

NOW THE AMERICAN BOY HAS A CHANCE

Senator Perkins' Valuable Words of Advice.

TO DISTINGUISH HIMSELF IN THE NAVY

What Gunner Brown Has Done on the Oregon.



William R. Brown of the Oregon Now Gun Captain.

WILLIAM RANSFORD BROWN of Oakland is a bright example of the young American manhood on which the future of the United States navy depends. He has just returned to his home for a vacation, and brings with him a commission as first-class gun captain.

Young Brown's experience in the United States navy is just as extensive as that of the Oregon, and just as long. When this famous battleship first sailed from San Francisco on her maiden voyage William Brown of Oakland was one of her apprentices. No sooner had this lad entered upon the life of a sailor in Uncle Sam's big battleship than he decided to use every effort to obtain promotion. His character from the first for behavior and study was of the best, and when the Government some months ago ordered eight of the Oregon's best lads to go to a school of gunnery in the East to prepare for commissions young Brown was at once selected for one of the number.

During the early part of the career of the Oregon there was nothing occurred of particular interest, but in February of last year, when the battleship was at Bremerton, in the State of Washington, being thoroughly overhauled, no one guessed that she was really being prepared for that celebrated trip around Cape Horn to Cuba.

Young Brown during the last year of the Oregon's history and his own has shown in a series of letters to his parents how thoroughly one of Uncle Sam's sailors enters upon his duties.

From Bahia, in the Brazils, young Brown sent a brief letter touching upon the passage to that point from this coast. In this letter he says:

"We arrived here last night (May 8) from Rio de Janeiro to coal up and clear the ship for action. We are putting on our war paint and clearing the ship of all woodwork. This is the first change we have had to write. There is a Spanish fleet about 200 miles north of here waiting for us to come along. I think they will get all they are looking for. We hope to reach some American port in eighteen or twenty days. If we can reach the United States without a fight we will be very lucky. The Marietta is expected in to-day. She has been following close behind us all the way. This is the fourth port we have called in since we left Frisco. We stopped at Callao and at Sandy Point and at Rio. The Oregon is now painted lead color, and it makes her look very large and fierce, and I think when the Spanish sight her they will think twice before they come too near. All the guns are kept loaded all the time, so as soon as we sight a Spanish ship we will be ready to fire. You may not hear from me again, but if we come out all right I will write."

Nearly a month later young Brown continues his log-letters from the Oregon, which was then at Santiago de Cuba.

"Well, we have traveled over 15,000 miles looking for a fight with the Spaniards and did not find one until to-day. After coaling up at Key West we joined the blockading fleet off Havana. There were about ten American warships there and we got three cheers from all of them for our successful trip around the Horn. As we passed the Indiana the band played 'There's a New Bully Come to Town,' and I guess the band was right."

"With the New York and other ships we at once proceeded to Santiago, leaving the rest of the ships to blockade Havana. We arrived early in the morning off Santiago and found eight or ten American ships there, all of which gave us more cheers. The 'great' Spanish Cape Verde fleet is inside the harbor and is afraid to come out. They were so anxious to get at the Yankees before the war, but since then they have seen some of Uncle Sam's warships and they have changed their tune."

Then the letter goes on to tell about the sinking of the Merrimac and the bombardment of the Spanish forts by the American fleet.

"We are still keeping up the blockade and as soon as the troops come we will give the Spaniards some more of McKinley's peace-makers. You ought to have seen the dust fly and the Spaniards, too, while we were firing. 'This is an old story now, the battle of the Nile. But a brave story can never die of age.'"

And the same is true of the story told by young Brown in the following letter written while all this nation was celebrating the great victory of which in his unaffected language he tells:

"OFF SANTIAGO DE CUBA, July 4, 1898. 'Dear Mother: This is the 4th of July and we are taking a day off to ourselves. We have done a good deal of work in the last three days and we need a rest. On the 1st and 2d our fleet destroyed some of the Spanish batteries and yesterday we completely destroyed the Spanish fleet off Santiago."

"It looks as though the Spanish admiral had been waiting for a chance to escape, for late Saturday night there were nine of our ships on blockade duty off the entrance to Santiago. About daylight Sunday (3d) four of our best ships left for coal and ammuni-

lards considered it a good opportunity to escape.

"The Oregon was lying in front of the entrance, and the other four ships (Indiana, Iowa, Brooklyn and Texas) were lined up on either side of us. Just at 9:25 as first call went to quarters the lookout reported the Spanish fleet coming out of the harbor. We cleared for action at once and signaled to the rest of the ships to look out for what was coming. There was great excitement for a few minutes."

"As soon as the first Spaniard poked her nose outside she commenced firing at the Indiana and we answered her with a broadside of six, eight and thirteen inch shells. Soon her four big cruisers and the torpedo boats were outside. They headed up the west coast of the island, close to shore, and the Oregon and Brooklyn kept alongside of them about three thousand yards off."

"The torpedo boats were blown sky-high in short order. I saw one go up. When she exploded a volume of black and white smoke shot up a hundred feet into the air. That was the last seen of her and her sisters soon followed her fate. Before we went two miles two of the Spanish cruisers were seen on fire, heading for the beach. They went ashore within half a mile of each other. Shells were flying over us like hail, but luckily none hit us and not a man was scratched. There were two more ships ahead of us still, and we flew after them at the rate of seventeen knots, firing our heavy guns as fast as we could, and we could fire them fast. The third one was struck and she headed for the beach. We kept firing as we passed her until she went high and dry on the beach and there was an explosion aboard of her. That was the Viscaya, the one that could destroy New York City so quickly. I tell you, mother, that ship will never enter New York harbor again."

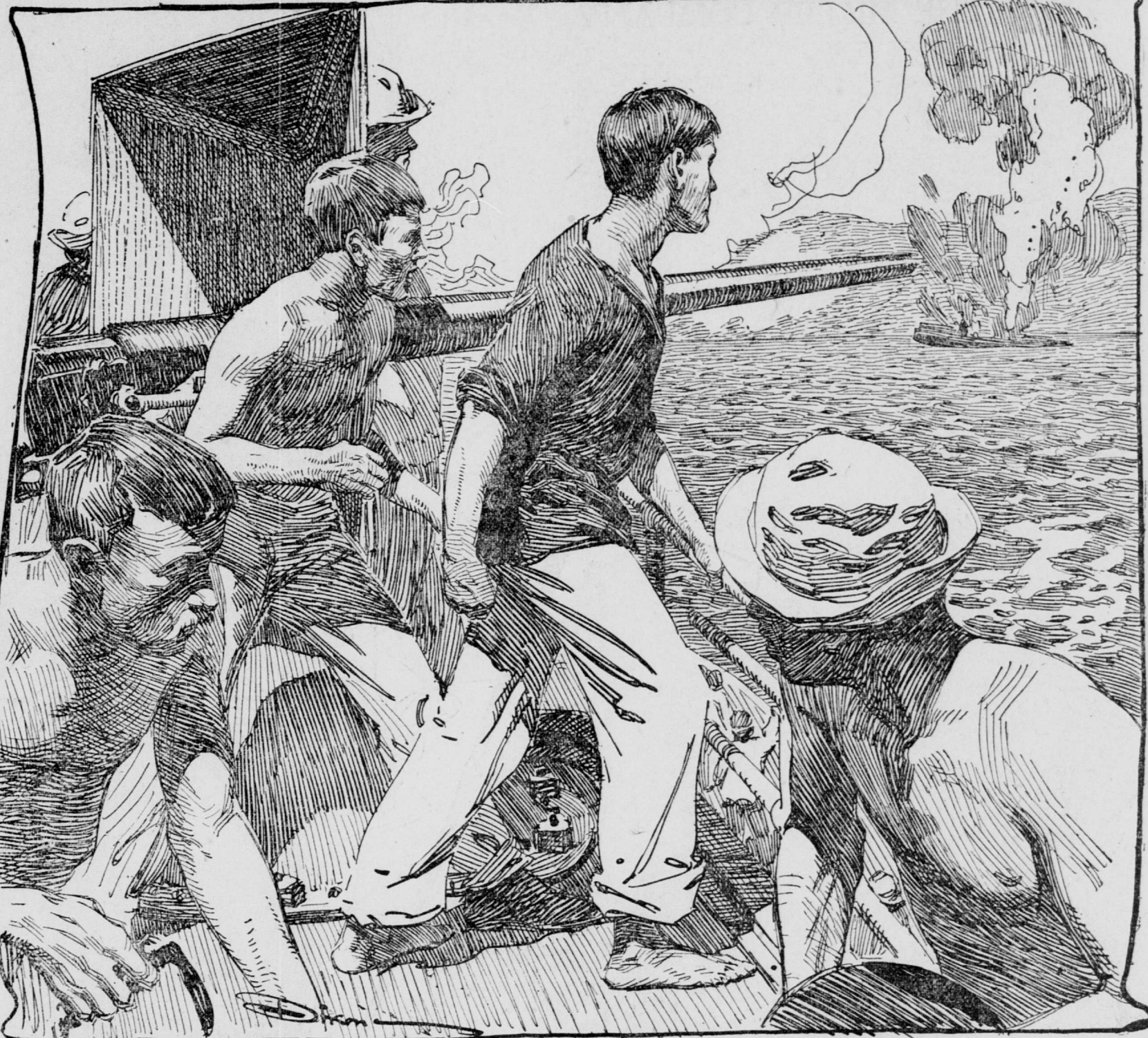
"It was now about 12 o'clock and there was only one ship left, the Christobal Colon, the fastest of the fleet. The Oregon and Brooklyn chased her for about two hours, and when we saw we were gaining on her we let a few of our thirteen-inch bow-chasers drive at her. One went right in front of her. It struck a little too near to suit her, so she headed in for the shore and after a little more shooting hauled down her colors and surrendered."

"When our prize crew went aboard of her they found four dead and about twenty wounded. She was hit a great many times. About 500 officers and men were put aboard the Resolute and made prisoners of war. We stayed there all night to watch her. She was leaking

Senator Perkins Says That All American Lads May Profit by Young Brown's Experience in the Navy.

I HAVE read the story of Gunner William R. Brown and I would like if every American boy would profit by his experience. It is just such young men as we want in our navy. The chances of promotion under act of Congress, recently passed, are even much greater than those which fell to the lot of young Brown. It is for the purpose of bringing forward such lads that the naval station on Goat Island is being built. It was only after great effort that I succeeded in having the number of apprentices in the navy increased gradually from 500 to 2000, and out of this number California has already produced over four hundred.

When the war with Spain broke out 63 per cent of our navy were of foreign nativity. By encouraging such lads as young Brown it is hoped that in ten years 90 per cent of the men in the navy will be American born. This result can only be produced by the apprentice system, which will always insure good material upon which to build our greater navy. There are hundreds of good, honest youths who seem to have no place on shore and who are just the material to graduate through the naval training station into seamen and warrant officers. It is only by placing the facts properly before the people that the full advantages offered by our navy can be understood and appreciated.



"I SAW ONE GO UP. WHEN SHE EXPLODED A VOLUME OF BLACK & WHITE SMOKE SHOT UP HUNDREDS OF FEET INTO THE AIR"

badly and before morning we could hardly see her, and that was the end of the great Cape Verde fleet. We are now ready for their reserve fleet if it comes over."

"I will have a thousand dollars or more when I get paid off. Yesterday's work amounted to many millions, to be divided among the navy. Do not worry. I will come out all O. K. Your son, WILLIAM R. BROWN."

In another paragraph of the same letter young Brown undoubtedly tells some very plain truths. In answer to

a query from his mother he says: "You asked me in your letter if my knees knocked together when the first shot was fired. I was not so badly scared as all that, but I will admit that it all felt a little queer at first. We are used to it now. We have smelt quite a good deal of gunpowder in the last month."

Last September there was great joy aboard the Oregon, for it was then supposed that she was to be sent around the Horn to San Francisco. "I expect we will be there by Christmas," says Brown. "Then you can see the ship

that opened the eyes of the whole world. Thousands of people come here (New York navy yard) every day, and although there are six other ships all they want to see is the Oregon."

Then comes what at this time seemed like a great disappointment to the young gunner, but which was really the stepping-stone to his future success. October 1, writing from the United States ship Amphitrite, then at Boston, he says: "We are not going to Frisco. Sudden orders came from Washington to send eight young sea-

men from the Oregon to this ship to take instructions for gun captains. I was one of the eight, and it nearly broke my heart to hear that I could not go back to Frisco with the Oregon. It is probably for the best, but I don't like it a bit. If we pass the examinations we will get from \$35 to \$50 a month. We are now taking daily studies at the gunnery school, working up for examinations."

After a month's studying and practicing young Brown realized that the change ordered in his career was for his own benefit. "The first Lieutenant of the Oregon," he says, "has explained the matter to me and has convinced me that this is the best thing for me to do if I want to get up in the navy. I am one of fifty sent here from the different ships in the navy. It will take about five months to receive our instructions and qualify, and if we pass we will be given our rates right away. Chief gun captain gets \$60 a month, first-class gun captain \$50 and second-class captain \$40. I am confident now that I will get second-class, but I shall try for first. We are sent here, I learn, because we have all got good records, and they will shove us along. When we get through I can go to the Oregon if I want to, and I want to bad enough. We expect to get our prize money about Christmas, and as soon as our examinations are over the Government will send me overland to Mare Island, where I shall be paid off, as I have only eight months now to serve."

The progress made by the Oakland gunner was evidently very good, for after the end of the first preliminary examination he only made one error out of fifteen questions, which all related to deck battery guns, "and," says he, "it was a corker. The next examination will be on the Lee rifle, and I think it will be easier than the first. We will leave here some time in the latter part of this month for Port Royal, S. C. for our target practice, which will last at least two months. It will soon be over now, and I shall be at liberty to come home."

"In the target practice I fired sixteen shots to-day with a three-pounder and made twelve bullseyes at about 1500 yards. To-morrow we will fire six-pounders and four-inch guns, and last of all the big ten-inch guns. The ten-inch shells weigh 500 pounds and will carry ten miles. We have to fire with them at a target 3000 yards away. Our course will finish in a few days and we shall know where we stand."

Recently the young Oakland gunner passed the final examinations, and qualified for gun captain of the first class. "If I had got four per cent more," he says, "I would have got chief. We have not our appointments yet as the recommendations have been sent to Washington to be approved. I might leave for California any day and I hope the next letter will be a verbal one. I will send you a telegram as I pass through Los Angeles on my way to Oakland."

A SOPORIFIC PLANT.

Mr. Gillespie of Edinburgh has called attention to the curious soporific action of certain plants found in Russia and in America.

These plants are known to botanists under the name of stipa. On the Mediterranean coast, where the stipa grows in profusion, it is called virgin's flax, and because of its beautiful blossoms is used extensively for bouquets.

In Texas and New Mexico a species of this plant, called stipa viridula, possesses soporific qualities.

The cowboys and herders of the West, where the plant grows luxuriantly, often find to their astonishment that their cows and horses are suddenly overcome with sleepiness, accompanied with great weakness. They are rendered incapable of traveling and cannot exert themselves without great effort.

Horses and cows are affected alike. The head falls low, the body trembles, the breath comes with difficulty and the heart beats tumultuously. Accompanying this there is profuse sweating and exhaustion. The poor animal seems violently sick. However, in a few days his state becomes normal again.

Strangely enough, sheep are not affected by the plant.

As an experiment Mr. Gillespie inoculated frogs and rabbits with an extract from the stipa viridula. After the injections the animals were apparently seized with hallucinations and suffered the anxiety and paralysis of a strong narcotic.



MAKING A FOOL OF LOVE.

Drawn for The Sunday Call by E. Frederick, the Noted Illustrator of Summer Scenes.