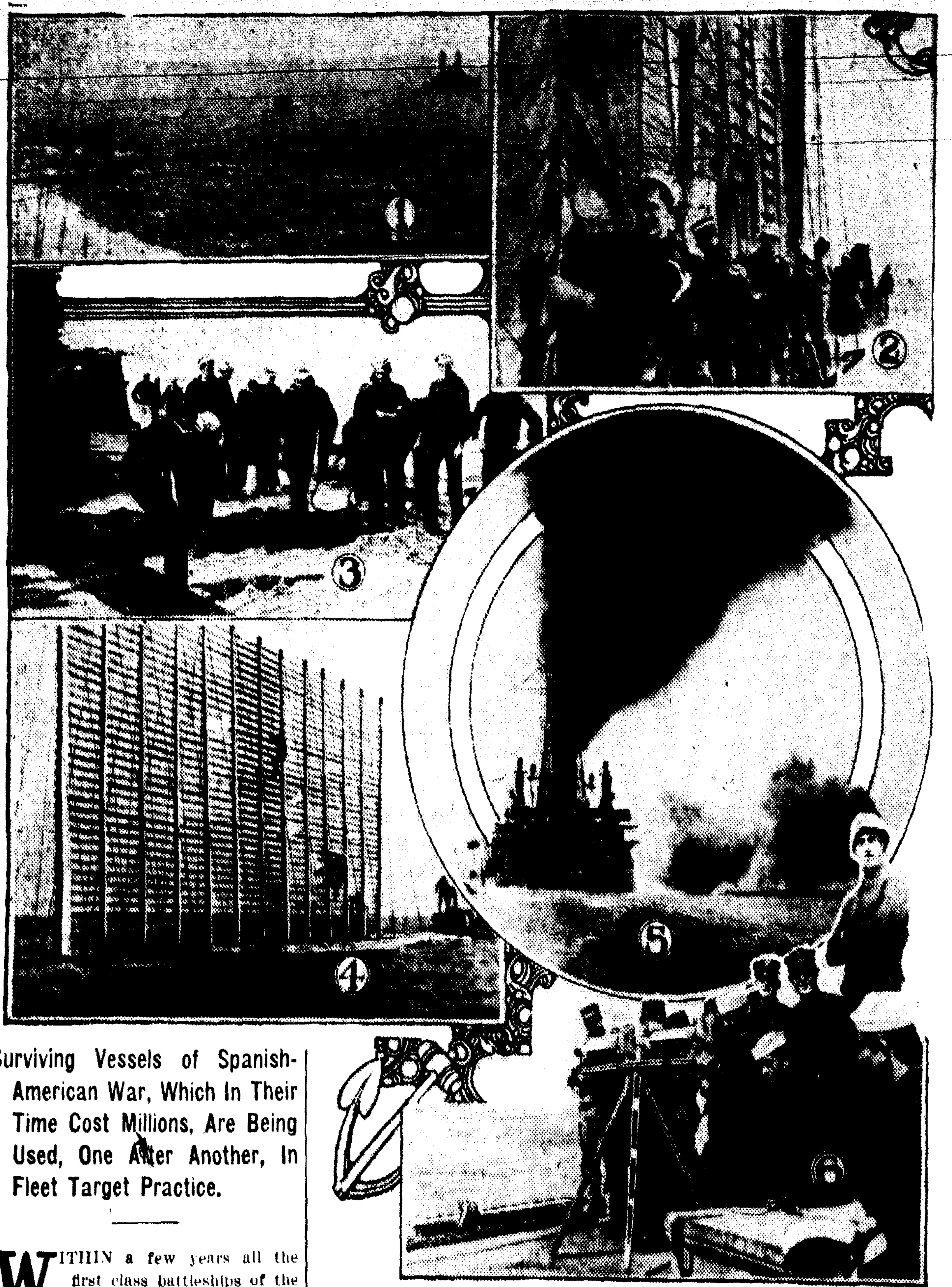
Shooting Up Old Battleships



Photos by American Press Association.

1.—Practice ground. 2.—Repairing target. 3.—Preparing target net. 4.—Dismantling target. 5.—Firing a broadside. 6.—Sighting effects of shots.

Surviving Vessels of Spanish-American War, Which In Their Time Cost Millions, Are Being Used, One After Another, In Fleet Target Practice.

WITHIN a few years all the first class battleships of the United States that fought in the Spanish-American war, with a single exception, probably will have been destroyed by the shells of the great Dreadnoughts and super-Dreadnoughts of the present Atlantic fleet. The Texas, which Commander Philip caused to fight gloriously, has met her doom already in this way, and now the battleship Indiana, which was one of Sampson's first line ships at Santiago, is to be dismantled of her guns and towed to some convenient spot where she can be used as a target for the guns of the newer and mightier ships of the Arkansas, Delaware, Michigan, Florida and Connecticut types.

For almost two years, off and on, the battleships of the Atlantic fleet have been firing at the hull of the old Texas until today there is little of the Texas that could be made use of as a target, and the officers in charge of the naval target work are looking about for something to take the place of that famous ship of 1898. And it is said that they have about decided that the Indiana, to build and equip which the government spent $5,983,871, has been tentatively selected as the next ship that will be offered as a sacrifice to show what the gunners of the great Atlantic fleet can do.

The Indiana has long since become obsolete, and when she goes to her last anchorage to await the bombardment of the ships of the Atlantic fleet she probably will go under a name other than the Indiana, just as did the Texas, which was badly riddled under the name of the San Marcos when the name Texas had been given to the mighty super-Dreadnought Texas, a sister ship of the New York, two vessels which are nearing completion and either of which is equal in battle efficiency to a dozen vessels of the old Texas type. Indiana undoubtedly will be the name given to one of the super-Dreadnoughts that will be authorized during the Wilson administration.

LIKELY TARGETS OF FUTURE

When the Indiana is wrecked beyond use for target purposes no one will be surprised to see the Massachusetts and the Illinois and the Iowa follow her into oblivion via the target route. Like the Indiana, all these ships are obsolete survivors of the battle of Santiago.

But when a ship is not available to fire at targets are erected on rafts, at which the gunners point the huge iron monsters under their control and test their skill.

Steaming at full speed, the marksmen find little difficulty in hitting targets at a range of 15,000 yards, which is really remarkable when it is said that the largest part of the target is below the horizon, the upper part only being visible. The mere moving of the ship or a fair size wave will often obscure the target entirely.

European powers also are waking up to the realization of the importance of efficient gunnery. It was only last year that foreign navies regarded it as a waste of effort to aim at a greater range than 7,000 or 8,000 yards, thinking that the hitting of a target at a greater distance was merely a matter of luck.

Nevertheless our ships have proved beyond a doubt that at the range of 12,000 and 15,000 yards hits can be made with comparative frequency.

PRACTICE IS EXPENSIVE

The secret of this achievement lies in the efficiency of the men behind the guns, on the bridge, in the engine room and particularly of the fire control officer stationed in the cage-like masts so familiar a part of the equipment of a modern American warship.

The enormous cost of target practice can well be imagined. Take, for instance, the Utah, which last year hit more targets than any other battleship. The firing of one of its twelve inch guns costs the government $500. If the whole armament, including the torpedoes, were fired together it would mean that $25,040 had literally "gone up in smoke."

It has been estimated that spring training, such as the Atlantic battle fleet completed recently, cost Uncle Sam's treasury the large sum of $3,000,000. This is about 3 per cent of the money which it takes yearly now to maintain and strengthen the navy in order to keep up with the world's procession of super-Dreadnoughts, Dreadnoughts, ordinary battleships, armored cruisers, lighter cruisers, torpedo boat destroyers, torpedo boats, submarines, auxiliary vessels, etc. But naval officers and department officials say the $3,000,000 is well expended, for if America is to have a big navy at all, they argue, money must be spent to keep it on a high plane of efficiency.

Ever since the time of the Spanish-American war, when the American ships, although they disposed of Spain's weaker navy in jigtime, did not make a large percentage of hits, the navy department has devoted time and brains to the matter of improving naval marksmanship. "The shots that hit are those that count" is a navy axiom that is impressed on all the officers and men, and there is keen rivalry among the vessels for the honor of flying the black balled flag which indicates supremacy in gunnery.

ARDUOUS WORK INVOLVED

Target practice off Hampton Roads and elsewhere means a lot of hard work for officers and men. There are the erection of the targets, the maneuvering of the ships, the handling of the ammunition, the loading and firing of the guns, the inspection of the targets after fire and many other details. The strain on the nerves comes mainly, of course, when the big guns commence their ear splitting booming. When the order to fire comes the great gun emits a deafening roar and a sheet of flame. It recoils with the shock, but soon recovers, and then follow anxious watching and the desire to hear the report of the landing of the projectile. If it scores a hit, well and good. If not, there are scowls and frowns, for each shot counts in the total.

The most practical tests of naval gunnery is when a real battleship is used as a target, as in the case of the Texas or San Marcos, its later name. The effect produced upon the old boat by the eagle eyed gunners is best told in a report by the secretary of the navy at that time.

"The results of the firing," declared the secretary, "have furnished us with the most valuable information on the important questions that arise in the consideration of the preparedness of the fleet for actual battle.

ACCURATE, DEADLY FIRING

"The firing has conclusively proved that our system of training is the best, and the total wreck of the San Marcos has impressed every observer of the accuracy of fire and the destructive features of our projectiles.

"As the practice was primarily for the education of spotters in estimating the errors in range at distances of five to seven miles, it was intended to have the salvos so placed that few projectiles would hit the vessel, so that we might use her again next year for spotting practice.

"Almost all the salvos were fired so that they would fall at varying distances for the education of the spotters, but in order to observe the fire of our projectiles on an actual armored vessel a few of the salvos were directed at the target itself, and we got a great many hits from these salvos. I noticed on one salvo that four twelve inch projectiles fell in a bunch, all of them striking the vessel and causing dreadful havoc.

"The New Hampshire placed the salvos anywhere she wanted, and when the gunners wished to have some hits on the conning tower and the turret armor, in order to observe the effect, they had no trouble placing the shots at from 10,000 to 12,000 yards range at just the point desired.

FATAL LONG RANGE SHOTS

"A few projectiles were directed against the masts, so as to show what would happen to the exposed communication systems. An inspection of the vessel after firing showed the immense holes which had been plowed through from one side to the other, many of them being below water and any one or two of them being sufficient to make the vessel a total loss. The armor of this vessel was unable to withstand the impact at the very great range at which we fired, and the battleship was a total loss after the first two salvos were directed at her.

"All the officers of the fleet were deeply impressed with the accuracy and the great destructive effect of the projectiles. All the manikins which were placed at the guns representing the crews were dreadfully cut to pieces, and the fumes and fire left by the passage of high explosive projectiles would have destroyed every living thing.

"The bulkheads in places were like sieves, due to the action of high explosives, and all the compartments below were completely riddled. It was remarkable to note the enormous power of some of these projectiles, which at 12,000 yards went right through the heaviest armor and continued their work of destruction inside the vessel."

This test indicates that no enemy would be proof against American guns anywhere within a radius of nine miles.

LIVE SCARECROW IN LONDON.

The Only One, He Believes, In Business of Frightening Away Birds.

London has long buried under its miles of streets any fame that it may once have had as a farming center and as the home of the rural laborer. Indeed, most people would be puzzled if asked to find a boy with an old fashioned clapper scaring birds from a wheat field within a few miles of St. Paul's. But a London Chronicle representative came across him, perhaps the last Londoner to be engaged in this work. He was vigorously "clapping" in a field near Ilford, and the crows rose from a broad field of young wheat like a flight of black aeroplanes.

He is Willie Taylor, and ever since he left school, three years ago, bird scaring has been an important part of his work on the farm. "They tell me," he said, "that I am the only boy using an old bird clapper so near London. I don't know of another hereabouts. Yes, it's lonely here in the fields all day, and I'm not allowed to read while I'm at work, though I like reading. But sometimes other boys come and sit by me, and that passes the time. After dusk and whenever there isn't bird scaring to do I help in the farmyard with the horses and any other work. I'd like to work with the carts and the teams always. I get 8 shillings a week now. Master's just given me a raise of 2 shillings."

Though he spends his days in the wheatfields within eight miles of St. Paul's, young Taylor has only been right into London once, and he speaks of that as quite an event. It was when he went with one of the farm carts with a load of vegetables to Covent Garden. His eyes sparkle at the thought that he is getting to be a big, strong fellow and will soon go with the carts as a regular part of his work. That will be life indeed!

ORIGINAL FOLKS IN PANAMA.

Discovery of Indians to Whom White People Are Strangers.

Professor Pittier of the United States agricultural department, who was sent to Panama for botanical study, has done some remarkable work for the Smithsonian institution in regard to exploring among the original inhabitants of that region.

He visited a tribe of Indians known as the Chocos. They live on the southwestern coast of Panama, and Professor Pittier thinks they are descendants of the tribes which inhabited that part of the world when Columbus discovered Santo Domingo.

They are tall and stalwart, with kindly natures, a free hospitality and an innate honesty. Few white men have ever been among them. Tribes of a somewhat similar nature are also found on the southeast coast, many of them having never seen a white face in their lives. While the republic of Panama nominally rules this section, the truth is that these Indians govern themselves entirely, have absolutely no intercourse with the whites, do not allow a white man to visit their lands and still fly the Colombian flag.

Their houses are grass huts, their clothing is almost nothing, but they seem to enjoy life in spite of the fact that they are unacquainted with the benefits of religion, fashion, society and government.

Show Your Grit.

If fate hits you between the eyes
Don't stay to nurse your sorrow
You've got a chance, if you'll but rise,
To fight again tomorrow.
—Detroit Free Press.

Gossip of the Sport World

By "SCORE KEEPER"

Club and college oarsmen are unusually active this season, and the list of regattas indicates the most successful season in the history of the sport. The list of club and college races besides those already held follows:

May 24, Cornell versus Harvard university, at Lake Cayuga, Ithaca; May 24, Pennsylvania versus Annapolis, at Annapolis; May 24, American regatta on Schuylkill river, Philadelphia; May 30, Harlem regatta, Harlem river, New York city.

June 20, Harvard versus Yale, at New London, Conn., varsity and freshmen eights and fours; June 21, intercollegiate regatta at Poughkeepsie, varsity eights, freshmen eights and fours between Cornell, Pennsylvania, Columbia, Syracuse and Wisconsin; Schuylkill navy regatta.

July 2 to 5, Royal English Henley regatta, Thames river, London; Independence day (July 4), people's regatta, Philadelphia; New England Rowing association, Boston; Connecticut Valley Rowing association regatta, Rosedale (N. J.) club, Hackensack river, July 16 and 17, Central States Rowing association regatta, also July 18 and 19, Southwestern Rowing association regatta, both at Peoria, Ill., July 19, Long Island Rowing association, July 26, Hudson River regatta, New York.

Aug. 1 and 2, Canadian Henley, at St. Catharines national regatta, at Boston, Aug. 8 and 9, week of Aug. 25, Perry centennial regatta, Put in Bay, Lake Erie, Detroit Boat club auspices.

Sept. 1 (Labor day), middle states regatta (probably Baltimore), New England Rowing association at Boston.

Oct. 12 (Columbus day), New England Rowing Association regatta, Boston.

Big League Ball Parks.

AMERICAN LEAGUE.

	Approximate cost
Philadelphia Shibe park	$600,000
Cleveland League park	400,000
Detroit Navin field	500,000
Chicago Comiskey park	750,000
Washington Nationals park	450,000
Boston Fenway park	400,000
St Louis Sportsmen's park	350,000

NATIONAL LEAGUE.

New York Polo grounds	$900,000
Brooklyn Ebbets field	[illegible]
Cincinnati Redland field	450,000
Pittsburgh Forbes field	500,000
Philadelphia National League park	400,000
Chicago Cub park	350,000
St Louis Robison field	25,000

Do You Know That—

The first no hit game in the history of baseball was played in Ionia, Mich., Aug. 17, 1876, between the St. Louis Reds and the Cass club of Detroit. Jim Galvin pitched for the Reds?

The record for the shortest game is thirty-two minutes, played Sept. 17, 1910, between Atlanta and Mobile teams at Atlanta. Full nine innings?

Gibbons to Study Law.

Mike Gibbons, St. Paul middleweight, plans to matriculate at the Minnesota State university next fall, where he will study law. Mike proposes to abandon the ring by the time a degree is awarded him, and he figures by then he will have money enough stored away not to worry if clients are scarce at first.

"It's not that I don't like the game," Mike says. "I like to fight better than I do to eat, but the next three years, as I figure it, will be my best, and at the end of that time I naturally will be on the down grade.

"I don't want to retire from the ring and find myself without something to do, and I believe the law will appeal to my sensibilities. At any rate, I'm going to tackle it, and if the work is to my liking I'll stick at college until I get a degree. I see so many down and out boxers in my travels that I can't bear to think of the day when I'll be numbered among them.

"Even if I am not all in at the end of three years I think by the end of that time I will have had enough of the fighting game, and I will be ready to retire."

Gibson Still In the Ring.

Who says they don't come back? Look at George Gibson, the Pittsburgh Pirates' veteran catcher. Last season it was thought that he had seen his best playing days, that in a year or two more he would be in the minors.

In the early season games Gibson handled the pitchers as well if not better than he did in his best days. He now plays with lots of snap and pegs with deadly aim. Manager Clarke is pleased with the showing of the veteran. Two years ago Gibson was considered the best catcher in the country.

Photo by American Press Association.

George Gibson, Veteran Catcher of the Pittsburgh Pirates.

The Height of the Ridiculous

Slippery Path of Fame.

"When I went to Washington," said the congressman who was defeated, "the people of Plunkville gathered and strewed roses in my path."

"And when you returned as a lame duck?"

"They strewed banana peelings and cactus."—Washington Herald.

Sandy Didn't Care.

The Porter—Have you lost something, sir?

Sandy—Aye, aye, but it's naethin', only the three penny bit o' silver A was aboot tae give ye fer carryin' ma bag.—London Opinion.

Couldn't Afford Luxuries.

"They were to operate on me for appendicitis."

"Why didn't they?"

"At that most inopportune time I failed in business."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Watered Stock.

Housekeeper—Why do you charge so much for your ice?

Iceman—Well, mum, the water was high when we cut it.—[illegible]

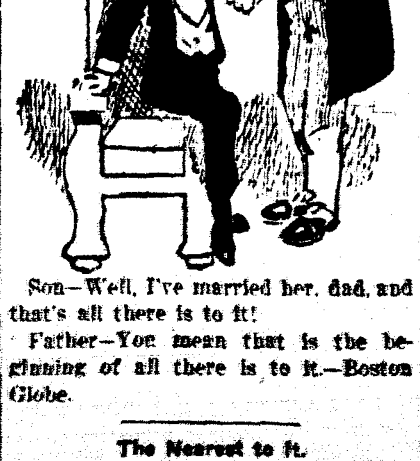
And He Couldn't Figure Out Why.

A man who had spent twenty-five years in prison was recently released and shortly after was asked:

"What change in the world was the greatest surprise to you?"

"Well," he said, "when I went to prison women were quite round. When I came out of prison I found they had become flat and oblong."—Wisconsin State Journal.

Different.



Son—Well, I've married her, dad, and that's all there is to it!

Father—You mean that is the beginning of all there is to it.—Boston Globe.

The Nearest to It.

A colored woman went to the pastor of her church to complain of the conduct of her husband. After listening to a long recital of the delinquencies of her spouse the minister said, "Have you ever tried heaping coals of fire upon his head?"

"No," was the reply, "but I done tried hot water."—Metropolitan.

Duties of the Office Boy.

Employer—Do you know the duties of an office boy?

Office Boy—Yes, sir—wake up the bookkeeper when I hear the boss coming.—[illegible]

Impossible Suggestion.

"Cannot this quarrel be patched up between Mrs. Wombat and Mrs. Wallaby?"

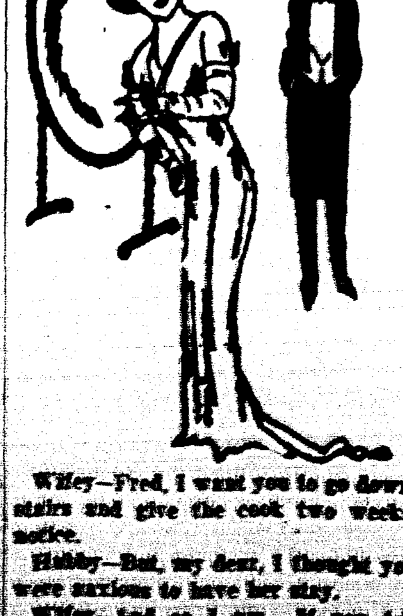
"No; this quarrel cannot be patched up. Mrs. Wombat offered Mrs. Wallaby's cook $2 more per week."—Pittsburgh Post.

Right Away.

Orator—Now, then, is there anybody in the audience who would like to ask a question?

Voice—Yes, sir. How soon is the band going to play?—Toledo Blade.

Diplomacy.



Wifey—Fred, I want you to go downstairs and give the cook two weeks' notice.

Hubby—But, my dear, I thought you were anxious to have her stay.

Wifey—And so I am. If you tell her to go she'll probably stay just to spite you. See!—Chicago News.

[illegible]

[illegible]