

MORRO CASTLE

Good evening - that seems like an ironic salutation tonight when a whole nation is shocked by that most frightful of sea tragedies. In some ways, the sense of horror is deeper today, even than on Saturday when the first shock went shivering across the nation. In fact, the horror has been deepening for three days, as we realize more and more the almost incredible extent of the disaster; and, as the mystery continues to grow darker.

It isn't easy to believe that the fire that swept the crowded Morro Castle could have been incendiary, could have been deliberately caused by human hands. One's first impulse is to put the idea aside as incredible. Surely it was a freak accident. For my part, I still find it almost impossible to believe that it was a criminal plot.

Yet, there is the story that has been repeated over and over, of how a previous fire had broken out on the ship but had been extinguished by quick work. And they thought that fire had been criminally set.

But let's rehearse today's developments:-

The officer in command of the Morro Castle declares

emphatically that the fire was incendiary, that somebody set it. He gave his testimony at the investigation which is being made by the United States Department of Commerce. Acting Captain, Chief Officer Warms, broke down as he told his story, broke down and wept.

No wonder that his nerves went to pieces, after that fantastic nightmare of doom! His Captain had died of acute indigestion with creepy, rumored suspicions that he was poisoned. Mr. Warms, as Chief Officer, succeeded to the command. Captain for only a few hours and then the blaze broke out in the library, and swept the ship for as frightful a sea horror as has ever made the wide ocean a tragic place. And Chief Officer Warms stuck to his post to the very end, the last man to leave the ship, according to nautical tradition. And now today he was answering the questions of the investigators, exhausted, trembling, shaky, and finally breaking down altogether.

"The fire was set by someone". That was his insistent contention. Somebody stowed gasoline or kerosene in a locker in the library. And the other ships officers say the same -- confirm it.

~~And~~ ^T That same echo of incendiarism is repeated in Havana, the port from which the gay Morro Castle sailed on its ill-fated voyage. Captain Oscar Hernandez, Chief-of-the-Port-of-Havana-police, declares it is his belief the fire was set by radicals. And he is specific in his accusation. He contends that the Morro Castle disaster was the work of a passenger who boarded the ship with fire-making chemicals in his baggage.

According to this, the radical plotter set his fire-making chemicals in the library from which the uncontrollable flames went raging through the super-structure.

~~And then take this coincidence:~~ The Morro Castle lies beached on the shore at Asbury Park, smoke pouring from the fire-scarred hull. And simultaneously, smoke has been pouring from a ship down in the Canal Zone. She is the passenger Steamer Santa Rita, with sixty passengers aboard. At midnight last night fire broke out suddenly, and from then on it was a desperate struggle to control the flames. In response to distress signals, rescue boats went out from the Port of Balboa, boats with firemen

and fire equipment, and these helped the crew on the Santa Rita to keep the blaze under control. On the Santa Rita they were successful. The ship docked this noon at Balboa - damaged and still smoking, but no lives lost.

An explanation is given in no uncertain terms.

Officers aboard the Santa Rita declare that the fire was incendiary, a deliberate crime, the work of radical conspirators.

And that brings up an inescapable question:-

"Is it possible that revolutionary elements in Latin America have been engaging in a general conspiracy to set fire to ships?"

If there is anything in the theory, it may be that fire was set in the Morro Castle timed to break out when the ship was almost in port, and the human disaster might be expected not to be so great - damage to the ship mostly, - and then a combination of circumstances turned the fire in the library into an overwhelming tragedy. If there is anything in these dark surmises, what happened to the criminal aboard who set the fire? Did he meet his doom in the unexpected swiftness of the catastrophe?

These are all guesses, dark and uncertain.

The word "eclipse" means to throw something into shadow, make it dim and inconspicuous. That's what's happened to the textile strike over the week-end -- eclipsed by the disaster at sea.

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And it would seem as if the sombre feeling of shock and sadness had calmed and quieted the strike over the week-end. Anyway, ~~the~~ violence has died down in the textile ~~in~~ areas. The fights between the strikers' pickets and the guards at the mills have been few and far between. And chief activities have been in Washington, where the President's mediation board was hard at work trying to get the employers and strike leaders to agree.

The Winant Board met again today and had a three hour conference with George A. Sloane, who has the head of the Cotton Textile Institute, represents the employers.

From the workers side another proposal for a truce was made, a mild modification of that scheme ^{which} ~~the~~ the labor leaders have been suggesting ^{and are insisting on right now --} that the textile operators shut down their mills while the strike pickets keep guard and see that no damage is done.

Strike Leader

~~Francis~~[^] Gormley, the trim, slender British-born

mill hand, who for a score of years he^s~~^~~ directed labor activities in Providence, Rhode Island, has this to say to the mill owners:

"If you'll shut down the textile mills, we'll stop picketing."

It's an offer to stop all strike activities if the owners

will agree to close the mills, and if this is done the strike

committee will accept arbitration. *π* The textile operators are

not paying attention to the suggestion. They feel they have a

right to keep their mills open if they want to, *— and many are reopening —*[^] though some of

them are quite willing to shut their doors as they ~~are~~^{are}[^] over-

stocked with goods. They ~~are~~^{are}[^] optimistically inclined to think

that the strike may not be such a bad thing.

The union leaders are also expressing optimism.

They say they ~~are~~^{are}[^] willing to continue the strike all winter long.

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I guess we all like a neat, sharp argument when we hear one. Donald Richberg, chief of the executive counsel in defending the New Deal, gives us figures to the effect that farming incomes have been increased by a billion dollars, five billions have been lent to private industry, of which two billions have been repaid. And he adds that more than eight and a ~~mk~~ half million people have returned to work, which gives another figure to add to the already contradictory and confusing figures about unemployment.

But the neat, sharp argument concerns the cost of the gigantic government drive for recovery, six billion dollars in fifteen months.

"That", points out Donald Richberg, "is far less than the cost of one year of participation in the World War."
~~Which~~ ^{Which} carries ^{the} a point of inference that if we spend billions of dollars to destroy life, why not spend billions to sustain life?

No reason at all, of course; but on the other hand has it come to this? That peace is as ^{disastrous} ~~bad~~ as war? Maybe so, but it's mighty pessimistic philosophy.

MAINE

I wish I could guess tonight what you'll be reading in your newspaper tomorrow morning - about Maine, the election. It is the old Maine Barometer, and this year, with everybody wondering about the political weather, the barometric ^{reading is being} ~~leader has been~~ watched with redoubled interest.

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The big fight is between Governor Louis Bränn on the Democratic side and Alfred K. Ames, a retired lumberman, who is carrying aloft the standard of the G.O.P. Of course, just as c-a-t spells cat, so G-O-P usually spells victory in Maine. But this time the art of spelling is in the alphabet soup. The New Deal has politics so tangled this year that the Delphi^c oracle would have trouble in making any kind of prophecy. ^{TP} ~~So~~ The Maine campaign has been ~~particularly~~ lively. Two principal Republican spellbinders have been Representative Hamilton Fish and Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, who have enlivened things in a fairly orthodox way. The real touch of novelty has been Gene Tunney, as the most active Democratic spellbinder. A retired, undefeated, heavyweight champion certainly should be able to bind spells. Jack Dempsey can testify to that, although the ears of the Maine voters may be tougher than Dempsey's chin.

Anyway, they're voting right now up in the staunch northern spaces of the pine state. The polls close at nine o'clock. And tomorrow's papers will give you the reading of the Maine barometer.

That barometric business began as long ago as eighteen forty. Maine was then a Democratic state. The opposition was a new party called Whigs. They weren't supposed to have much of a chance. But in the September election Maine gave the Whigs a majority. And then in the regular November presidential election they triumphantly elected their president - William Henry Harrison. That began the Maine barometer and it's been ^{forecasting} ~~forecasting~~ the political weather ever since - although it's been wrong many a time!

BRIDGEPORT

And there are promises of lively political doings in Connecticut, where two years ago the City of Bridgeport astonished people by electing a Socialist Mayor. ^{For eighteen} ~~thirteen~~ years Jasper McLēvy ran for office and was always beaten - until Bridgeport un-
took him from his carpenter's job and expectedly ^{and} sat him in the Mayor's office. Now ^{the} Socialist Mayor, Jasper McLēvy has been nominated as a Socialist candidate for Governor. He's a strenuous and picturesque campaigner. The probabilities are that he will not become Governor of Connecticut, but the certainty is that he' ^{will jazz up the campaign,} ~~will jazz up the campaign,~~ ^{will Jasper McLēvy.}

ARMAMENT

We are due for some more spectacular fireworks at the Senate investigation of munition makers. With ~~ft~~ airplane manufacturers called in to testify, the schedule includes those always exciting and mysterious words -- military secrets.

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The investigating committee has been told a story of how Soviet Russia, in building up her giant air fleet, bought great quantities of aviation equipment from American firms. Included in this equipment were various sky-fighting devices developed by the United States Government. These come under the classification of military secrets. So the accusation takes this form:- Uncle Sam spent a lot of his money developing secret military inventions, which were acquired by the airplane manufacturers, who sold them, ~~along with other flying equipment~~ to Red Russia.

This is the story which the Senatorial inquisitors are going to investigate, while all sorts of bigwigs of the sky-navigating industry will cut more or less handsome figures on the witness stand. American military secrets and the squadrons of the Communist air force will loom with dramatic significance.

League

There's one event on schedule -- maybe happening right now -- which should mark a significant departure in the affairs of the world. It's the entrance of Russia into the League of Nations.

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Of course that's been coming for some time; ~~it's~~ ~~just~~ a cut-and-dried bit of routine now. Poland has been opposing all along. And now Argentina says she's against taking Red Moscow into the international family. But even so, the Argentine delegates won't vote against it. They won't vote at all. They'll merely stay away while the other delegates cast their ballots.

The large significance of Russia in the League lies in its implications. We all know that the Communist regime was founded on the idea of world-wide revolution, ~~and~~ not friendly cooperation with ~~xxxx~~ capitalistic countries. But membership in the League means cooperation. ~~It is~~ **It** is the very opposite of agitating Red revolution in the other countries. So Bolshevik Russia, in the most definite and formal kind of public stand,

renounces the original Communist plan of touching off Red revolutionary fires in other countries.

To be sure, the Soviet government has been taking this attitude for quite a while. And at the same time plenty of people have been pointing out that what the Communist overlords say in public is one thing, while what they may do in private is another. They may still have revolutionary ideas of painting the world Red. But just the same, the Soviet entrance into the League does stand out as a major political happening.

I'm tired of being picked on. I am going to complain to Roy Howard. His man, Westbrook Pegler, has got to stop kicking my baseball team around. Yes, Roy Howard, of the Scripts-Howard ^{chain of} newspapers, is letting that knock-down, drag-out and skin 'em alive columnist of his go too far. He's calling my team, "The Bloomer Boys".

Well, let it go at that. Us Bloomer Boys finally won a game from the White House Correspondents yesterday. ^{With} our bloomers ^{billowing in the breeze} ~~were more billowy than theirs, and~~ we won eleven to five ^{on the diamond of the Pawling Boys School.}

Maybe it was because their manager, Colonel Marvin McIntyre, had to dash away to Washington. Or maybe it was because the President, himself, wasn't there to do the master minding. Last week they yanked the Brain Trust, pulled them out of the game for bum playing. Yesterday they yanked the umpire, which was one of the most peculiar things ever seen in baseball. The White House Correspondents brought their own umpire with them, but his decisions in their favor were so raw that they put him out of the game. So, Umpire McCafferty,

RUSSIA

There's a strange election on in Russia, in the City of Khoristan, and the ^{candidate is} ~~campaign is for~~ Czar Nicholas the Second.

They are voting for or against the Czar, that unfortunate last ~~emperor~~ emperor of the Romanoffs, whose death is one of history's ^{grimest} ~~grossest~~ tragedies.

In the town of Khoristan there stands a statue of Nicholas the Second, one of the few that remain in Soviet Russia, and the people are voting "Shall the statue be allowed to remain, or be ~~to~~ down?" ~~It is a part of a rostrum for public speakers.~~ So tonight in Soviet Russia the electioneering is under way, for or against the Czar.

BASEBALL ENDING - 2

was sent to the showers.

Well, we won, and everything would be fine and dandy, except for this guy Westbrook Pegler. We play softball, but he says it's bean-bag, and tells us to get a few Vassar girls to show us how -- only he says they might get too rough. So please Roy Howard call off that Ruffian of yours!

RETAKE

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When men want to escape they think of all sorts of things. A whole catalogue could be made up of various methods of breaking out of prison. One stunt that has been tried at times is running away with a locomotive. A branch railroad track commonly runs into a prison. And sometimes prisoners have been known to capture a locomotive and make a wild ~~dash~~ ^{dash.}

Something like that happened today at the great Joliet Penitentiary in Illinois. A locomotive was just pulling out of the yard. Four convicts ^{tried to} ~~hopped~~ ^{and seize it} aboard for a ride to freedom. That's what they thought it would be -- but it wasn't. They failed -- driven off. Then ^{two} guards opened fire, ^{two} of the escaping convicts were killed and the other two wounded. ^{One guard shot.} They took a desperate chance; ~~and~~ it didn't work.

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END

A lot of sport events were washed out by the rain that ended last week -- among them the Barney Ross- Jimmy McLarnin fight for the welterweight championship. It is not raining tonight, but still they are ^{not} ~~being~~ ^{on} putting the fight ~~on~~. They are holding ^{over} it until next Saturday. Tonight is Jewish New Year, Roshhashona. Jewish fans wouldn't go to see any boxing fights on this day. And then, Barney Ross ^{really} ~~himself~~ bears the name ^{and was born} ~~of~~ Rashkovsky, and he wouldn't think of socking anybody ~~on~~ the chin, not on Roshhashona.

On the other hand, Jimmy McLarnin is an Irishman. The great Irish ~~fixtix~~ feast is St. Patrick's day. But Jimmy wouldn't mind fighting on St. Patrick's day. Which in fact is the day when an Irishman fights the best.

It is too puzzling to figure out in a fifteen-minute broadcast, so I'll say -- *Roshhashona - top o' the mornin'*

and SO LONG UNTIL TOMORROW.

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