In a personal interview asked on the question by the editor Captain Clerk gives in the May Century the following opinion of the Spanish admiral's strategy:

"Almost all the Spanish fleet had to come out and I, for one, had given up the hope that it would do so. It is impossible to estimate how much Cervera should have preferred to have night day to the time of the battle, notwithstanding the searchlight-watch so rigidly maintained. The idea would have been quite possible to have placed as guides to the channel, along the shore, and on the smokestack of most of the sunken Merrimack, lights sighted toward the sea, so that we could not have him.

The admiral would have had to be very bold, if he would have had light enough to see the shore and the smoke from the spouting of the guns, which probably would have extinguished theirs.

The direction of the enemy could thus have been given by signals, and our captains would have been certain of discovering him, whether he was being rammed or torpedoed or our own crew would have had a far better chance of accuracy of fire when full daylight enabled every commander to see what all the others as well as the enemy were doing, and exactly what was to be done. It was the difference between certainty and uncertainty.

In the daytime we were able to choose the moment in which all lines of action were being related to the enemy rather than being to the west, keeping the fleet together. At sea line any vessel which might be able to overtake us would be the nearest, and on shore, near the port, and arm would thus have been neutralized.

"Considering the course that were open to Cervera, I should probably, in the circumstances, have done as he did—beared toward the westward, keeping the fleet together in the hope of driving him away. We would have been better off if we had attacked him, but we did not have the force. By attacking them when the distance is somewhat greater, the course would have favored them, and by attacking him when he was near the shore, the chances of bringing them to a point of decision would have been greater than they were."

It is evident that the admiral had no better chance of saving one or two or even more of his ships by the policy of warring, with an ultimatum rendezvous. Only three of our ships were superior in speed to those of the Spanish, the New, the Merrimack, and the Oregon—possibly the Texas. If we had ever sustained a Spanish ship, it is possible not that one of them would have been able to close with the other to do anything."

"With the exception of the Spanish, the Merrimack had four guns, the New, one, the Oregon, four, and the Texas, two. The command on the New, for instance, consisted of 50 men. The command on the Oregon, 200 men. And the Texas, one.