

THE ANCIENT DAYS OF THE SPANISH WAR

CHAPTERS FROM THE DIARY OF JOHN D. LONG

EDITED BY LAWRENCE SHAW MAYO

IN January, 1897, President-elect McKinley asked Mr. Long to come to Canton, Ohio, for a conference. The two men had been friends in Congress in the eighties, and although ill health had prevented Governor Long from taking an active part in the presidential campaign of 1896, he knew — and the press did not hesitate to guess — that McKinley was about to offer him New England's seat at the Cabinet table. Just which portfolio would be his remained to be determined. McKinley's first suggestion was the Treasury. But Mr. Long shook his head, insisting that he knew nothing about finance. This was discouraging to the President-elect, for he wished New England's favorite citizen to occupy a high place in the Cabinet. He could not offer him the State Department, for that must go to Senator Sherman. That was settled. However, as Sherman was failing, mentally and physically, he would probably remain in office not more than a few months. Would Mr. Long wait until the expected vacancy should occur, and then become Secretary of State? Again Governor Long shook his head, protesting this time that he was no diplomat. This was hardly true, but it was his way of saying that he preferred purely administrative work. Then he told McKinley that he doubted if his health would permit him to do the work required of the head of either

of the departments mentioned; but if, upon reflection, the Major wished to entrust him with the Secretaryship of War or of the Navy, he would be glad to consider either office.

Early in February it was generally known that John D. Long would be a member of McKinley's Cabinet. The formal offer, to be sure, did not materialize until the second day of March, but in the meantime the press had announced that he would be Secretary of the Navy, and on this occasion the press was right. McKinley was pleased, and New England was delighted. Mr. Long himself was not displeased, for he little guessed that within a year from the date of his commission the Navy would be the busiest department at Washington.

The first nine months were uneventful. In fact almost the only entry of general interest in the Secretary's journal for that period is this, on Friday, April 9, 1897: 'Roosevelt calls. Just appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Best man for the place.' During the winter of 1897-98 Mr. Long happily adopted the time- and labor-saving scheme of dictating his diary, with the result that he made longer observations. Among these, his portraits of some of his contemporaries are often remarkable. Then, too, there are frequent sidelights on others, which are illuminating. A day or two after Christmas he dropped in at the White

House about noon and found President McKinley 'as usual, seated at the Cabinet table, with somebody at his elbow pressing claims for office.']

I fancy it is a relief to him [wrote Mr. Long] under these circumstances to have a Cabinet Officer come in and afford him a diversion from this constant pressure. When we were alone, we went over a few matters of official interest, and then chatted pleasantly upon domestic matters. . . . From that, we branched off upon the notice I had read in the morning papers of his mother's will, which gave everything to the unmarried sister who lived with her for many years. I told the President I thought I saw his handiwork in this disposition of his mother's property for the benefit of the one who evidently needed it most. It is very sweet to get underneath the hard surface of public life, and to drop into the homely currents which are common to the lives of us all. It is a striking characteristic in the President that he is so devoted to his family, a devotion which extends over to his large circle of personal friends. I tell him that it is the only fault I have to find with him: that he is inclined to be too good to his friends, at the risk sometimes of losing sight of that sterner virtue which made the Roman sacrifice his son.

During the day Senator Lodge dropped into the Department, tormented, as is not infrequently the case, with this eternal matter of the distribution of public offices. Lodge is a man of wealth, industry, brains, and good ambition. It is to his credit that with his large means and social opportunities he is so devoted to public life. It is not easy to understand how he can endure the subjection, which every such man is obliged to undergo, of his time and talents to so much that is petty and annoying in the demands which the

public, and especially the office-seekers, make.

[The eleventh of January gives us a picture of another Senator from Massachusetts.]

In the evening Senator Hoar called upon me. He is a delightful man. His mind is stored with learning, especially on the lines of historical and biographical literature. He has the highest sense of public duty, most chivalrous and unflinching courage of his convictions, and deservedly possesses the confidence of all with whom he is associated, and of the people whom he represents. Some of his orations on special historic occasions ought to rank with those of Webster and Everett. Yet such is the changed condition of things, and in such an ocean of literary accumulation are we to-day submerged, through the newspapers, magazines, and multitudes of books, that nobody remembers one of his — or of anybody else's — addresses a week after it is delivered. Whereas the speeches of Webster were a part of the education of the people fifty years ago.

Senator Hoar's manner in speaking is not especially good. He stands with knees bending inward, and with a quaint drone or whine in his voice. Neither his gesture nor his elocution is at all fine. It is fun to hear him sound the *u* like *oo* in such words as constitution.

I have often been struck with the fact that the Senator's judgment of men is not the best. I do not think he has the discriminating insight into personal character. He is inclined to be extravagant in his likings, much more, I think, than in his prejudices; which, of course, is a good fault. I think, too, that he is easily imposed upon by men in whom he takes stock. He is also inclined to be a hero-worshiper, and

extravagant in his praises when once launched upon adoration. Interesting himself in the story of Rufus Putnam, or some other worthy, he is inclined to put him on a pedestal higher than that of George Washington or Benjamin Franklin. After perusing the Bradford manuscript,¹ he puts it next to the Scriptures; though why he stopped there, I am somewhat surprised. Evidently Shakespeare and Milton are entirely distanced.

How quickly men grow old! But a day or so ago he was a state senator from Worcester, under the dome of the Massachusetts State House; then one of the young representatives in Congress, distinguishing himself at the impeachment of General Belknap.² Now I sit with him, an old man, his shoulders bent, his hair white and thin, although his mental vigor is entirely unquenched. He has led a noble life, rich in mental product and culture, though poor in this world's goods. He loves his library and is happy in the company of the poets, philosophers, and statesmen of the past; the gauds and shows of the world are not necessary to his happiness.

[Much as he might have liked to do so, the Secretary of the Navy could not spend many evenings at home with such congenial visitors as Senator Hoar. A few social occasions were enjoyable in their way, but others were made endurable only by Mr. Long's unfailing sense of humor. There was, for instance, a reception at the Russian Embassy on the evening of January 12, 'starting at quarter of ten.' As this

was 'considerably later' than his usual hour for going to bed, the Secretary went reluctantly, accompanied by his wife and his daughter Helen.]

A more dismal house for a reception is hardly possible. It was as barren as a barrack. As we were early, the thing looked a little meagre for a time. However, we entered the drawing-room, paid our respects to the Russian Secretary of Legation, to the wife of the Military Attaché, and one or two other officials, with whom conversation was brief and, owing to unfamiliarity with each other's language, not especially intelligible.

We sauntered past a shelf in the alcove, on which was a punch bowl, and behind it a servant to dip it out, and then wandered into a room too big for a drawing-room and too small for a hall, which was arranged for dancing. My niece, Julia Castle, and her husband were there; the fat Chinese Minister, and his fatter wife; two Haitian women, with an abundance of hair, and at least a sufficient exposure of the neck and shoulders to suggest the original Haitian maiden on her native heath and in her primitive costume.

By this time the rooms were comfortably peopled; the musicians were playing, and, as others were waltzing, I took a turn with Helen, much to the amusement of everybody who saw me dance, and also to my own admiration. Inasmuch as Mr. Gary and Mr. Wilson of the Cabinet were there, I took great pleasure in thus intimating to them that they were old fellows while I was still a youth.

[Washington was an interesting place of residence, and the Navy was an interesting department even in time of peace; but there were days when Mr. Long's thoughts bore him far away from the District of Columbia.]

¹ Governor Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation*. It was due primarily to Senator Hoar's efforts that the Bishop of London had recently presented the original manuscript to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

² During Grant's second administration, 1873-77.

Most delightful morning; air fresh and clear, but almost as warm as springtime. The climate in Washington has been very lovely during the winter, and a sharp contrast to the wind and storm, sleet and snow, and variation from warmth to extreme cold, which prevails in the neighborhood of Boston, and a striking contrast also to the intenser cold of my birth-place in Maine. And yet I find myself continually longing to go back there for a taste now and then of the winter-time. I recall the landscape, continuously deep with the white snow; the roads winding their tortuous course between high drifts on either side; the crisp, clear mornings, and the frosty windowpanes; the blue smoke rising straight and swift through the clear atmosphere, and all the familiar traces of the traditional New England winter landscape.

[During the first part of the winter of 1898, as for a long time previous thereto, matters in Cuba were in what Secretary Long termed 'an earthquaky condition.'

As yet, however, there seemed to be no reason for action of any kind by the United States. One evening while this status quo prevailed there was a Cabinet dinner at Vice-President Hobart's.]

Beautiful old-fashioned house, on Lafayette Square; charming rooms; one of the most exquisitely furnished tables I ever saw, with a wealth of roses and green leaves and other ornaments in the centre. The President is quiet; his wife, who is an invalid, is very gentle; the Vice-President is inclined to be humorous; the Secretary of State is getting a little forgetful, and tells the same story twice. The rest of us sit around in the usual fashion, of rather dull commonplace. After

the ladies retire, we smoke and talk trifles. There happens to be nobody who tells a good story; nobody who has the art of interesting monologue. My experience is that most men, and most gatherings of men, are not interesting. It is the rare man who can entertain his fellows, either in the way of pleasantry or instruction.

[On January 24, 1898, the time seemed to have come when the Administration could and should make a slight change in its Cuban policy.]

This has been an interesting day. The Cleveland Administration, which left us the legacy of the Cuban imbroglio, had adopted the policy of having no United States vessel at Havana. The present Administration could not change this policy without a great deal of friction and risk; and yet it has been the purpose from the first to have a vessel at Havana, not only because our vessels ought to be going in and out of it, like those of any other nation, it being a friendly port, but [also], in view of the possibility of danger to American life and property, some means of protection should be on hand.

Since the Spanish Ministry came into power, three or four months ago, the whole Spanish policy with reference to the island has been changed: autonomy has been granted, and a more liberal and humane course pursued. There has been an understanding that our Consul-General there, General Lee, might telegraph for a ship at any time, and telegraph directly to the commander of it at Key West in case of an emergency.

For still further safeguard, it has been understood that, if telegraphic communication was discontinued at Havana, it should be assumed that the cable had been cut, that Lee was in danger, and that a ship should

at once proceed, without further order, from Key West. All this has been a risky arrangement, and I have favored for some time suggesting to the Spanish Minister here that his Government recognize the wisdom of our sending a ship in a friendly way to Havana, to make the usual visit and to resume the usual practice, which exists with all other nations, of free ingress and egress, to exchange courtesies and civilities with the Spanish authorities there, and to emphasize the change and the improved condition of things, which have resulted from the new Spanish policy.

To-day the Spanish Minister assented to this view, in conversation with the State Department. Judge Day³ and I called on the President, and we arranged that the Maine should be ordered at once to Havana, notice having been given by the Spanish Minister to his people, and by our Department to our Consul.

Of course the sailing of the ship has made a great stir among the newspapers, and in public sentiment. We have carefully guarded, however, against any alarm, and, in our interviews, given assurance to the country that it is purely a friendly matter, and a resumption of customary relations. The newspapers try to discover some hidden meaning beneath this, as they always do; but it happens to be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. There is, of course, the danger that the arrival of the ship may precipitate some crisis or riot; but there is far less danger of this than if the ship went in any other way. I hope, with all my heart, that everything will turn out all right.

[Two days later his hopes seemed to

³ Owing to Secretary Sherman's infirm condition, Judge Day, his First Assistant, had become actual head of the State Department.

be realized, and his justifiable concern over the visit of the Maine to Havana gave way to less grave but more annoying matters.]

Cable from Captain Sigsbee, commanding the Maine, in which he reports that much interest was manifested on the arrival of the Maine, military courtesies exchanged, and that everything went off pleasantly.

Senator Penrose comes in, and we come near striking fire about a little two-penny appointment of shipkeeper, at \$2.00 a day, at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Representative Butler wants it, and Penrose wants it. It is like a fight of wolves over a carcass. Shameful and disgracing picture: that a Senator of the United States should be running his legs off, wasting his time, when great questions are at stake, about this carrion of patronage — which very patronage only hurts, instead of helping, his political prospects.

[Mr. Long's administrative methods, and a sketch of the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs, are disclosed under the date of February 2.]

Went with Captain O'Neil, Chief of the Bureau of Ordnance, this morning before the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs, with regard to armor plate. Of course I know nothing about it, and go through the perfunctory business of saying so, and referring the Committee to Captain O'Neil. When I say I know nothing about it, I mean nothing about the details — which only an expert can know — of the process of manufacturing armor. I make a point not to trouble myself overmuch to acquire a thorough knowledge of the details pertaining to any branch of the service. Such knowledge would undoubtedly be a very valuable equipment, but the

range is so enormous I could make little progress, and that at great expense of health and time, in mastering it. My plan is to leave all such matters to the bureau chiefs, or other officers at naval stations or on board ship, limiting myself to the general direction of affairs. What is the need of my making a dropsical tub of any lobe of my brain, when I have right at hand a man possessed with more knowledge than I could acquire, and have him constantly on tap?

At best, there is enough for me to do, and to occupy my attention. Some of it is spent on important things, and a very large part on small things, especially personal matters — personal frictions, personal delinquencies, personal appeals, and personal claims.

Senator Hale is Chairman of the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs. He came from Turner Village, the next town to Buckfield, where I was born. He went to Hebron Academy, as I did. He probably taught school; started a small law office; served several terms in the House of Representatives, and for a number of years has been Senator from the State of Maine.

Last summer, in the Turner Village burying-ground, I saw the graves of his father and mother. On a neighboring hill is his father's homestead. Just under the hill in Buckfield where I lived, is the schoolhouse where his sister taught, and he, on Friday nights, used to drive to carry her home. He married the daughter of Zach Chandler, and now enjoys the large fortune, which furnishes him with a beautiful home here and a beautiful home in his native state.

Hale is an able man, has a strong, practical mind and a heap of hard sense and a clear way of putting things.

He has made a good record as a politician and statesman, and deserves the honor he has acquired and the confi-

dence which the people of Maine put in him.

[The nature of some of the 'small things, especially personal matters,' with which the Secretary of the Navy was bothered appears in his journal for the fifth of February.]

I am amused to-day with another exhibition of the jealousies of the army and navy corps. The Chief of the Bureau of Navigation comes in with a long face, and says that the Navy are feeling very troubled over the fact that, at the White House receptions, while two army officers and one marine officer take part in introducing the guests to the President and Cabinet and to their wives, there is no representative of the Navy proper. It also turns out that, at the first reception, while General Miles, head of the Army, was invited, the senior officer of the Navy was not invited. Also, that, while no general invitations were extended to the naval officers, Commander Clover of the Navy, who has a rich wife with social affiliations, was there. Also, that at the last reception, to which the chiefs of the various naval bureaus were invited, and no others, there was an exception in the case of Lieutenant-Commander Buckingham, which is regarded as a discrimination against older officers than he.

I suggest that this is undoubtedly due to the fact that Buckingham happens to be the son of a clergyman in Ohio, who, I think, performed the marriage ceremony at the President's wedding.

Just at this time in comes Roosevelt, who says that the naval officer in his office was very much aggrieved because, while Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, was not invited, a civilian clerk under him, whose salary is only some \$1200 or \$1600, and who married the daughter of a million-

aire in Washington, having social affiliations, was a guest. Roosevelt is too sensible a man to do more than to laugh at this. He recognizes that the President, like everybody else, ought to have the privilege of inviting whom he pleases to his own house, and that, if he omits any, it is on the simple ground that he really does not see fit to invite them, or, if there is any reason why he should have done so, omitted them through an inadvertence.

Roosevelt amuses me also by saying that General Miles himself felt very much aggrieved, and the whole Army with him, at the fact that his particular seat at the recent White House dinner was not in the exact spot where he thought it ought to have been; and, what is funnier still, that Congressman Boutelle is still more aggrieved, and threatens never to attend another similar occasion, because he was given no lady to take out with him, but sat between two men.

Meanwhile, the President has authorized me to select some naval officer to attend the reception, being very glad to comply with a request to that effect. I offer that place to two young lieutenants, who rather snobbishly decline it, and so I detail Southerland, of the Dolphin, who is a stand-by, and who always comes up to any demand that is made upon him.

These are the humors of public life.

[Not long after this episode, the manner in which naval matters were prepared for the consideration of Congress led Mr. Long to write a few remarks concerning our governmental methods.]

Went with Constructor Bowles before the House Committee on Naval Affairs, with reference to the New York Dry Dock, which is under repair. A little room, overcrowded; much confusion; very little regularity in the pro-

ceedings; a good many people talking at the same time; and yet, after all, a great deal of information conveyed and digested.

How small the number is of those who have complete and accurate knowledge of any one subject! This committee, the naval eye and ear of the House, is charged with the important matter of the dry dock at New York. It is fair to say, with entire justice to them, that not more than two of them have anything more than a general confused notion that there is a dock there, and that it is out of repair and in process of reconstruction; probably not more than one has ever seen it. Yet the Committee is to pass upon questions involving thousands of dollars and important methods of construction, where any error may be followed by most disastrous consequences.

[The international situation was progressing very well, from the point of view of peace-loving Americans, when a diplomatic error on the part of Spain increased the tension at what proved to be a critical moment. Under February 10 the incident is related.]

Was obliged to withdraw acceptance of invitation to Agnes, Helen, and myself to dine this evening with the Spanish Minister.

It appears that some time ago he wrote a private letter, in which he made offensive references to the President. This letter has been obtained in some way and published. It, of course, makes the relations of the Spanish Minister with the Administration such that he can no longer remain, and he is obliged to retire from his post. It is an unfortunate occurrence; an exceeding folly on the part of the Minister to write such a letter; a termination of what, hitherto, has been a useful term of service. He is a man of a good

deal of ability, and seems to have conducted himself remarkably well. So it is that little things are obstacles that throw great movements off the track and sometimes lead to disaster.

[The access of hostility occasioned by this now forgotten incident was increased a thousandfold by a great tragedy which occurred less than a week later. Although it took place on the evening of February 15, it appears, of course, for the first time in Secretary Long's journal in the entry for the following day.]

At half-past one o'clock last night Helen came into my room, returning from the ball, with a dispatch which had just been left at the house, bringing the terrible news that the U.S.S. Maine had blown up in the harbor of Havana, Cuba; many killed and more wounded, and the cause unknown. I was at once deluged with newspaper-reporters and additional dispatches. Sent for Commander Dickins, of the Bureau of Navigation, who came in and, under my direction, telegraphed for some small vessels to go to the harbor to render assistance.

This is the most frightful disaster, both in itself and with reference to the present critical condition of our relations with Spain.

I am kept up until five o'clock by telegrams and calls from newspapermen.

This morning, at 9 o'clock, I call on the President, to whom I had sent full information before.

[The journal for the next few days gives an excellent idea of public opinion in the late winter of 1898.]

Wednesday evening, February 16. — This has been a busy day; a day of gloom and sadness. The Department

has been thronged with callers, expressing sympathy and intense interest in the disaster to the Maine, in the harbor of Havana. The entire Spanish Legation called to express regrets, as did the British Ambassador and the Minister from Switzerland.

The records now show that 253 men and two officers were killed by the explosion.

The President has, of course, given up the usual receptions which were assigned for to-night and to-morrow night at the White House. I have been with him most of the day. Lunched with him and his family at the White House dining-room.

Get a quiet evening, however, at home, and retire early.

There is an intense difference of opinion as to the cause of the blowing-up of the Maine. In this, as in everything else, the opinion of the individual is determined by his original bias. If he is a conservative, he is sure that it was an accident; if he is a jingo, he is equally sure that it was by design. The former is sure that no design could have been carried out without discovery; the latter is equally sure that no accident could have happened, in view of the precautions which are taken. My own judgment is, so far as any information has been received, that it was the result of an accident, such as every ship of war, with the tremendously high and powerful explosives which we now have on board, is liable to encounter. The best way, however, seems to be to suspend judgment until more information shall be had.

The occurrence suggests one important thing, and that is the frightful destruction of life and property which will hereafter accompany any naval or military engagement. In the old days a war vessel could be peppered all day long, with comparatively little damage to ship or to crew. Now a battleship

with five hundred men on board, fairly struck by one of the great projectiles, will probably go to the bottom and every life will be lost. This reflection ought to have weight with those who talk lightly of going to war. The illustration now afforded by this accident to the Maine gives food for sober reflection.

The saddest thing of all is the constant coming of telegrams from some sailor's humble home or kinspeople, inquiring whether he is saved, or asking that, if dead, his body may be sent home.

Thursday, February 17. — A trying and anxious day. No further developments as to the cause of the disaster. The air is full of rumors. There is a great deal of outspoken, and a great deal more of suppressed, excitement. Still, I think the good sense of the country is quieting down to a condition of patient waiting for facts and information.

The President sent for me this afternoon, to see if I had anything to give him. Am sorry to find him more oppressed and careworn than at any time since I have been in the Cabinet. Am afraid he is in danger of overdoing.

Friday, February 18. — I am really too much driven with the tremendous

pressure of this disaster to the Maine to find time to write more than a word in my daily journal.

Members of Congress, and naval officers, and many others are continually calling, and the number of letters and telegrams has increased, and the newspapermen cluster like bees about me. Some of these newspapermen are men of excellent ability and good address. They are gathering information for the public, and it is hardly worth while to be impatient with them when they are really the avenues through which the public, very properly, gets its information. Some of them are of great adroitness in obtaining what they want; some are of great ability in their comprehension and digestion of matters of public interest.

Attended Cabinet meeting this morning.

The House passed an appropriation, which I recommended, of \$200,000 for raising the Maine.

Late this afternoon I gave out a statement of facts to the reporters, intended to allay the disquietude occasioned by sensational newspaper articles.

Thus far everything has gone very smoothly and without friction.

(Passages from the Diary of the Secretary of the Navy, 1897-1902, will appear in February)

A PRELUDE

BY LAURENCE BINYON

I REMEMBER a night of my youth, I remember a night
Soundless!

The earth and the sea were a shadow, but over me opened
Heaven into uttermost heaven, and height into height
Boundless

With stars, with stars, with stars!

I remember the dew on my face, I remember the mingled
Homely smell of grass and unearthly beauty
Out of the ends of the air and the unscaled darkness
Poured in a rain, in a river,
Into my marrow — through all the veins of delight
Poured into me.

O the divine solitude! the intoxicating silence!

I was a spirit unregioned, worthy of them:

I, even I, was a creature of infinite flight,
Born to be free.

In the midst of the worlds, as they moved, I moved with them all,
A sense and a joy; I was hidden, and yet they were nigh;
For they came to me as lovers,
Those stars from on high.

Thus as my whole soul drank of the star-filled air,
I felt, more than heard, like a whisper
Invading me out of immensity, hinted, haunting
Sound

Of waves, of waves, of waves.

And I felt in the blood of my flesh, to the roots of my hair,
That it sought me, a mind in that muteness;