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The Bomb

BOMB tossing in New York city dates back a matter of twelve or thirteen years, and from the first it proved so popular as a means of execution on the part of the desperate band of criminals who resorted to its use that the police regard it as the most dangerous of all weapons they have to face.

In discussing the introduction of the bomb by Black Hand operatives in New York city Joseph Petrosino, lieutenant of police and commander of the first Italian squad ever organized here, once said: "Unless summary and heroic action is taken to crush this type of criminal the lives of none in this city will be safe."

Petrosino was a man of few words. Even his intimates never found him in what might be termed a talkative mood. What he had to say he voiced in the fewest possible words, but always in terms that left no doubt as to the speaker's sincerity.

Thousands of bombs have been exploded, and each with criminal intent, in New York city since that day in 1902 when a clumsily fashioned infernal machine was tossed from a hotel in Park street and fell upon the sidewalk of a drug store at Park and Mulberry streets.

Evolution of the Bomb. In tracing the history of the bomb in New York city nothing impresses one more forcibly than its evolution—the rapid improvement made in the fashioning of these infernal machines and their ever increasing deadliness.

This was the problem that Petrosino and his little band of Italian detectives—so grudgingly allotted him—had to solve. Their progress in this direction was remarkable when all is considered, but when a hostile Police Commissioner united with a single stroke of the pen all that years had been required to accomplish, it is little wonder that bomb outrages so increased and multiplied in New York city within the last few years.



1. Chemical or chlorate bomb found at No. 714 Second avenue. 2. Gaetano Imperato was caught lighting this chemical bomb in East Eleventh street; sentenced. 3. Bomb found on Giuseppe Costabile, Black Hand bomb thrower; leader; was sent to Sing Sing for seven years. 4. Gas pipe bomb sent through mail to Jacques Frank. 5. Giovanni Rizzo was caught lighting this chemical bomb in an East Thirtieth street tenement. 6. Four stick dynamite bomb planted under Mayor Gaynor's window, City Hall. 7. Dynamite bomb for which Bortolo Minutello, the maker, was sentenced to one year in the penitentiary. 8. Bomb found at No. 402 East Eleventh street, composed of two sticks of dynamite, electric tape and fulminate of mercury cap. 9. Chemical or chlorate bomb taken apart by the police. 10. Two stick dynamite bomb found in the possession of Angelo Cuchiaro; he received a sentence.

tion among the honest and highly respected members of their fellow countrymen.

The first bombs set off in New York were what the police to-day designate as "sacred bombs." When a demand for money had been made by the Black Hand and the sum was not speedily forthcoming, blackmailers would remind the victim of his tardiness by exploding what is now known as a "pumpkin bomb."

"Pumpkin Bombs." From the first appearance of the "pumpkin bombs" Petrosino redoubled his efforts in the Italian quarter. With difficulty he ascertained just who in the neighborhood where the explosive was set off had been threatened and then, cleverly followed the lead until he discovered just what group was keeping black-mail in that quarter.

The great bulk of the "bomb" gave the police an idea. An order was at once issued to all policemen on post instructing them to stop any and all Italians they met who might be carrying a bulky bundle. They were told to examine minutely the contents of these bundles and should anything therein resembling a "pumpkin bomb" be found the owner should be arrested at once.

went forth. In consequence new tactics were employed.

Thereafter bombs were fashioned by removing the tops of olive oil cans and the interior thoroughly dried by baking in an oven. The can was filled with powder and then sealed, a hole sufficiently large being left in one end to permit the insertion of a fuse.

Handicapped by the drastic order relative to oil cans, the resourceful Black Handers alighted upon a new scheme. Why not have some one beyond the pale of suspicion and an expert in the use of explosives make the bombs?

At about this time word on the city's subway began. As the work progressed and blasting became general the wily Black Handers, many of whom were employed in the excavation work, found dynamite easy to procure and in it recognized the ideal explosive for the bomb purpose.

and, instead of the hitherto harmless "sacred" bombs, infernal machines that wrought hundreds and thousands of dollars of damage were set off at frequent intervals.

New tactics were employed in setting off these bombs, which proved how much more daring the operators were becoming. In some cases the blackmailers in desiring to be more forcibly reminded of their victim that he was tardy in making his payments would lower the "pumpkin" bomb down the chimney of the tenement house in which he lived.

The bomb was exploded on a level with the floor where slept the victim and his family, and as it belched forth its blanket of black pungent smoke to the accompaniment of an ear splitting roar their terror beggared all description as they fled to the street.

But with dynamite it was different. When the bombs charged with this explosive went off it meant business. The downward course of the crash left the victim in no doubt as to the character of the explosive for dynamite's greatest force is invariably downward. When these bombs were exploded floors were ripped up, the ceilings below torn from the walls and the sleeping victims buried beneath a mass of plaster and other debris. Gas meters in



Henry I. Klotz, No. 1332 Fulton Avenue, Bronx, bomb maker, who was blown to death.

these tenements were invariably torn loose from their fastenings by such explosions and a new peril was added as the half clothed and frenzied tenants made their way out through the fumes of fast flowing gas.

Composition of the Bombs. Bombs of this description were made by binding three or four sticks of dynamite tightly together with tape and sheet iron hoops. The scrap iron, nails and slugs would then be inserted and these in turn securely bound. Sometimes concrete would be put in among the missiles and this permitted to dry and harden after the dynamite interior had been carefully protected by a wrapping of oil cloth.

had been stuck into him while he was blasting in an excavation several days previously. Just then another policeman entered to report the explosion in the lake shop. He brought along also the lat the bomb setter had left behind. The hat fitted Salvatore, and when a chattering and indignant group of Italians came hurrying into the police station several of them identified Salvatore as the man they had seen entering and leaving from the cellar. Salvatore's condition soon followed and he was sent to Sing Sing for ten years.

Petrosino afterward learned that Salena was a roommate of Leonardo Bortolotto, alias Leo Barry, who was an expert bomb maker, with a laboratory in the East Sixties. He later was down to stairs by a bomb he was attempting to plant and was identified by prints of several of the fingers found after the explosion. He was the first man Inspector Joseph Faurot, the finger print expert, identified by prints after death. Barry also was a horse poisoner, and he and Salena had lived and worked together.

Caught Red Handed. Giuseppe Bonaventura, now serving a term in Sing Sing, and once living in the "House of Three Deuces," in Curwain street, was the first man captured in New York city in the act of applying a match to the fuse of a bomb. He was caught red handed in the hallway of a tenement in East Eleventh street, where Francesco Spinelli, an intended victim, dwelt "The Three Deuces." It might be mentioned, was later the scene of a Black Hand fire in which twenty-three persons lost their lives.

Spinelli was the owner of several houses in East Eleventh street and conducted a well paying contracting business. Spinelli was the recipient of many Black Hand letters, but he refused to comply with the demand of the blackmailers. He had been warned to refrain from applying to the police for protection, but this threat too he disregarded. He was warmly commended by Commissioner Bingham for his courageous stand and that official took a personal and keen interest in the apprehension of the Black Handers implicated. At the suggestion of Petrosino, Spinelli delivered a package of masked money at the barber shop of one Abagnale, dwelt "The Three Deuces." As a man in the shop stepped forward and took the envelope the police, who were in hiding, arrested everybody in the shop. The case was thrown out of court, due to wide discrepancies in the testimony of Spinelli in court and that which he had previously told the police.

As soon as the case ended the demand for money on Spinelli were resumed. At the time of the raid on the barber shop the police noticed that Giuseppe Orsini, a friend of Abagnale and a habitué of the latter's shop, arrived a few moments after the arrests were made. He was not taken into custody, but a constant and unrelenting watch was kept on his movements. Maria Abagnale, a sister of the laborer, was in love with Orsini, and she too was watched.

After a renewal of these threats Petrosino redoubled his efforts to capture the Black Hand group that was persecuting Spinelli. From clues he picked up from time to time he directed his energies toward the apprehension of Bonaventura, who he had reason to believe was the real brains of the conspiracy against the contractor. Three bombs were set off in property owned by the contractor with varying results. On one of these occasions Petrosino was only a minute behind the man who applied the match, but his quarry escaped.

From then on Petrosino never permitted Bonaventura out of sight of some member of the Italian squad. Learning that an attack was to be made on the Spinelli flat late one night, Petrosino took up his stand in a dark hallway on the opposite side of the street. After a three hour fight he saw a man sneaking up Eleventh street with a spring looking package beneath his coat. As the man turned into the hallway of the Spinelli house Petrosino darted across the street, and as he entered the dark hallway he could just make out the form of a man as he crouched over some object he was tucking under the stairs.

A Daring Act. Suddenly there was a feeble flame as it flickered in the draughty hallway. By its glare Petrosino could see the man he was watching so intently apply the match to the tapers end of a fuse. In a second he knew he had his bomb toser, and in the very act of setting off an infernal machine. With a spring he landed on the back of the Black Handers and with a free hand seized the fuse and pinched off its sputtering end. Then followed a battle which the detective later described as one of the most furious he had ever engaged in. His captive fought with all the fury of a wild beast and repeatedly the detective belabored him over head and shoulders with his revolver butt before subduing him. As he led his prisoner out to the light of a street lamp he recognized Bonaventura, the bomb toser he had so earnestly sought. From that moment the threats on the life of Spinelli ceased. An important capture of a bomb thrower was that of Giovanni Rizzo, of No. 217 First avenue, who was caught in the act of lighting one of his infernal machines in the hallway of the tenement house at No. 366 East Twelfth street. As in all other such cases the prisoner gave battle before being subdued and was a subject for the ambulance surgeon before he was landed in his cell. He was sent to Sing Sing for a seven year term.

and its interior filled with some explosive of high power. A heavy coating of shellac covered the board and this in turn was neatly wrapped with heavy twine. Another coating of shellac, rendered it firm and water tight. The wrapping on these bombs was as uniformly and beautifully done as if a machine had been used, for not a single strand was out of place or alignment. The doors or what ever death carrying mechanism were never inserted and still other coatings of twine and shellac used until it was as compact and solid as rock. The fuse made its way through an ingeniously contrived passage until it led directly to the explosive. One of these bombs, capable of killing several persons at close range, could be carried in the outer pocket of a laborer's overcoat without attracting undue suspicion.

The First Arrest. The first person arrested in New York city for the recent explosion of a bomb was Salvatore Salena, and his capture had its ludicrous as well as tragic side. Salena was known also by the name of Barone, and he was not only a bomb toser for the Black Hand but he was actively identified with the east side band of horse poisoners who spread terror among scores of owners of valuable live stock.

Salena, or Barone, had sent a number of letters accompanied by the usual demands for money under pain of death to a prosperous baker with a shop at No. 5 Prince street. Failing to receive the blackmailers' demands, the baker was informed that his place would be blown up and that his death, as well as those of all employees there, would follow. The baker shop was in a basement twelve steps leading down from the sidewalk. Salena armed himself with an improvised type of "pumpkin bomb" in which a number of nails, scrap iron and spikes had been securely bound within, and spilled forth the wreckage.

The coast was clear, and the baker and his helpers fortunately were in another part of the building. Salena made his way into the basement, "set" his bomb, lighted the fuse and was about to start for the street again when the bomb prematurely exploded. There was a blinding flash, a terrific roar and almost crazed with pain, Salena bounded up the stairs to the street level and, huddled, sped down the street. As he turned into the Bovey he ran into the arms of a policeman who, failing to extract a coherent explanation of the man's wild flight, took him to the Elizabeth street police station.

Victim of Own Bomb. The prisoner couldn't or wouldn't express himself in English, so no satisfactory explanation could be got from him as he stood before the desk of the lieutenant on duty. Just then a reporter who was standing near called the attention of the policeman who made the arrest to a little pool of blood in which the covering prisoner stood.

The Italian was taken into a back room, and upon the removal of his trousers and undergarments it was found that his legs and waist resembled the body of a porcupine. The nails and slugs and spikes had imbedded themselves into his upper limbs until he fairly bristled with them. The victim of his own bomb was suffering intense agony, yet he stolidly swore that the missiles with which he was peppered

had been stuck into him while he was blasting in an excavation several days previously. Just then another policeman entered to report the explosion in the lake shop. He brought along also the lat the bomb setter had left behind. The hat fitted Salvatore, and when a chattering and indignant group of Italians came hurrying into the police station several of them identified Salvatore as the man they had seen entering and leaving from the cellar. Salvatore's condition soon followed and he was sent to Sing Sing for ten years.