



Mike Walsh Would Never Make a Prettier Shot than That One.

astern of us without much trouble; but I soon saw that she was rapidly gaining on us. It developed that our boilers were so badly fouled with grease and salt that they could not make steam enough to send us along at more than eight or nine knots an hour, when we should have been doing half as much again.

When the pursuing gunboat got within a little more than a mile of us she opened a savage fire with her one-pounders. Spanish gunnery was notoriously bad, and hers was no better than the average; but she was literally hailing shells at us, and some of them came uncomfortably close.

Boxes of dynamite and companion boxes filled with the much more dangerous fulminate of mercury detonators with which the explosive was to be set off under Spanish troop trains and in other favorable places, were piled up everywhere about the little ship, and with all our machinery above deck it needed but one well placed shot to produce an explosion that would leave nothing but a hole in the water or place us at the mercy of our surrounding enemies—which, for some of us at least, would amount to the same thing. If the gun failed, there was but one thing to do; that was to turn quickly and ram the gunboat amidships. The *Three Friends* was a stoutly built craft, and I figured we could go halfway through the Spaniard and send him to the bottom by the run. If we were lucky we could back out of the wreckage, run the *Three Friends* on the beach before the other gunboats could reach us, and join Gomez, who was not far away. There was no thought of surrender; for we knew perfectly well what that would mean.

THE Spaniard was not more than half a mile astern, and I had about determined to turn and slam into him, when a shout from Pagluchi told me the gun was ready. It was trained between the deckhouse and the shrouds, so the tug had to be swung round three or four points to get it to bear. I put the helm hard over to starboard by climbing up on the wheel, which should have been handled by two strong men instead of one little Irishman, and waited for the report. As we altered our course I was exposed to the full force of the Spanish fire. Rifle bullets sang right merrily through the pilothouse; but not one of them so much as grazed me, though they chipped the wheel and stanchions.

I had expected to hear the roar of the gun as soon as it bore on our enthusiastic pursuer; but in place of it I heard a lot of vigorous swearing, which told me something had gone wrong with its mechanism. Without waiting for the particulars, I climbed up on the wheel again and straightened her out. By that time the other warships were only a short distance ahead of us, and close together at the end of the channel, and it began to look really ticklish. In less than a minute, while I was rapidly calculating the chances of escape after we had rammed the gunboat astern, Walsh sang out that everything was all right.

Using what seemed to be the last of my strength, I climbed up the spokes of the wheel a third time. As we swung round the gun roared. At the time it appeared to me that it had been fired too soon, and I feared it had gone wide of the mark; but I was mistaken. Though Mike Walsh spent a thousand years in the navy and fired a gun for eight hours a day, he would never make a prettier shot than that one. The shell

struck the Spaniard right in the center of his deckhouse and exploded with terrific force. The pilothouse was torn away, putting the steering gear out of commission, and the whole forward part of the ship was wrecked. Precisely how much damage was done we never knew. The Spaniards denied that there had been any loss of life; but the confidential report we received a few weeks later, through one of our "underground" routes, stated that thirteen men had been killed outright and a dozen others more or less seriously injured. At any rate, the explosion of the shell was followed by a lot of screaming, and from what we could see as to its effect I judge that our secret report gave the correct version of the affair.

The Spaniard immediately ran up a red light, as a signal that he needed help, and the other gunboats went to his assistance, which left us a clear field. We did no dallying over our departure. The last we saw of the Spaniards the two uninjured warships were standing by the one we had crippled and small boats were passing between them. If we had been called on to fire another shot, it would have taken us sometime to do it; for the recoil of the gun had torn loose the lashings with which it was made fast to the deck, and kicked it almost through the bulwarks. It was a lucky chance that it did not go overboard. When we looked the *Three Friends* over the next morning we found evidences of Spanish bullets everywhere; but none of them had done any serious damage. The Spaniards are about the only people on earth who could have failed to sink us that night.

With the best speed we could make we proceeded to No Name Key, north of Knights Key, where we landed the cargo and General Morales and his party on Christmas Day. We left enough provisions to last them a week, and the *Three Friends* went on to Jacksonville, while Colonel Carbo and I chartered a small schooner to take us to Key West. From there we went to Tampa on the *Olivette* and slipped into Jacksonville, where we met General Nuñez. We got away on the *Dauntless* as soon as we could sneak her out of the harbor, and picked up the expedition on New Year's Day, 1897.

THE reloading of the cargo was delayed by a surprising interruption which while it had an amusing side as viewed in the light of history, seemed tragic at the time; for it threatened another, and more serious, disaster. On account of her draft, the *Dauntless* was obliged to lie three or four miles off shore. The patrolling cruisers and revenue cutters that were looking for us made it important to get the stuff aboard as quickly as possible; so, in addition to the dories in which it had been landed, we engaged ten little schooners and sloops, belonging to friendly "konks" or wreckers living on the adjacent keys, to bring it to us.

Just as we were getting things well started, Ralph Paine, who had arranged to rejoin the expedition, came tearing up from Key West, where Carbo and I had left him, in the *Vamoose*, a fast steam yacht belonging to his newspaper. The "konks" took the strange white craft to be either a revenue cutter or a torpedo boat, and the moment they made her out they scurried in all directions, taking our arms with them. Two boatloads of Cubans, who were just leaving the shore, put back in a hurry, and lost themselves in the bush. Nuñez was so angry I feared he would explode before he relieved himself with as fine a burst of impassioned oratory

as anyone could ever wish to hear.

Paine, seeing the unintentional havoc he had wrought, tried to follow the fleeing flotilla to explain things; but that only made matters worse. The "konks" thought he wanted to capture them, and ran in among the shoals where the yacht could not go. After the *Vamoose* had departed, leaving with us the dejected but determined Paine, who intended to see that cargo landed if it took all winter, I made the runaways understand by means of the whistle that there was no cause for alarm, and they warily returned; but we had lost several hours, and it was dark before we got the last of the arms aboard.

We passed Key West at sunrise, eight miles out. They must have seen and recognized us from the naval station; but they knew they could not catch us and did not care to try. We ran on round Cape San Antonio, at the west end of Cuba, and on the morning of January 3 put the cargo and party ashore in Corrientes Bay, just inside of Cape Corrientes.

This final performance was more like a Fourth of July celebration than the secretive landing of a filibustering expedition. As we came to an anchor I intended to give one short blast of the whistle, to summon some of Maceo's troops, who were waiting for us near the cape; but something went wrong with the siren and it boomed its loudest for a full five minutes, before we could shut it off. The *Dauntless* had a siren that would have done credit to an ocean liner, and if there were any Spanish troops or a gunboat within ten miles of us they ought to have heard it. Our nerves had hardly recovered from

this shock before a careless Cuban dropped a box of dynamite on a coral reef, and it exploded with a roar that started the echoes to going again. Fortunately, the man with the slippery fingers was far enough away from the rest of the party so that no one else was killed.

The only man who was not annoyed by all this unseemly racket was Michael Walsh. He hailed the disturbance with hearty approval, as a possible promise of trouble.

"Let 'em come!" he shouted, when it was suggested that the Spaniards might be down on us at any minute. "I came down here looking for scraps, and the more of 'em I can get the better. We had one good little one with that durned gunboat; but another one is due right now."

We sent the Hotchkiss gun ashore first, and Mike set it up on the beach. Then he looked anxiously round for human targets, and showed keen disappointment when none appeared.

Not many weeks afterward we heard that Mike had blown up a troop train in Pinar del Rio, and other reports of his activity reached us from time to time. For some unknown reason he drifted back to Florida before the end of the war, and was murdered there—by a Spanish spy, I have always believed.

DUPUY DE LOME, the Spanish Minister at Washington, was greatly agitated over the one little shot we fired at the gunboat off San Juan River, and he demanded that everyone who was on board of the *Three Friends* be prosecuted for piracy. Technically, that may have been what it amounted to, for the United States had denied the Cubans belligerent rights; but morally it was a very different matter.

When we got back to Jacksonville we found the despatch boat *Dolphin*, which had been added to the protective force in our absence, and the revenue cutter *Boutwell* watching for us off the mouth of the river. We were all taken into court and solemnly informed that we were under arrest.

The grand jury investigated the case with great care; but decided, by the usual unanimous vote, that there was not sufficient evidence to justify any indictments. Plainly stated, there was no chance of convicting us save out of our own mouths, and there was not a man aboard the *Three Friends* whom the Government could induce to talk, either by threats or promises. Even the distracted *Dons* aboard the gunboat we fired on could not have sworn that the shot came from the *Three Friends*. The most they could have testified to was that the shot was fired from a ship that closely resembled the *Three Friends*; but all tugboats look alike on a dark night. Therefore, the friendly grand jury merely saved all hands the expense and bother of a trial that would have been a farce.

THE instalment of *Dynamite* Johnny's thrilling adventures in our next issue will deal with his amazing answer to Captain General Weyler's threat that he was going to capture him soon, and would hang him to a flagpole in full view of the city. Captain O'Brien sent back word that his next exploit would be to land an expedition within plain sight of Havana—and he actually did it, and within three miles of Weyler's palace. This is one of the most dramatic chapters extracted from the historical records being prepared by Horace Smith.