

Mystery of the Maine--Will the Next Few Weeks See Final Solution?

Whole Nation Now Awaits Result of Engineering Inquest Being Conducted in Havana Harbor

BY JOHN ELFRETH WATKINS.

Will the "mystery of the Maine" be solved by the inquest now to be held in Havana harbor?

Will this official post-mortem examination prove that our vengeance upon the kingdom of the don is justified—if ever vengeance is justified, or will that lusty battler, "Remember the Maine," come re-echoing down the ages to haunt and remind us of a vengeance too swift?

Its temper cooled by thirteen years of reflection, the nation which convicted and punished Spain for the catastrophe of mid-February, '98, now awaits in suspense to learn whether Spain was, after all, the victim of circumstantial evidence.

After exonerating the Maine's own officers and crew of negligence and concluding that she was blown up by a submarine mine that caused a partial explosion of two magazines, the forward magazines, the court of inquiry which sifted the mystery declared itself "unable to obtain evidence fixing the responsibility for the destruction of the Maine upon any person or persons."

What appears astonishing in these days of government spies and Federal detective bureaus is the paucity of evidence, except that of a technical character, gathered in Havana during the days succeeding the catastrophe.

Anonymous Letter Tells Plot.

Soon after the explosion Consul General Lee at Havana received an anonymous letter written in Spanish and signed "A Friend." It gave details of a conspiracy between certain merchants of Havana and three desperadoes—two harbor thieves and a skilled diver—to blow up the Maine. Details as to where they had secured their equipment, where they had hidden their boat and the names of their backers were given, as was the price which they were to be paid for the job—\$2,999 in advance and \$4,999 after their work had been accomplished.

Before dawn of the day of the catastrophe the trio sneaked out into the harbor, where the diver did the work to bring about the explosion, but just when they were retiring they were attacked, from some quarter not stated. One of the two thieves was killed and "left his teeth in the boat." The other was wounded, taken prisoner and at the time the letter was written "was being administered morphine constantly" that he might be put out of the way before betraying the plot.

Only the diver escaped, according to the mysterious writer, who suggested that this survivor, named Pepe Taco, be found and made to talk, which he would probably do, offered his original share of the profits, which he now feared to claim.

No funds with which to run this story down were in the hands of Consul General Lee during those days of excitement, but he assigned his clerk, Henry Draine, to the task of finding Pepe Taco. He sent Draine to Charles Carbonell, an American citizen of Havana, as the likeliest person who could help them, and Carbonell enlisted the services of his trusted boatman, who reported that Pepe Taco could not have been the man, as he had died many days before the Maine's destruction, so it must have been Pepe Barquin, who was meant, the boatman added. But a search for Barquin resulted, it is alleged, in the discovery that he, too, had died suddenly several days before the explosion. The Court of Inquiry considered the anonymous letter and called upon our consulate for a further investigation of this story, but further evidence was not forthcoming.

The Mysterious Witness.

The only direct evidence before the court bearing upon the authorship of the conspiracy was presented by a mysterious person, thus described in the proceedings of the tribunal:

"A witness then appeared before the court, whose name and address are suppressed by agreement with the witness that his identity should not be revealed, and was sworn by the president, through the interpreter.

This mysterious witness said he was crossing about 7:30 o'clock on the morning of the 15th from Havana to Reglas on a ferryboat. He was standing close to the wall near where four Spaniards—a fat citizen wearing a beard, a man in a military uniform, a lieutenant and an army staff officer—were speaking in low voices and with suspicion that he was listening to them. They were discussing the Maine, one of them having remarked that it was a shame to Spain that she was in the bay. The staff officer remarked he had heard in the Circulo Militar, or military club on the Prado, that they were going to blow her up.

"But if you blow her up another one would come," replied the lieutenant. "They would take care not to send another," said the staff officer.

"Will not making explosions in the bay run great risk to the city of Havana?" asked the stout citizen.

The staff officer replied in the negative: The explosion would simply open the vessel, he said, and she would sink immediately.

"I take plenty of beer on that occasion," laughed the citizen, at which juncture a cross-fire from one of the voices of the speaker directed at the stout citizen.

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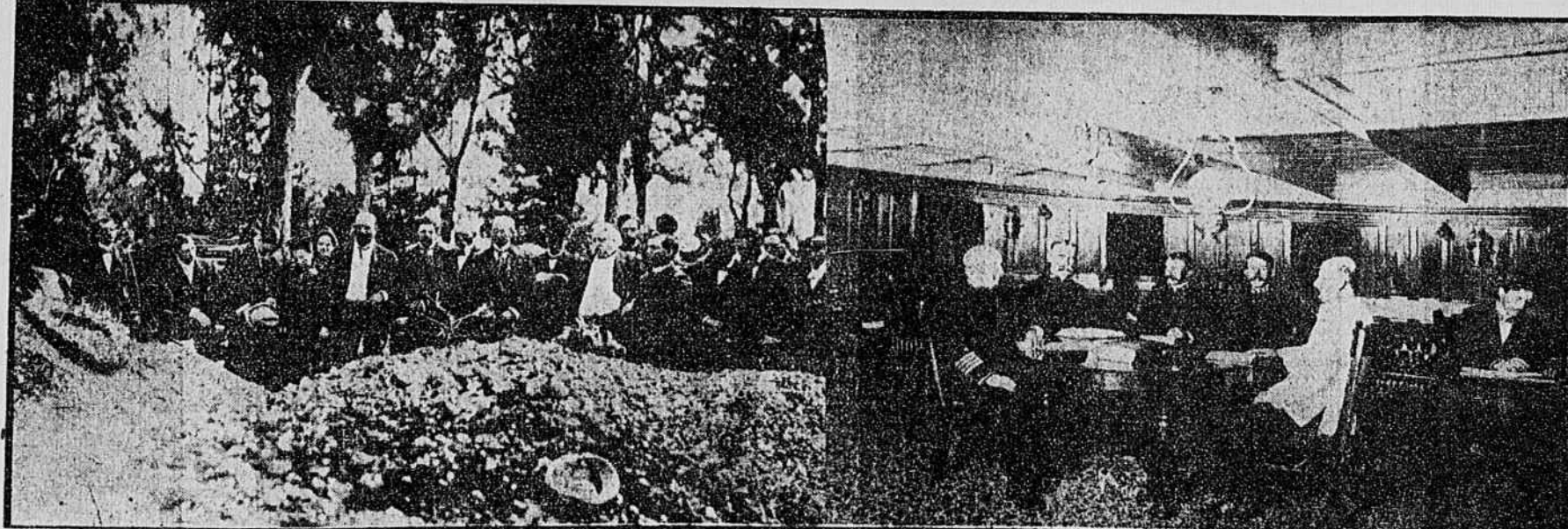
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Cries Name of Gully Man.

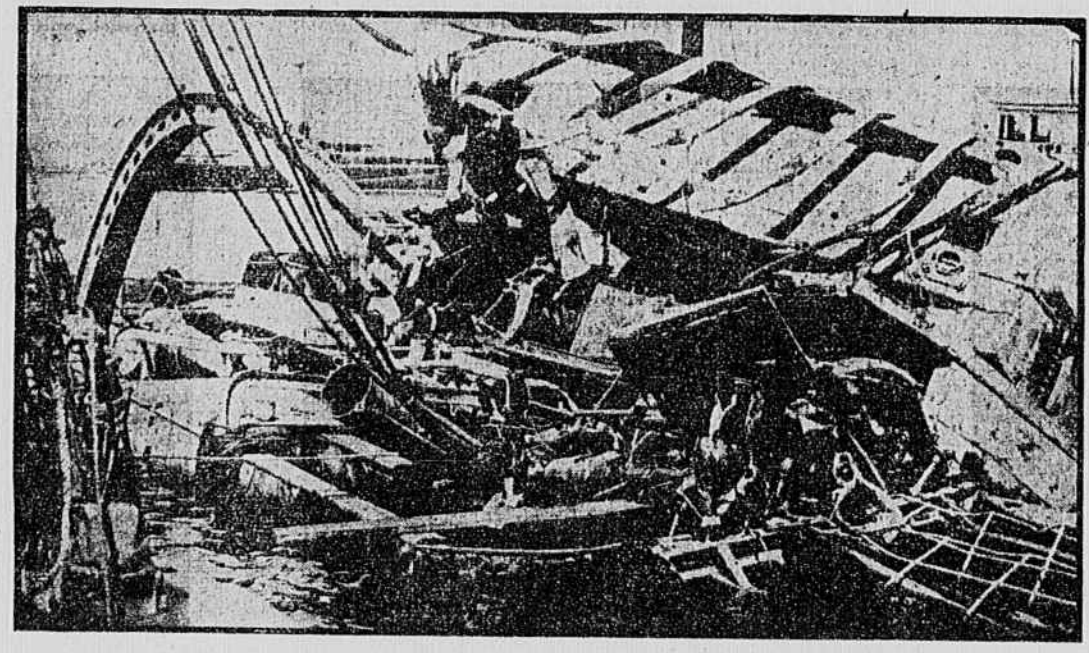
Since the war precipitated by the Maine tragedy evidence that the Cubans and not the Spaniards were responsible for the explosion has been volunteered from several sources.

In a lecture delivered in Kansas City last November, Jasper Ewing Brady, a former army officer and brother of the well known divine, Rev. Cyrus Townsend Brady, stated that as one of the four army officers who had investigated the Maine mystery he had become convinced that Cubans had destroyed our battleship.

"When I went to investigate the disaster with three other officers," Captain Brady said, "there were three



BURIAL OF THE MAINE VICTIMS AT HAVANA.



VIEW OF MIDSHIP PORTION OF WRECK OF MAINE FROM PORT SIDE.

theories concerning the origin of the disaster—that the explosion was caused from the outside by agents of Spain; that it was caused from inside and that the Maine was anchored over a mine prepared by the Cubans. We were able to inform the President and Secretary of War that the last theory was the most consistent with the facts. This leads to the conclusion that the Maine was blown up by the Cubans in order to bring on war with Spain and the deliverance of Cuba."

Continuing, he said: "Now, I will tell you for the first time the name of the man who blew up the Maine. He is, or was, Jose Zalvaldo. He was electrician at Morro Castle. It was he who threw the switch which set off the powerful mine that destroyed the ship and sent 267 lives into eternity in a flash. Zalvaldo was afterward shot by order of General Blanco. We even got a piece of the cable that led from the mine to the room in Morro Castle. That piece of cable is now in the Navy Department at Washington.

Attempts of several military and naval officers in Washington to repudiate Captain Brady's statement have lately drawn fire from Francis Atwater, of Meriden, Conn., who was editing a newspaper at Havana at the time the Maine was blown up.

According to Mr. Atwater, a detective assigned to the mystery had traced the crime to this same Zalvaldo, who was not shot, but poisoned, and one of whose accomplices stood ready to confess full details of the plot. The War Department was notified at the time of this man's willingness to lay bare the mystery, according to the editor, but apparently took no action.

Testimony of Former Spy.

And this controversy between Brady and Atwater upon the one side and the army and naval officers upon the other has drawn a cross-fire from one J. C. Crawley of Aberdeen, Wash., who is alleged to have been a spy in the employ of the Cuban government.

According to him, Zalvaldo, whose name he prefers to spell "Seavald," did not actually blow up the Maine, although he was one of the principal conspirators in the plot.

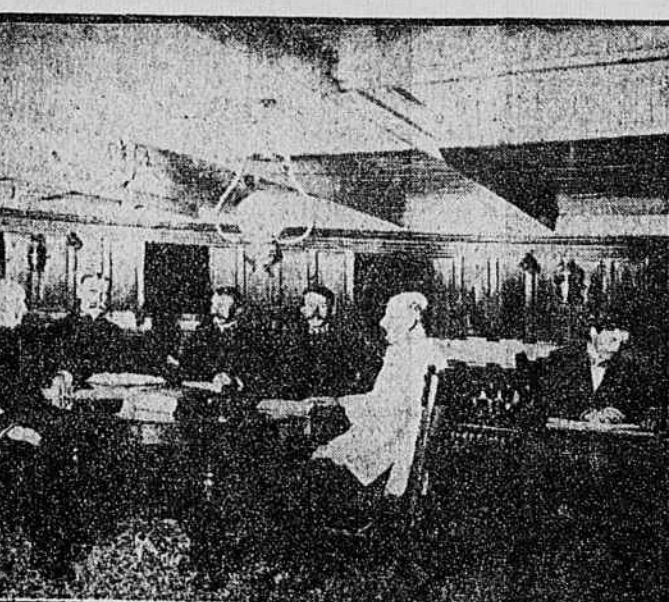
"Jose Seavald," says Mr. Crawley, "was an electrician soldier in the Spanish army, some say navy, but to the best information of our spies he was of the signal corps of the army. He had much to do with the connecting of the mines in the harbor of Havana, which the Americans, assisted by the native Cubans in Havana, succeeded in cutting, thus foiling the first attempt to blow up the Maine.

"Seavald did prepare and connect the wire to the torpedo which destroyed the Maine, but he did not touch the button that set it off. That was actually done by a high Spanish officer, Don Pedro, in a ferryboat, which was rowed out of the harbor just a little before the explosion. It was the intention to explode the torpedo under the power magazine, and if the Maine is raised it will show with how much success.

"The ferryboat had only two men in it, the officer and the wire, Seavald, after connecting the wires, fainted (whether in pretense or not I do not know), and was taken to the hospital, forcing the officer to do the work. The ferryboat was gone a couple of hours. I cannot say exactly, for we were too busy saving our own lives in the excitement following the explosion.

American Spy Surprised Them.

"The excitement was caused by an American, who, being a first-class Spaniard by nature and tongue, was acting as a spy, and was employed as a waiter in the Spanish Officers' Club. He had a tray in his hand containing bottles and glasses when the sound of the explosion reached the club. At the instant of the sound the officer whom



MAINE COURT OF INQUIRY IN SESSION.



REAR-ADMIRAL GEORGE W. MELVILLE.

and one another, would be more dangerous to their own crews than to any one else.

The explosion in a shallow harbor, like Havana, of a mine sufficient to destroy the Maine would, in Admiral Melville's opinion, have thrown up great volumes of water, which was not the case.

Other theories advanced since the tragedy of 1898 attribute the Maine's destruction to the work of an anarchist, a fanatic or a disgruntled sailor. And others have argued that her ammunition when brought suddenly from a wintry climate to the summer heat of Havana exploded by spontaneous combustion.

Will the skeleton of the crumbled levathan reveal a secret often believed has been dug out of Havana's harbor mud? Or has the coroner delayed his inquest too long?

Will the next few weeks see the solution of the world's most baffling maritime mystery?

(Copyright, 1911, by John Elfreth Watkins.)

the political spool, nor will she attract the hol' phier of society to her "at homes." The "dear public" will be met at home or when being often with great volumes of water, which was not the case.

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The Social Side of Washington.

[Special to The Times-Dispatch.] Washington, D. C., July 22.—While the changes now occurring in the official world create scarcely a ripple on the outgoing social season they will be of paramount significance when the clans begin to gather for the third formal season of the Taft administration. When all the world is bent on vacation tripping the fact that some of the Cabinet and diplomatic families are going to the city for the summer, returning to its usual rendezvous in the autumn and finds new faces in conspicuous places.

In the White House circle there are two new Cabinet ministers, each with a wife to take her place on formal occasions in the brilliant receiving line with President and Mrs. Taft, and one of them with an interesting family of young people to give prestige to the juvenile circle in officialdom.

Secretary of the Interior and Mrs. Fisher, who take the place of Mr. and Mrs. Ballinger, have already selected a home for the summer in a beautiful house in Connecticut Avenue occupied by the Secretary of War and Mrs. Dickenson, while the latter's successors, Henry L. Stimson, have chosen a house in the new house in Sixteenth Street as the scene of their future hospitality. This means that the new Secretary of War and his wife will belong primarily to the Henderson-Foraker clique, as most residents of that thoroughfare do.

Sweeping changes in the House and Senate, presaged by last year's elections and inaugurated by the extra session of Congress, eight months before the anticipated time, already in social life of the dominant mode in the city here, will be the result of the social life of the legislative branch will be one of charm and individuality, if less brilliant than when the Aldriches, Hales, Depews, Keans, Herbert Parsons and Hamilton Fishes were social leaders. One thing superlatively evident as these days go by is that as the progressives of Speaker Clark has in it no headlong frenzy and his conservatism has no moss upon its back ex-officio, so the social leadership of Mrs. Clark will be a masterly visitation along less conventional lines than threaded the maze of the past several years. She will be no more radical in favor of the simple social life, however, than is her husband in

Senator Gallinger, of New Hampshire, for reasons of heavy personal sorrows, and Representative Kahn's proposed tax on the dowries of American heiresses, who marry "broken-down noblemen."

A distinguished visitor disturbing the week's routine is Armand de Champele de Juminao, Duc de Richelieu, collateral descendant of the cardinal of seventeenth century fame and premier of the gay New York society for the past few months, who dined on the capital horizon as the guest of John de la Roche, the Frenchman, whose title is among the most honored remaining in democratic France, is destined to become very rich one day, will visit the city on the visit of Lord Camoy, of England, whose engagement to Miss Mildred Sherman, whom he met when he came over on the Vespa-Gould wedding, is just announced.

Commander Kimmel, U. S. N., Mrs. Kimmel and their children left Washington this week to spend the remainder of the summer at Uconen, Va.

Mrs. Waddy B. Woods and children have gone to Gettysburg where they have a cottage for the summer. Mr. Woods, formerly of Charlottesville, Va., but now a resident of Washington, will spend the week-end with his family.

Mrs. Guy Mason and her small daughter are visiting in Berryville.

Mrs. Dabney Jefferson Carr, of Richmond, accompanied by Mrs. Howard O. Davis, wife of Captain Davis, U. S. Army, in passing through Washington this week en route from Alexandria, where they had been house guests of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert W. Anderson, to Blue Ridge, where they will spend the week-end.

GRACE PORTER HOPKINS.

Culpeper Social News.

[Special to The Times-Dispatch.] Culpeper, Va., July 22.—Miss Ruth Schofield, of Texas, is visiting Mr. and Mrs. Willie Hill on East Street. Misses Vera and Kate Smith, of Richmond, are guests of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kilby, Sr., on Jameson's Hill. Hunter Kilby, of Norfolk, is also a guest of Mr. and Mrs. Kilby this week.

Miss Rhea Scott spent the week with friends in Charlottesville, but will be in Culpeper again before returning to her home in Ashland.

Miss Arvid Samuelson, who has been visiting in Richmond, returned home Thursday accompanied by her grandmother, Mrs. Origgis of Richmond, who will be the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Max Samuelson.

Mrs. Tucker Chief entertained the matinee bridge on Friday at her home on East Street. The next meeting of this club will be with Mrs. Samuel Book.

Mrs. Hugh Patten, who has been visiting friends in Culpeper for several months, left Thursday with her granddaughter, Cabell Gilber, for her home in Lynchburg.

Miss Janey Norris attended the marriage on Wednesday of her sister, Miss Rebecca Norris, to Frank Wells Nevens, of New York, which took place at the summer home of Mr. Wells Hastings, at Prouts neck, Maine.

Mrs. A. D. Whitman, of Tacoma Park, Washington, Mrs. Willie Wine and her daughter, Miss Inez Wine, of Baltimore, and the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Rixey, on Main Street. Mrs. Granville Coleman, of Brandy, was also a guest of Mr. and Mrs. Rixey.

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