A large shell gun, too heavy for one boat, was to be carried off on a temporary deck covering two. At this work they were engaged when daylight broke; and with its coming appeared, outside the barrier and heading for the inlet, the revenue cutter that had followed them, with ports open, guns showing, and at her gaff-end a string of small flags which, in the silent Volapuk of the sea, said: "Get underway as fast as you can."

A signal-book and a good glass are needed, as a rule, to interpret this language. The captain and mate ashore had neither and those aboard were not tutored in their use; so the command was not answered. "The jig's up," said the captain. "Get this gun ashore again. We'll go aboard and answer or he may fire. They'll confiscate my boat, but I don't want her sunk."

But their hurry to unload the gun, resulted in the swamping of one boat and the staying of the other; so they were forced to remain—and hope.

"Run up a white flag," roared the captain; "then scull that boat ashore."

The cook heard, but could not understand. The man on the bridge understood, but could not obey—he could not find the flag locker. However, he impressed on the cook's mind the wisdom of getting the boat ashore. But Jack Shiven only smiled and shook his head. He could not scull a boat. Neither could the Cuban—for such he was—and the fireman conscientiously and emphatically refused to leave his work. He had shipped fireman, not sailor.

The boom of an unshot gun was heard from seaward—given as a hint, which, of course, was not taken. Then another report, louder, came from the cutter, and with it a shot, aimed to cross the stern of the "Avon." But years of service in the revenue marine had somewhat demoralized the old man-of-war's man who had charge of the gun. He did not allow for the half-charge of powder, and the lateral deflection given the consequently ricochetting shot by choppy waves, running at angle with his aim. That shot, barely clearing the reef, made a curve, shorter with each blow of a glancing sea, bounded over the stern of the "Avon," and cut through the port main boom lift (a wire rope), which fell and struck the wondering, smiling cook on the head—a slight blow but enough. The shot buried itself in the sand on the beach, having undone the work of that other government shot fired thirty years before; it had wakened the sleeping soul of John Dorsey. He reeled, recovered, and in a cracked falsetto, cried out: "—carried away, sir," finishing the sentence begun in his youth and interrupted by the descending belaying-pin. Clapping his hand to his head, he looked around bewildered; then bounded forward to the bridge. The Cuban followed.

"Are you hurt?" asked the latter.

"Hurt? Who are you? Get off the bridge! Where's the captain? Who's got the wheel?" His voice was choked and guttural.

"The captain is on the shore with the crew. Do you not see them?"

Dorsey reached into the pilot house, and in the old familiar nook placed his hand on a pair of glasses, with which, after a suspicious inspection, he examined the group on the beach.

"None of our crowd," he muttered. Then he turned the glasses on the revenue vessel outside.

"Haven't they got enough men-of-war on the coast without trotting out their cutters?" he growled. "What's he say?" M. L. H.—"get under way." Say you," he demanded of the Cuban. "What's happened? What time is it? When'd you join this boat?"

"On the day before yesterday, at Cedar Keys."

"You lie," snarled Dorsey. "We haven't been there in four months: but—" he felt his head again—"what's happened? Everything looks queer. Where's the ball on the pilot-house? Two minutes ago it was night time. What does this mean?"

Two minutes ago you were struck on the head, and have

been awakened by the unusual proceedings, obeyed orders.

Then, leaving the dark man on the bridge to watch the horizon, and a negro fireman in the boiler-room to keep up steam, every other man in the crew from the captain to the mess boy went ashore in the next boat, for the last and hardest lift of all. A large shell gun, too heavy for one boat, was to be carried off on a temporary deck covering two. At this work they were engaged when daylight broke; and with its coming appeared, outside the barrier and heading for the inlet, the revenue cutter that had followed them, with ports open, guns showing, and at her gaff-end a string of small flags which, in the silent Volapuk of the sea, said: "Get underway as fast as you can."

"The jig's up," said the captain. "Get this gun ashore again. We'll go aboard and answer or he may fire. They'll confiscate my boat, but I don't want her sunk."

But their hurry to unload the gun, resulted in the swamping of one boat and the staying of the other; so they were forced to remain—and hope.

"Run up a white flag," roared the captain; "then scull that boat ashore."

The cook heard, but could not understand. The man on the bridge understood, but could not obey—he could not find the flag locker. However, he impressed on the cook's mind the wisdom of getting the boat ashore. But Jack Shiven only smiled and shook his head. He could not scull a boat. Neither could the Cuban—for such he was—and the fireman conscientiously and emphatically refused to leave his work. He had shipped fireman, not sailor.

The boom of an unshot gun was heard from seaward—given as a hint, which, of course, was not taken. Then another report, louder, came from the cutter, and with it a shot, aimed to cross the stern of the "Avon." But years of service in the revenue marine had somewhat demoralized the old man-of-war's man who had charge of the gun. He did not allow for the half-charge of powder, and the lateral deflection given the consequently ricochetting shot by choppy waves, running at angle with his aim. That shot, barely clearing the reef, made a curve, shorter with each blow of a glancing sea, bounded over the stern of the "Avon," and cut through the port main boom lift (a wire rope), which fell and struck the wondering, smiling cook on the head—a slight blow but enough. The shot buried itself in the sand on the beach, having undone the work of that other government shot fired thirty years before; it had wakened the sleeping soul of John Dorsey. He reeled, recovered, and in a cracked falsetto, cried out: "—carried away, sir," finishing the sentence begun in his youth and interrupted by the descending belaying-pin. Clapping his hand to his head, he looked around bewildered; then bounded forward to the bridge. The Cuban followed.

"Are you hurt?" asked the latter.

"Hurt? Who are you? Get off the bridge! Where's the captain? Who's got the wheel?" His voice was choked and guttural.

"The captain is on the shore with the crew. Do you not see them?"

Dorsey reached into the pilot house, and in the old familiar nook placed his hand on a pair of glasses, with which, after a suspicious inspection, he examined the group on the beach.

"None of our crowd," he muttered. Then he turned the glasses on the revenue vessel outside.

"Haven't they got enough men-of-war on the coast without trotting out their cutters?" he growled. "What's he say?" M. L. H.—"get under way." Say you," he demanded of the Cuban. "What's happened? What time is it? When'd you join this boat?"

"On the day before yesterday, at Cedar Keys."

"You lie," snarled Dorsey.

"We haven't been there in four months: but—" he felt his head again—"what's happened? Everything looks queer. Where's the ball on the pilot-house? Two minutes ago it was night time. What does this mean?"

Two minutes ago you were struck on the head, and have

claims to Mary, and Mr. Simpler had to surrender her. In speaking of her peculiar husband, Mrs. Sargent said:

"It's a Spaniard's bullet does not end his restless life, I think his strange experience in marrying the Evans girls will prevent him from returning to Lewis county."

A MONSTER WINE VAT.

Largest Tank in the World Being Set Up in San Francisco.

The largest oak wine vat in the world is being set up by the California Wine Association at the Lachman cellar, on Brattan street, in San Francisco. The famous Heidelberg casket is a baby by the side of the newcomer. It has the proportions of a two story cottage, and on its bottom four quadrille sets could be danced with ease.

The Heidelberg wonder has a capacity of 50,000 gallons, while this San Francisco monster is to hold 80,000 gallons. The huge cask is oval shaped on the ground and measures 27 1/2 by 20 feet in each direction, while the great sides rise to a height of 20 feet and are from 2 1/2 to 8 inches in thickness. The wood used will weigh 20 tons, and the iron hoops will turn the scales at about six tons.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

GROWING MOVEMENT.

MEN ALL OVER THE COUNTRY ENLISTING TO AID CUBA.

The Enlisting of Men Causing Much Commotion and Discussion Among State Department Officials in Washington—Compared by Some to the Cooley Movement.

While the members of the senate and house are endeavoring to kill off the Spaniards with resolutions and by wagging their jaws a movement that seems to be growing tremendously in the west is attracting more attention at the department of state than anything that is being said or done at the capitol.

"Oh, it will be nothing more than another Cooley affair, and will probably amount to less than that," said an official of the state department to me, and with that he was disposed to dismiss the whole