

PHILLIPS AND HIS STORY.

ONE OF THE MERRIMAC HEROES ON A TRIP TO THIS CITY.

He Tells the Story of the Daring Dash of the Merrimac to the Harbor of Santiago—The Thrilling Incidents in Connection with Their Short Trip.

Mr. Geo. Phillips, a young man who formerly belonged to this city, and is a brother-in-law of Mr. Chas. Jackson, who keeps the oyster saloon on King Square and was one of the famous crew of the S. S. Merrimac, which in the late Hispano-American War was sent in by the Americans to block the channel of Santiago, has been spending a short time in this city, meeting his relatives and enjoying a well earned rest.

Mr. Phillips is a man rather short in stature, of a dark complexion and possessing that bold fearless look that belongs to the daring seamen and soldiers who have made names for themselves and brought honor to their country in the late war. His demeanor is so modest that it is with the greatest difficulty that one can get him to talk about the war and the most exciting and daring attempt that formed a part of it.

All the readers of this paper must remember the brave crew of the Merrimac and how their deed of heroism was heralded to the world when they made the attempt to block the harbor of Santiago, and they will no doubt read with the keenest interest a description of the short cruise and the scenes that followed.

When Mr. Phillips shipped from Galveston, Texas, he did not have very much idea of joining the American navy, though he had been in that southern city for nearly six years; but being as he was a machinist by trade, acquainted with marine engines and the running of them, he found no difficulty in signing articles when he presented himself to the recruiting ship at Galveston, after he had passed the medical examination, and being assigned at once a post in the American navy. His description of the examination was interesting, but as it is not a part of this story, it need not be included in it.

Fifty-five hours of railroad journeying took him to the Norfolk Navy Yards, and at this port he was assigned with many others to the S. S. Merrimac. This was a vessel calculated to carry 5,200 tons of coal, and was to follow the warships in their short cruises and to provide them with fuel when necessary. Having obtained her cargo, the Merrimac went to Key West, and after lying there for fourteen days, proceeded to a certain port to coal some of the American warships.

After having done so she was on her way back with one-half her cargo on board when she sighted the American fleet off Santiago de Cuba. Shortly after she joined the fleet, Hobson, the daring navy constructor, conceived the idea of preventing the Spanish fleet from escaping from Santiago by sinking the large coal steamer Merrimac across the narrow harbor entrance. Of course everybody knew that in order to do this, the steamship would be compelled to face the fire of strong batteries, including the big guns of Morro Castle and the concentrated fire of Spanish warships. Still in spite of this, Hobson, after obtaining the consent of the Admiral, called for volunteers to man the Merrimac. No more men were to be taken than were needed and Mr. Phillips' story of the choosing of these is certainly a thrilling one, and recalls the bravery of those olden times that won victories for the English and England everywhere.

Some three hundred men volunteered for the work of seven, and it was a difficult task to choose them. Mr. Phillips in his modest way did not claim any credit for being chosen by Hobson, but says that so long as he was on the Merrimac and understood the working of her engines and valves and all that was necessary in the sinking of the ship, he supposes, that so long as he was willing, he was chosen. That however is but a mild way of putting it. Mr. Phillips, like any other man did not have to go to face death in the Merrimac. He volunteered to go and was chosen. There were others who also volunteered. One of these was at the wheel, another named Kelly was in the fire room. One stood ready to cut away the bow anchor and another was assigned to the port anchor; a spare man to take the wheel in case the wheelman was killed, and another to look generally after stations. This was the entire crew of the Merrimac.

In speaking of the plans of their short

trip—only one of five miles from the fleet to the entrance of the harbour. Phillips said that their intention was to have the Admiral's ship, the New York, follow the Merrimac in, firing blank shots at her, just as if a Spanish ship was seeking to run the blockade in the harbor. But the New York instead of following them in the first morning signalled for them to come back, and they were forced to wait for 24 hours.

Before making the attempt again Hobson gave each and everyone of them a chance to withdraw, but none of them took advantage of it, though urged to do so by their friends and shipmates, who thought the attempt they were going to make led to certain death.

His description of how everything portable on the Merrimac was taken from her by the crews of the other ships, who retained the articles as souvenirs, was very amusing. Even the grub, that was brought aboard was captured for the same purpose.

Hobson remained with them all the time, talking over the attempt they were going to make, and instructing each and everyone of them very carefully into what had to be done.

It was quite early in the morning when they did make a start, and they went at full speed for the entrance of the harbor.

While doing so, he, in the engine-room and Kelly in the fire-room could not tell what was going on above, and when they first heard the dull and muffled reports of the big guns, Kelly rushed into the engine-room, exclaiming—

"That is the New York firing blank shots at us." "He had hardly uttered the words" said Phillips, "when one of the shots from the Morro Castle battery struck the rudder of the ship and she quivered like a leaf, calling forth the remark from him—'If those are blank shots they are damn queer ones.' They were not long in suspense about them for just then Hobson gave the signal to come on deck. Before he did so, Phillips said he had to open the valves so as to allow the water to rush in and assist in sinking the ship. The water was pouring in when he and Kelly ascended to the deck and took their positions. Each of them, along with the others on board, had a mine to explode on the port side of the ship, and along side of the station where to explode the mine was a life-belt and a revolver. In order to get



GEO. PHILLIPS.

the life-belt they had to take their position, and they had barely done so, when the signal was given to explode the mines. These were all placed on the port side of ship, and when they did their work, they were to rush to the starboard side and remain as long as possible. However before they had received the signal a shot from the Morro Battery had struck the fore-castle and exploded. Fortunately none of them were hit by the flying splinters; one fellow made up his mind to leave the ship on the spot. Hobson however interfered and quietly remarked that the first man who deserted his post would be shot. They would live or die together, he said. And these words had hardly escaped him when the mines exploded and the ship went down.

"If she had not sunk in shallow water," said Mr. Phillips, "I would not have been here to-day to tell this story, for all of us were sucked down in the depths with her. We had made provision, however, for our safety, and a life-raft and a life-boat floated immediately afterwards. To these we swam. None of us had to go more than 20 or 30 yards, and all of us reached the life-raft in safety. To this we clung for over two hours, while all the time the Spanish riflemen were

peppering away at whatever was floating and moving with the tide from the sunken vessel. Had we been floating about on those hatches there is no doubt that many, if not all of us would have been shot."

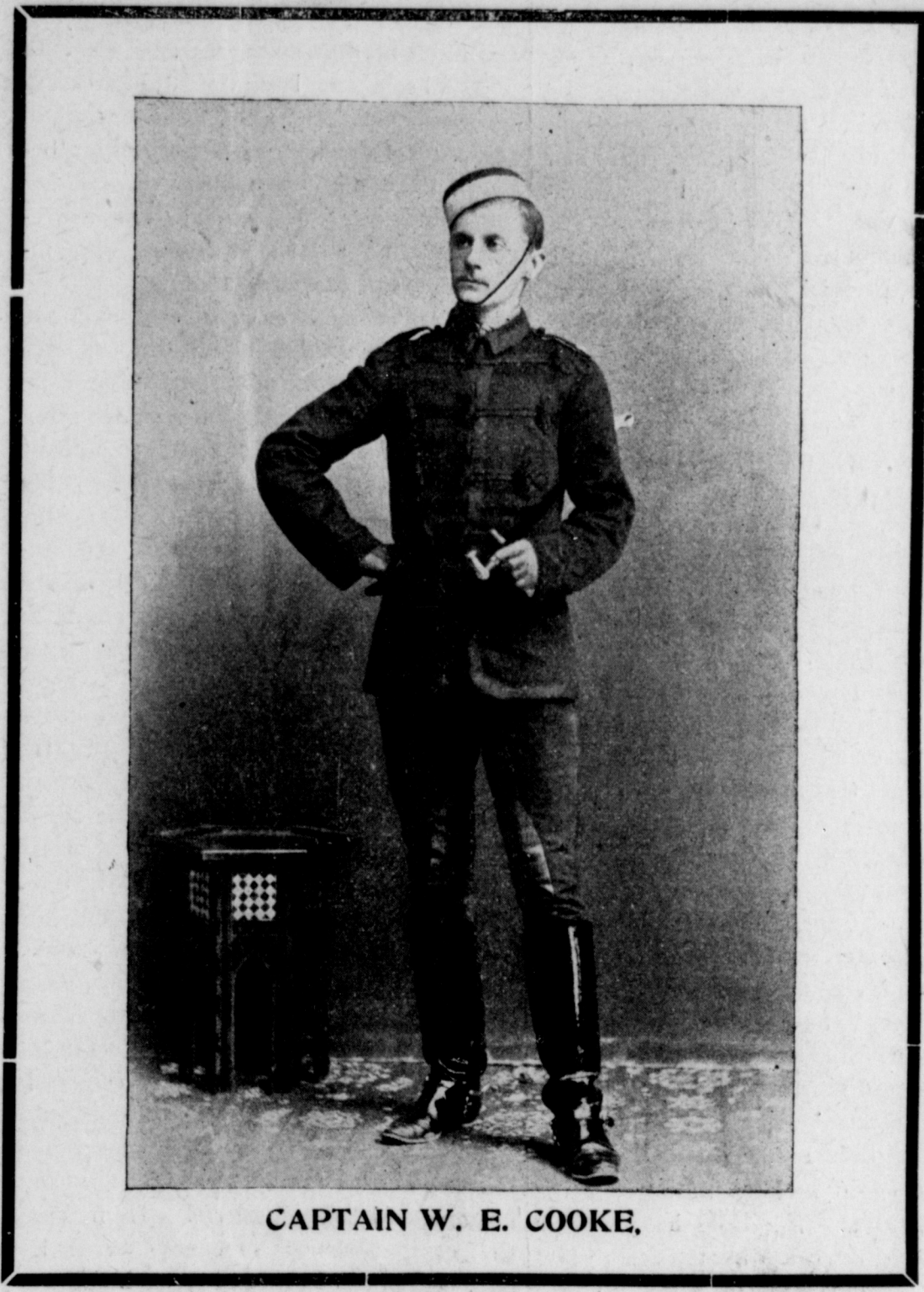
"In about two hours, as I said before," said Phillips, "a steam-launch from the Reina Mercedes, a Spanish warship in the harbor approached us and Hobson standing on the raft, asked in French if there

DIED WHILE AT HIS DUTY

MR. W. E. COOKE MEETS DEATH IN FAR AWAY AFRICA.

Sketch of the Life of the Young Soldier who Died far From Home and Friends—His Port-rait and the way in Which News of his Death was Received.

MONCTON, SEPT. 29.—One of the saddest events which has occurred in many years to



CAPTAIN W. E. COOKE.

was a Spanish officer on board. Obtaining the reply that there was, he said, I wish to surrender myself and crew as prisoners of war. The Spanish officer in charge, who proved to be Admiral Cervera, beckoned him along-side and Hobson swam from the raft to the launch. Having been examined for arms, his comrades were beckoned to approach in the same way. They did so and finally reached the deck of the ship to which the steam-launch belonged.

Hobson said when he got upon deck—"I demand stimulants for my men, water and soap for them to wash in, and dry clothes."

"You demand! you demand!" said the Spanish Captain in an excited way, "I would request that a man in your position would request rather than demand."

Hobson changed his demand to a request, and everything that the crew needed was immediately supplied to them. Hot rum in liberal quantities was given them, and every facility was afforded for good baths and dry clothes. Then after this food and room were served to them again, and the height of hospitality reached them in the shape of a cigar.

SO MUCH FOR RED TAPE.

Where Mr. T. J. Cronin's Letter Went and How Long It was in Transit.

A few days ago, a gentleman from Welsford, which is about 26 miles from St. John, mailed a letter to Mr. T. J. Cronin of this city. He was very anxious that it should reach Mr. Cronin very promptly and so he took advantage of the new post-office regulation that permits a person to put a 10 cent stamp on the envelope to insure its special and speedy delivery. The letter arrived in St. John all right, but it appears that there was no 3 cent stamp on it in addition to the special delivery 10 cent stamp. So instead of being delivered to Mr. Cronin, the post office officials here sent the letter to Halifax to the Branch Dead Letter Office there. Then the Halifax officials wrote Mr. Cronin that if he would send them a three cent stamp, he would get his letter. Of course he did so and just seven days after his correspondent had mailed the letter at Welsford it was delivered to Mr. Cronin here. Now, would it not have been simpler for the post-office officials here to have carried the letter up to Germain Street to Mr. Cronin's place of business, and saved him the loss of that three cent stamp and the loss of his order. The post-office officials have given a good deal of worry and trouble in this case. So much for red-tape.

startle the people of Moncton and arouse their sympathies, was the tragic death of Captain W. E. Cooke, only son of Mr. and Mrs. T. V. Cooke of this city who was shot dead by natives in East Africa during the performance of his duty, some time during the early part of this month. The sad intelligence reached his family last Thursday and was conveyed through a telegram from Lord Aberdeen warning them that there was grave cause for anxiety concerning Captain Cooke, as there had been a skirmish with the enemy. This was quickly followed with a second telegram announcing in terms which left no room for doubt, that the young soldier had been shot dead.

No details have been received so far, but the authorities at the Foreign office have promised to send all available particulars as soon as possible. The blow was a most crushing one for the family who had only recently received the most cheerful letters from Captain Cooke, and Mrs. Cooke is completely prostrated by the blow. Messages of sympathy and condolence have poured in upon the stricken family, and in addition to Lord Aberdeen's telegram of condolence the following telegrams from General Hutton, and Lt. Col. Drury, were received during the day:

MR. T. V. COOKE:—Have just received from His Excellency the sad news of your son's death in action on the east African coast. Pray accept my deepest sympathy. GENERAL HUTTON.

KINGSTON ONT., SEPT. 22.

MR. T. V. COOKE, Esq:—Our profoundest sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Cooke at the sad intelligence communicated to us by Lord Aberdeen. We all mourn the early death of your son and our comrade. LT. COL. DRURY.

Captain Cooke was born in Picton, N. S., in 1868, but passed a great part of his early youth in Moncton. He graduated from the Royal Military College at Kingston in 1891, and after devoting some time to civil engineering he gratified his strong leaning towards military life by obtaining an appointment on the permanent staff of the Royal Canadian Artillery at Quebec, from whence he was transferred to Kingston, in A Battery, under Colonel Drury. Last autumn he received an appointment for service under the British Foreign Office in the East African protectorate and in May was ordered out in charge of an expedition against certain hostile tribes, returning victorious and unharmed. Evidently there has been a second outbreak, and Captain Cooke's life was sacrificed.

The services in the different churches on Sunday were conducted with special reference to the sad death of the brave

young soldier, the evening service at St. George's partaking largely of the nature of a memorial service. The rector referred in touching terms to the young man who had met death in the fearless and manly performance of his duty as a soldier, and an officer of his Queen and country; and the hymns "Nearer my God to Thee," and "On the Resurrection Morning" were sung by the choir.

In the Central Methodist Church Mr. Lodge referred feelingly to Captain Cooke's death, and expressed the heartfelt sympathy of the community for the bereaved family. Prof. Watts organist of the church played Beethoven's funeral march and the choir sang the funeral anthem, "Sleep Thy Fast Sleep." At the conclusion of the service the congregation remained in their seats while the Dead March from Saul was played.

The deepest sympathy is expressed by all classes for the bereaved family in their terrible affliction.

THE WORK AT THE POLLS.

Some Necessary Features for Success Were Lacking in the Election.

There wasn't any fun around town Thursday, election day. The usual bustling was absent and the bustle and excitement incident to elections were lacking. Men went about their business in the usual way and but one-third of them, as the figures show, went out of their way to vote for or against the proposition.

There were some lady workers and they drove from point to point encouraging their temperance friends and providing them with refreshments. But in one booth this was lacking and a well known liquor dealer had much pleasure in "feeding his enemies" as he expressed it. The temperance representative in King's ward who objected to his opponents drinking ale in the booth found out that he had some determined people to deal with who did not propose to go without their beverage before the law said so. A dominion official made himself so personally objectionable that a good deal of indignation was expressed and it is not unlikely that in future he will keep quiet at elections. The liquor dealers made no effort to win. They did not spend money or distribute rum. All that they did was to be represented in the booths and prevent any impersonation. Little if any of that was attempted. The bars throughout the city were closed and though Inspector Jones was busy all day walking from place to place, so far as PROGRESS can learn, he saw no open saloons. Some of the dealers were in favor of keeping open as they were doing in Montreal but the majority was for avoiding even a doubtful infraction of the law. The result was given to both parties through the evening papers but partial returns were handed in to the headquarters of the liquor dealers on Water Street and the rooms of the Prohibitionists on Charlotte street as the vote was counted. What the leaders of the "Antis" watched was the percentage of the temperance vote to the whole vote. They were not concerned evidently whether there was a majority against them or not but watched their opponents vote as indicating the strength of the sentiment against their business. All credit must be given the hard work of those who conducted the temperance campaign. They spent a good deal of money, in holding meetings and hiring speakers. The result must have pleased them in one respect and disappointed them inasmuch as they did not succeed in drawing out a large vote.

The Show's Disappointing Feature.

The business representative of the Lewis Morrison show, Mr. Murray is about the only unpopular and disappointing feature of it. Mr. Wallace Munro, the advance man, is accustomed to receive all the courtesies that can be extended to him in this city and in his natural desire to reciprocate he left written requests for Mr. Murray to carry out his intentions. By ignoring them Mr. Murray rather showed himself in his true light and did an injury to a popular company of which he is the misplaced manager.

Base Ball Benefit.

On the B & A grounds next Tuesday afternoon a team of reporters from the daily papers will play ball with a combination of firemen and policemen. The game promises to be a most spirited one, and has also a worthy object. It is a benefit for Willie Ingraham who lost both legs in an accident last Spring. The game will begin at three o'clock and an admission fee of ten cents to the grounds will be charged.