The Watermelon That Queen Victoria Raised for "The Fourth of July"

By SALLIE M. MOSES

"WHAR yo' gwine now, you Vic?" called Aunt Kitty, as she stood in the doorway of her cabin, to a small black child who was scudding down the path toward a garden patch, some distance from the cabin, and who, as the words of her grandmother reached her ears, halted, hesitated a moment and then, turning, ran back at all speed to where the woman was standing.

"For sho', granny, I'se dun forgot—nebber mind, I'll do all dem chores so quick 't will mek yo' wink."

Then, stealing a glance at the white haired, wrinkled faced negress, whose anger seemed to vanish the moment the child spoke, she went on:

"Oh, granny, yo' jes' orter see him! He's so big and fat and striped, an' I thumped him, an' he's perty near ripe. I 'spec' he'll be ready—" then she suddenly stopped and ran into the house for a bucket and was soon feeding the pig, letting the calf in to its mother and then hurrying to the pea patch.

"Fo' de Law's sake, what ails dat chile?" muttered old Kitty. "Who's big an' fat? Who'll be ready for—for what?"

But Kitty, in spite of her sharp tongue, dearly loved the little one, and could never stay angry with her long.

Sometimes the child was called Vic, sometimes Queen Vic, but if any one asked the wee thing herself, she always replied: "Yassum, Queen Victoria Johnsing, yassum; dat's what my mammy tole me."

Uncle Tom and Aunt Kitty were old time slaves on the plantation of Colonel Graves in Alabama, but since "de wah" had remained on the old place where they were given small wages and allowed some ground for a "truck" patch, where they raised vegetables, and, in fact, were very comfortably fixed.

Little Vic was different in many ways from the other children on the plantations. Like all her race she was highly imaginative and a dreamer of dreams. She was a favorite at the "great house," where the young ladies of the family made much of her, told her fairy stories, taught her to read and write, and encouraged her to put her quaint ideas into words. But she was not much of a talker and asked very few questions, so the mistake she made, of which this story tells, was not so strange after all.

For many weeks Queen Vic had heard her granny and her crony, Aunt Rhody, talking about "de fowth of July comin'," all mixed up with stories of the days "befo' de wah," and how Massa Linkum had made them free, and other thrilling experiences. Up at "the house" the young ladies were making a flag for the fourth of July and talking about the stars and stripes and the "Bonnie Blue Flag" and unionists and confederates, all of which was Greek to Vic, except the oft repeated expression, "the fourth of July."

To her childish mind this name represented a man very powerful, very popular, because Miss Belle said there was to be a parade in his honor, and in some way she connected him with that wonderful being who had set the black people free so they would never be whipped any more or sold away from their families, as she had heard Aunt Rhody tell about, and Vic presently decided that she, too, ought to show her gratitude to this great personage. But how?

There was to be a big celebration at Mobile on the 4th and greatly to the child's delight her grandparents, after much discussion, concluded to go and take her with them. In all the 10 years of her life she had never been off the plantation and the journey of 10 miles seemed to her of vast proportions. Suddenly, one night as she was thinking over her great good fortune, a brilliant idea came to her. She had something she could give "de fo'th."

In one corner of the half acre inclosure about the cabin Vic had a garden spot all her own, where she was allowed to plant what she pleased, and to sell the product to the "big house" and keep the money for herself. This year she had planted watermelon seed, which had produced a famous crop. One of the melons promised to be a real Jumbo, and this became her special care. She fenced it round with truck, visited it several times a day, and threatened instant destruction to any rash pickanniny who should even dare to look at it from the top fence rail. No persuasion could induce the child to tell the reason for all this care. Her grandmother and Aunt Rhody surmised that she was going to sell it and buy some luxury in the way of ribbons.

IN THE WAGON WAS A SEAT FOR UNCLE TOM, AUNT KITTY AND AUNT RHODY, WHILE A GOOD SUPPLY OF HAY WAS PUT IN THE WAGON BED BEHIND THEM FOR LITTLE VIC TO SIT ON.

At last the eventful morning dawned for the great journey to Mobile. In the wagon was a seat for Uncle Tom, Aunt Kitty and Aunt Rhody, while a good supply of hay was put in the wagon bed behind them for little Vic to sit on. A big basket held the lunch. When everything was about ready the child pulled her grandfather's sleeve. "Want yo' to come with me a minnit," she whispered. "Bring yo' knife erlong." Without a word he followed her to the watermelon patch. "Dere, cut de stem of dat big one," she ordered, "and then cah'y it and put in de wagon, and min' yo' do it mitey keerful, granpop."

"What yo' gwine do with dat, honey?" exclaimed the old man as he obeyed the commands of the little girl, who was his darling. "We uns cain't eat dat big one."

"Eat it!" repeated Vic in a fright. "No, indeedy—it's my melon. It's not to be eat, granpop."

"No? Well, then, youse gwine ter sell it, honey?"

"No, indeedy, I'm gwine—" but there she stopped, and not another word would she say. So the old man shouldered the melon and bestowed it carefully under the seat and covered it with a piece of carpet just in time to avoid the curious questioning of the two colored women, who were so busy getting into the wagon and making themselves comfortable that they failed to notice Uncle Tom's maneuvers.

Now behold them on their way! Aunt Kitty was radiant in a new calico on which pink and purple morning glories ran riot. Her head, tied up in a bright blue bandana, also sported a big straw hat with a wreath of roses. A spotless white handkerchief was round her neck and her feet were encased in white stockings, while in front of her reposed a shiny new pair of shoes to be put on when she reached town. Aunt Rhody was also in gala attire, while Uncle Tom wore a rusty suit of black given him to wear at the funeral of his former master. Queen Vic was resplendent in white, with low slippers adorned with red bows and her tightly braided pig's tails tied with bright red ribbons, the entire outfit the gift of her young ladies.

They had started very early and reached the city, securing a place on a desirable street corner, just as the parade was starting. What a wonderful sight it was! First came a brass band, making all the noise they possibly could. Then the police, in spick and span uniforms, with smart white gauntlets, and mounted on gayly decorated horses. Then came a number of carriages filled with "distinguished citizens." In one of these carriages sat a man of commanding figure, a genial countenance, white hair and kindly eyes, who repeatedly raised his hat and bowed as the crowds on the sidewalks cheered and waved their flags. In the rear were more horsemen, more carriages, more brass bands and many local fraternal societies and pedestrians.

Queen Vic's eyes grew as round as marbles as she gazed with awe and delight at this sight. She had never imagined there were so many people in all the world. But she looked in vain for "Fourth of July." Finally she decided that the gentleman with white hair, who kept bowing to the shouting crowds, was the famous character she was looking for.

Presently, after marching through the principal streets, the procession made its way to a small grove on the outskirts of the city, where a platform had been erected and draped with flags. Vic noticed that her "Fourth of July" made a speech, which was received with much clapping of hands, but she did not catch the name, when he was introduced to the audience.

After the speeches were over, the crowds scattered about the grounds in groups, lunch baskets were opened and picnic dinners were in order. As Aunt Kitty took her basket from the wagon Vic all at once remembered the melon and what she had intended to do with it. Without a word she slipped away and, looking anxiously about for her hero, discovered him seated on the grass under a big tree, vigorously fanning himself with his Panama hat and, fortunately for the timid child, all alone. She walked up to him and stood at his side.

"Is yo' de Fort' of July, suh?" queried the child.

The man looked up at her with an amused smile. "The Fourth of July? Why, no, I think not. What makes you ask such a queer question?"

"Why," said Vic, her face clouding over in her disappointment, "'kase I been lookin' for dat man. I'se got sumpin' fo' him, and I was sho' you was him when I saw de people a-cheerin' an' yo' a smilin' an' a bowin' at 'em. Who is yo' den?"

"I—well, I'm only the governor of the state. And what is your name, little one?"

"I'se Queen Victoria, suh, yassir, Queen Victoria Johnsing."

"Oh, I see! Well, Queen Victoria, I must tell you that the fourth of July is not a man, it is a day. A day on which we celebrate the freedom of the United States, as some day you colored people will celebrate Emancipation day. But you are too young to understand about that. And now that we know each other, tell me what you were going to give Mr. Fourth of July when you found him. Perhaps I will do as well."

Queen Vic was sadly disappointed at this shattering of her dreams, but after a steady look into the governor's kindly face her hesitation vanished, and with the confidence of a child she placed her hand in his and led him to the wagon, where Aunt Kitty, Uncle Tom and Aunt Rhody were in a high state of excitement over the sudden disappearance of their charge.

"'Clar to goodness," grumbled Aunt Kitty, "dat chile'll be de def of me. She doan' keer no mo' for de trubble—sho's yo' bo'hn dar she is wid a white gemman' a-comin' dis way!"

Little Vic was equal to the occasion. "Granny," she said, "dis yere's de gubner of de state. I tho't he was de Fort of July you all dun talk erbout, but he says de Fort is a day 'stead of a man, so I'm a-going to gib him de present." In a moment she was in the wagon, had uncovered the jumbo of a melon and rolled it to the tailboard.

"Dere, gran'pop, you lif' dat melon out an' cah'y hit for de gubner over to where de white folks is. An' I hope you'll like it, suh, 'case I growed it myself for de Fort' of July," and she made her best courtesy, as the young ladies had taught her to do.

A smile flitted over the governor's face, then with his most courtly air he bowed to the little black girl. "Thank you very much, Miss Queen Victoria, for this fine melon. I and my friends will certainly enjoy this specimen of your fine gardening."

A shake of her hand and the governor was gone, followed by Uncle Tom, carrying the melon, and by the admiring looks of his little friend. When Queen Vic turned back to her delayed dinner she found herself tightly grasping a gold piece, the governor's souvenir of this great fourth of July.

"Well, I 'clar to goodness!" was all Aunt Kitty could find breath to say.

A FEW SHORT STORIES FROM JUNIOR CALL WRITERS

Carol in Fairyland

ALICE TOFT,
Mountain View. Age 13 Years

CAROL could not seem to go to sleep that night. She lay awake gazing at the moon, when all of a sudden a tiny, silvery voice startled her, and said:

"Excuse me, earth child, for frightening you. I see the sandman has neglected his duty. I am a 'fairy.' I have come from fairyland to——"

"Fairyland!" cried Carol. "Oh, where is it?"

"Mortals are so stupid," muttered the fairy. "It is in the moon, of course. I have come to take you there," she said, waving her wand. "Come." Carol then found herself the size of the fairy, and then the two flitted out into the night.

"I declare," said the fairy, "we must take the rainbow road. How tiresome! Mercury might as well have lighted up the milky way for us; it's so much shorter. Well, come on, this is the road they call the rainbow. Mercy on me! Don't go so near that dark cottony place. That's the rain cloud, and you'd get drowned if you fell in."

"Oh!" said Carol, jumping aside.

"That's where the thunder lives, on that mountain side. We fairies pull his whiskers and run. When you hear the thunder again you'll know some fairy has pulled his whiskers while he was dozing, and he is looking for them."

Carol nodded.

"Ah, here is our carriage that will take us to the moon," said the fairy. "You call them falling stars, but they are merely the fairies' carriages."

When they had started and were going fast the fairy again admonished: "Do sit still. You nearly fell on a comet. There is a planet on which witches live. And there is the land of the goblins," she said, pointing to different planets. "That white planet is where snow and rain come from."

"When shall we get to fairyland?" asked Carol.

"Oh, soon."

After much dodging between planets they arrived at a stairway of flowers.

"Here we are," said the fairy.

They climbed the stairs and as soon as they reached the top swarms of fairies greeted them. The queen of fairies ordered that Carol should visit her at her palace of flowers. So Carol and the fairies made their way there. Queen Rose was delighted to see her. She showed her through the palace and had Carol sit up with her. Once Carol caught sight of the sandman nodding and dozing in the corner.

Queen Rose was by no means dignified. She laughed and scampered as much as the rest. After much running and playing Carol announced that she must go. The fairies hated to see her go, but, of course, it would not do for her to stay.

"Goodby, earth child," they all called after the falling star carrying Carol and her chaperon.

The star let Carol out at her window. She got into bed again only to feel some one shaking her. She opened her eyes and her mother stood beside her.

"Get up, Carol, you'll be late for school."

"I've been to fairyland, mamma," she said, but mother just smiled, and Carol jumped out of bed.

JUNIOR STORIES AND PICTURES WANTED

As a number of the juniors have evinced a desire to write stories for The Junior Call on subjects of their own selection, it has been decided to give publication to such stories as are considered most worthy, and juniors who like to write are, therefore, invited to send in their contributions. The stories should not be more than 500 words in length. They must be strictly original, written on one side of the paper only, and plainly marked with the name, age and address of the author. A number of stories were received this week which, unfortunately, were written on both sides of the paper, and, therefore, can not be used.

Further, in The Junior Call's very large family there are undoubtedly many juniors with clever ideas who can draw well, and they are also invited to submit original pictures, the best of which will be published with the author's name and address. The pictures must be drawn with a pen, in black ink, on white paper.

Now, artists and writers, let us see what you can do!

Crossing the Plains

JULIENNIE LEGGETT,
Wright School, B Seventh. Box 39, No. 1. Age 12 Years

LITTLE Marie and her sister Jennie crossed the plains to the California gold mines with their parents. It was a tiresome drive for her as she sat in the uncovered wagon with a blanket wrapped around her.

But one Sunday a joyful thing happened to her. She received a little pony from her father. As she received it on Sunday she called it Sunshine.

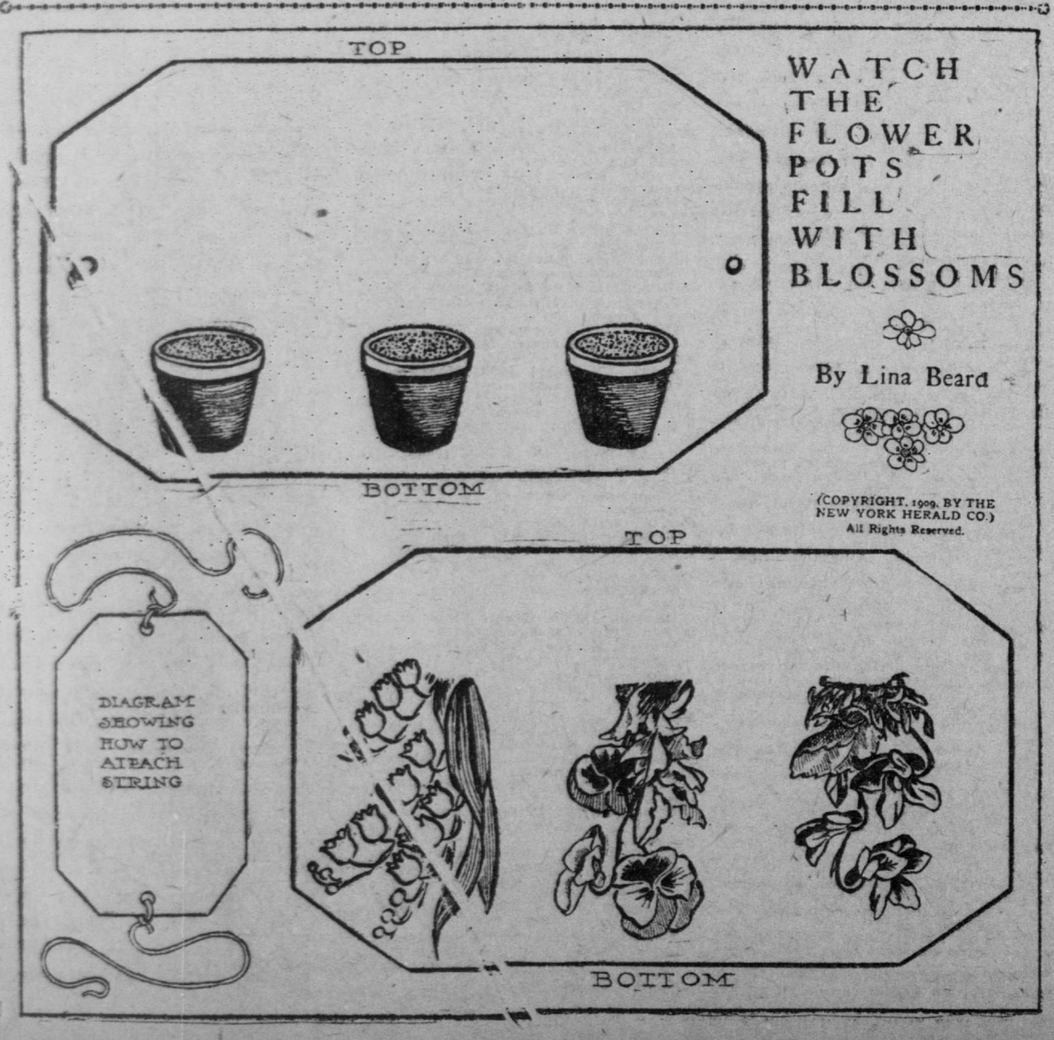
Every day she and Sunshine would go for a ride. One day as she was riding alongside the wagon she asked her mother to let her take Jennie for a ride. Her mother did it gladly, for Jennie was very hard to amuse. They had just entered the wood when they heard a rough voice, which commanded them to get off the pony. Marie, turning to see who it was, saw two Indians.

One grabbed the rein of Sunshine and the other took the two girls. They told the girls to follow them.

Marie, who was very bright for her age, broke off little bits of leaves and dropped them in the road. They were put into a wigwam and a large chief guarded the door. About midnight a rifle shot was heard. Marie knew it was her father's. She lay very still. Soon another was heard. Five Indians were killed and several injured. Marie's father heard her cries and went to her aid. Sunshine was tied in the grass and brush. When he heard Marie he crushed the brush with his feet to draw attention. He and the girls were taken back and they did not go out riding again till they reached California.

The Magic Flower Pot

Here is a pretty cut out notion. Cut out the panel containing the flower pots and paste it on side of a stiff card. Now cut out the panel containing the flowers and paste on the other side of the same card, observing the directions as to top and bottom. When you have pasted both panels down smoothly on the card, attach strings to the ends of the card, as shown in the small illustration. Holding a string in each hand, wind up the card. When you pull on the strings the card will whirl round and round, and the flowers will be seen growing in the pots. Try it; it is worth while.



My Dream

ERMA PEDRANTI,
Olema, Garcia District School. Age 10 Years

ONE night I dreamed that a fairy all dressed in white came in my room and asked me if I wanted her to grant me some wishes.

Then I told her that I wished to go to fairyland. So she blew her whistle and the next moment I found myself in fairyland.

Then she led me to the place where she lived, and told me that if I wanted to stay here she would let me stay and take care of her sheep. Then I told her that I would rather stay than go back.

For a long time I was very happy, but after a while I became lonesome, because I was so far away from my mother and father.

One day I asked the fairy if she would bring me home, and she said, "Yes," and the next moment I found myself at home again and told my mother all about it. And after that I often visited the good fairy.

Aunt Hepsey's Recipe

KATHERINE WHYTE,
16½ St. Rose Avenue, San Francisco

"MOTHER," said Emily Rand slowly, as she placed an empty jelly tumbler and an unsoiled napkin on the dining room table, "you haven't any idea how much I enjoy going up to Aunt Hepsey's.

"Did she seem as bright and well as usual, dear?" asked Mrs. Rand anxiously, as she hurriedly laid the cloth for the noonday meal.

"I think so, mother, and she was delighted with the bread and jelly."

"I imagine Aunt Hepsey's gratitude, which is always so genuine, is the secret of my little girl's pleasure. Isn't it, dear?"

"No, mother," replied Emily thoughtfully, as she took the knife tray from her mother's hands, "it isn't that, for when I don't have anything for her it's always the same. It's her beautiful face that attracts me; and when I come away I always feel—why, I can hardly express it, but, I guess, sort of purified. I wish I had such a sweet face, for then everybody'd love me as they love Aunt Hepsey."

"You can have such a face, dear, if you follow Aunt Hepsey's recipe."

"Recipe, mamma? Why, that seems very strange. She doesn't do anything to make her have such an atttractive face—course she don't."

"She certainly does, Emily, and it's a recipe my own little girl may follow with like results. It's to think beautiful thoughts, and beautiful thoughts make a beautiful face. The face, dear, is the miracle of the soul, and what the soul thinks the face expresses. Never allow yourself to think sour and disagreeable thoughts, but only those which are pure, unselfish and sweet, and in time my little girl's face will be just as beautiful and attractive as Aunt Hepsey's."

Tommy Talks About Old Times

See if you can discover what six members of the animal kingdom are meant by these busy workers.

When Greataunt Susan was a girl, I've
often heard her say,
Children as well as grown folks were
more useful than today,
And even birds and insects helped to do
the daily work,
And none of them were idlers or ever
cared to shirk.

Some curious things they tell us of
the beasts that watched the fire,
And of a bird that held the pot and
never seemed to tire;
A most industrious insect helped prepare good things to eat,
While a dainty winged worker offered
rest to poor, tired feet.

And these were very kind, indeed, but
I think even better
Was the interesting animal who helped
secure a letter.
And still another gentle beast, of whom
you've often read,
Gave up her forest wandering to stay
and make the bread.

Now I suppose that you suppose that
those I've mentioned here
Are all outlandish foreign beasts, unusual or queer;
But this is not the case, you'll find,
when you have guessed them right,
Those six industrious workers who
have toiled by day and night.

Knee Deep in Tigers

Two little boys spent a snowy day during the Christmas holidays tiger shooting in their father's dining room; as one, making his cautious way among the legs of the dinner table, for the nonce a pathless jungle, was hailed by the other with, "Any tigers there, Bill?" he answered gloriously: "Tigers? I'm knee deep in them!"—Children's Answers.

The Dominant Idea

There are times when a man's purpose overmasters everything else, following him even to the gates of death, rendering him unconscious of the facts about him in the one great thought of accomplishment. The recent burning of the well known inn on Lookout mountain draws the public attention to that great battleground.

The site of the inn, which commands a widely extended view, looks directly upon the scene of a famous charge of the civil war. Major General O. O. Howard relates a pathetic little incident which happened on this very spot, in his article entitled, "Grant at Chattanooga."

Four men were carrying a wounded soldier to the rear on a streetcar.

"Where were you hurt, sergeant?" asked our officer.

"Almost up, sir," was the faint reply.

"I mean in what part are you hurt?"

The wounded man fixed his eyes on the speaker.

"Almost to the top," he whispered.

The officer lifted the covering and saw the frightfully shattered arm.

"Yes, I was almost up," murmured the sergeant. "But for that I should have reached the top."

He had been bearing the flag when he was shot. He died, with the utterance growing fainter and fainter on his lips:

"Almost up."

Culinary Note

"Ma wants two pounds of butter exactly like what you sent us last. If it ain't exactly like that she won't take it," said the small boy.

The grocer turned to his numerous customers and remarked blandly:

"Some people in my business don't like particular customers, but I do. It's my delight to serve them and get them what they want. I will attend to you in a moment, little boy."

"Be sure to get the same kind," said the boy. "A lot of pa's relations is visiting at our house, and ma doesn't want 'em to come again."—Puck.

THE SINKING OF THE MERRIMAC

THE sinking of the ship Merrimac at the mouth of Santiago harbor, by Lieutenant Hobson, was one of the most daring exploits on record. It is here told in his own words.

"I did not miss the entrance to the harbor. I turned east until I got my bearings and then made for it, straight in. Then came the firing. It was grand, flashing out first from one side of the harbor and then from the other from those big guns on the hills, the Spanish ship Viscaya, lying inside the harbor, joining in.

"Troops from Santiago had rushed down when the news of the Merrimac's coming was telegraphed and soon lined the foot of the cliff, firing wildly across and killing each other with the cross fire. The Merrimac's steering gear broke as she got to Estrella point. Only three of the torpedoes on her side exploded when I touched the button. A huge submarine mine caught her full amidships, hurling the water high in the air and tearing a great rent in the Merrimac's side.

"Her stern ran upon Estrella point. Chiefly owing to the work done by the mine she began to sink slowly. At that time she was across the channel, but before she settled the tide drifted her around. We were all aft, lying on the deck. Shells and bullets whistled around. Six inch shells from the Viscaya came tearing into the Merrimac, crashing into wood and iron and passing clear through, while the plunging shots from the fort broke through her decks.

"'Not a man must move,' I said, and it was only owing to the splendid discipline of the men that we all were not killed, as the shells rained over us and minutes became hours of suspense. The men's mouths grew parched, but we must lie there till daylight, I told them. Now and again one or the other of the men lying with his face glued to the deck and wondering whether the next shell would not come our way would say: 'Hadn't we better drop off now, sir?' but I said: 'Wait till daylight.'

"It would have been impossible to get the catamaran or raft anywhere but to the shore, where the soldiers stood shooting, and I hoped that by daylight we might be recognized and saved. The grand old Merrimac kept sinking. I wanted to go forward and see the damage done there, where nearly all the fire was directed, but one man said that if I rose it would draw all the fire on the rest. So I lay motionless. It was splendid the way these men behaved. The fire of the soldiers, the batteries and the Viscaya was awful.

"When the water came up on the Merrimac's decks the raft floated amid the wreckage, but she was still made fast to the boom, and we caught hold of the edge and clung on, our heads only being above water. One man thought we were safe right there; it was quite light; the firing had ceased, except that on the launch which followed to rescue us, and I feared Ensign Powell and his men had been killed.

"A Spanish launch came toward the Merrimac. We agreed to capture her and run. Just as she came close the Spaniards saw us, and a half dozen marines jumped up and pointed their rifles at our heads. 'Is there any officer in that boat to receive a surrender of prisoners of war?' I shouted. An old man leaned out under the awning and held out his hand. It was the Spanish admiral, Cervera.

"R. P. HOBSON."

The Feather

Having procured a small flossy feather the players sit in a circle as closely together as possible. One of the party then throws the feather as high as possible into the air, and it is the duty of all the players to prevent it from alighting on them by blowing at it whenever it comes their direction. Any player whom it falls upon must pay a forfeit.

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