



SECTIONAL VIEW OF THE BATTLESHIP MAINE.

THE VERDICT OF THE COURT.

The Maine Blown Up by a Mine. An External Explosion, but no Blame Attached to Spain.

PRESIDENT MCKINLEY ADVISES PEACE.

Washington, March 28.—The president today sent the following message to congress: To the Congress of the United States: For some time prior to the visit of the Maine to Havana harbor, our consular representatives pointed out the advantages to flow from the visit of national ships to the Cuban waters, in accustoming the people to the presence of our flag as the symbol of good will and of our ships in the fulfillment of the mission of protection to American interests, even though no immediate need therefor might exist.

allowed for a simultaneous investigation by the Spanish authorities. The finding of the court of inquiry was reached after 23 days of continuous labor, on the 21st of March, and, having been approved on the 22d by the commander-in-chief of the United States naval force in the north Atlantic station, was transmitted to the executive. It is herewith laid before the congress, together with the voluminous testimony taken before the court.

Its purport is, in brief, as follows: When the Maine arrived at Havana she was conducted by the regular government pilot to buoy No. 4, to which she was moored in from 5 1/2 to six fathoms of water. The state of discipline on board and the condition of her magazines, boilers, coal bunkers and storage compartments are passed in review with the conclusion that excellent order prevailed and that no indication of any cause for an internal explosion existed in any quarter.

At 8 o'clock in the evening of Feb. 15 everything had been reported secure and all was quiet. At 40 minutes past 9 o'clock the vessel was suddenly destroyed. There were two distinct explosions, with a brief interval between them. The first lifted the forward part of the ship very perceptibly; the second, which was more open, prolonged and of greater volume, is attributed by the court to partial explosion of two or more of the forward magazines.

The evidence of the divers establishes that the after part of the ship was practically intact and sank in that condition. A very few minutes after the explosion the forward part was completely demolished. Upon the evidence of a concurrent external cause the finding of the court is as follows: At frame 17, the outer shell of the ship, from a point 1 1/2 feet from the middle line of the ship, and six feet above the keel, when in its normal position, has been forced up so as to now be about four feet above the surface of the water; therefore about 34 feet above where it would be had the ship sunk uninjured.

The outside plating is bent into a reversed U shape. It is the after wing of which, about 15 feet broad and 32 feet in length (from 17 to frame 23) is doubled back upon itself against the continuation of the same plating extending forward.

At frame 18 the vertical keel is broken in two and the flat keel bent into an angle similar to the angle formed by the outside bottom plates. This break is now about six feet below the surface of the water and about 30 feet above its normal position. In the opinion of the court this effect could have been produced only by the explosion of a mine situated under the bottom of the ship at about frame 18 and somewhat on the shore side of the ship.

The conclusions of the court are: That the loss of the Maine was not in any respect due to fault or negligence on the part of any of the officers or members of her crew.

That the ship was destroyed by the explosion of a sub-marine mine, which caused the partial explosion of two or more of her forward magazines; and that no evidence has been obtainable fixing the responsibility for the destruction of the Maine upon any person or persons.

I have directed that the finding of the court of inquiry and the views of this government thereon be communicated to the government of her majesty, the queen regent, and I do not permit myself to doubt that the sense of justice of the Spanish nation will dictate a course of action suggested by honor and the friendly relations of the two governments.

It will be the duty of the executive to advise the congress of the result, and in the meantime deliberate consideration is invoked. William McKinley, Executive Mansion, March 28, 1898.

was excellent; everything stowed according to orders—ammunition, guns, stores, etc. The temperature of the magazines at 8 p. m. was normal, except in the after 10-inch magazine, and that did not explode.

Third—The explosion occurred at 9:40 o'clock on the evening of Feb. 15. There were two explosions, with a very short interval between them; the ship lifted on the first explosion.

Fourth—The court can form no definite opinion of the condition from the wrecking divers' evidence.

Fifth—Technical details of wreckage from which the court deduces that a mine was exploded under the ship on the port side.

Sixth—The explosion was due to no fault of those on board.

Seventh—The opinion of the court is that the explosion of the mine caused the explosion of two magazines.

Eighth—The court declares that it cannot find evidence to fix responsibility.

COURT'S FINDING.

Full Report of Officers Who Investigated the Maine Disaster.

The following is the full text of the report of the court of inquiry: United States steamship Iowa, first rate, Key West, Monday, March 21.—After full and mature consideration of all the testimony before it, the court finds as follows:

1. That the United States battleship Maine arrived at the harbor of Havana, Cuba, on the 25th day of January, 1898, and was taken to buoy No. 4, in from five and a half to six fathoms of water, by the regular government pilot.

2. The state of discipline on board the Maine was excellent, and all orders and regulations in regard to the care and safety of the ship were strictly carried out.

All ammunition was stowed in accordance with prescribed instructions, and proper care was taken whenever ammunition was handled.

Nothing was stowed in any one of the magazines or shell rooms which was not permitted to be stowed there.

The magazines and shell rooms were always locked after having been opened, and after the destruction of the Maine the keys were found in their proper place in the captain's cabin, everything having been reported secure that evening at 8 p. m.

The temperature of the magazines and shell rooms were taken daily and reported. The only magazine which had an undue amount of heat was the after 10-inch magazine, and that did not explode at the time the Maine was destroyed.

The torpedo war heads were all stowed in the after part of the ship, under the ward room, and neither caused nor participated in the destruction of the Maine.

The dry gunnecot primers and detonators were stowed in the cabin aft, and remote from the scene of the explosion. Waste was carefully looked after on the Maine to obviate danger. Special orders in regard to this had been given by the commanding officer.

Furnishes, dryers, alcohol and other combustibles of this nature were stowed on or above the main deck and could not have had anything to do with the destruction of the Maine.

The medical stores were stowed aft under the ward room and remote from the scene of the explosion. No dangerous stores of any kind were stowed below in any of the other storerooms.

The coal bunkers were inspected daily. Of those bunkers adjacent to the forward magazines and shell rooms, four were empty, namely "B3, B4, B5, B6."

"A15" had been in use that day and "A15" was full of New River coal. This coal had been carefully inspected before receiving it on board. The bunker in which it was stowed was accessible on three sides at all times and the fourth side at this time on account of bunkers "B1" and "B2" being empty. This bunker, "A15," had been inspected that day by the engineer officer on duty.

The fire alarms in the bunkers were in working order and there had never been a case of spontaneous combustion of coal on board the Maine.

The two after boilers of the ship were in use at the time of the disaster, but for auxiliary purposes only, with a comparatively low pressure of steam and being tended by a reliable watch. These boilers could not have caused the explosion of the ship. The four forward boilers have since been found by the divers, and are in a fair condition.

On the night of the destruction of the Maine everything had been reported secure for the night at 8 o'clock by reliable persons, through the proper authorities, to the commanding officer. At the

time the Maine was destroyed the ship was quiet, and therefore liable to accident caused by movements from those on board.

dent, A. Marix, lieutenant commander, U. S. N., judge advocate: The proceedings and findings of the court of inquiry in the above case are approved.

M. Sicard, rear admiral, commander-in-chief of the U. S. naval force on the north Atlantic station.

ABSTRACT OF TESTIMONY.

Some of Evidence on Which the Court's Finding Was Based. The following are portions of the testimony: Ensign W. V. N. Powelson was called the third day of the court. He testified that he had been present on the Maine every day from the arrival of the Fern, and during a great deal of the diving. In reply to a question to tell the court all about the condition of the wreck, he said the forward part of the ship, forward of the after smokestack, had been to all appearances completely destroyed.

The conning tower lay in a position opposite the door leading to the superstructure aft and to starboard, inclined at about 110 degrees to the vertical, with the top of the conning tower inboard.

Continuing, he described with close detail, the condition under the main deck on the port side. The fixtures were completely wrecked, while fixtures in the same position on the starboard side were in some cases almost intact. The port bulkhead, between the main and berth decks, at the conning tower support, had been blown aft on both sides, but a great deal more on the port than the starboard side. The fire room hatch immediately abaft of the conning tower had been blown in three directions, aft, to starboard and to port. The protective deck under the conning tower supports was bent in two directions, the plates on the starboard side being bent up and on the starboard side bent down.

In reply to an inquiry as to whether he meant with reference to their original positions, Ensign Powelson replied affirmatively. The beam supporting the protective deck, a few inches abaft of the armored tube, to port of the midship line, was bent up to starboard of the midship line. Just forward of the conning tower, underneath the main deck, two beams met at right angles; one beam was broken and pushed from port to starboard. A grating was found on the poop awning just forward of the after searchlight. A piece of the side plating just abaft of the starboard turret was visible. This plate was bent upward and then the forward end bent upward and folded backward upon itself.

This plate was sheared from the rest of the plating below the water line. This plating below the water line has been pushed out to starboard.

The unarmored gratings of the engine room hatch were blown off. A compensation strainer was picked up from the bottom on the starboard quarter at a point about opposite the poop capstan and about 70 feet from it. The chief engineer thought the strainer was for the fireman's wash room. It was not a strainer in the ship's side.

Near the piece of outside plating to which witness referred above, he said there were pieces of red shallice planks. On these planks was bolted a composition track two inches wide and an inch thick.

Ensign Powelson then asked if the court meant for him to say anything about what the divers reported or just what he saw.

The judge advocate replied that he would like to have him state important discoveries which might lead the court to draw some conclusion as to the cause, and if a diver gave such information to state the diver's name. Before doing so the judge advocate asked witness to state if the forward and after part of the ship were in line. Ensign Powelson replied that, as far as he could judge, they were not. The end where the explosion occurred seemed to be pushed from port to starboard from five to 10 degrees, he should judge, with the apex to the starboard. The divers reported to witness that at the point where the 10-inch shell room should be they discovered 10-inch shells regularly arranged, but the ship had sunk down to such that some of the shells were in the mud. Gunner Morgan reported that in walking on bottom he fell into a hole in the port side and went down into the mud. He also reported that, as far as he could judge, everything seemed to be bent upward in the vicinity of this hole. He also reported that plates seemed to have been pushed over to starboard and bent down.

Consul General Fitzhugh Lee appeared before the court on March 8. His testimony related to the official formalities preceding the Maine's arrival. On Jan. 24 he received a message from the state department saying that the Maine would be sent to Havana on a friendly visit, to resume the regular status of naval relations between the two countries, and he was ordered to make arrangements at the palace for the interchange of official courtesies. After a call at the palace he sent to state department a cipher message, saying:

"Authorities propose to think the Uni-

ted States has ulterior purpose in sending the ship. Say it will obstruct autonomy, and produce excitement, and most probably a demonstration. Ask that it not be done till they can get instructions from Madrid. Say that if for friendly purposes, as claimed, delay is unimportant."

It was too late, however; the Maine had already sailed. She arrived next day and Lee reported her arrival to the state department.

Captain Sigbee, in testifying before the court of inquiry, which convened in the harbor of Havana Monday, Feb. 21, said that he assumed command of the Maine on April 10, 1897, and that the ship arrived in the harbor of Havana the last time Jan. 24, 1898. The authorities at Havana knew of the Maine's coming, Consul General Lee having informed the authorities, according to official custom.

After he took on an official pilot, sent by the captain of the port of Havana, the ship was berthed in the man-of-war anchorage off the Nochia, in the Shears, and, according to his understanding, was one of the regular buoys of the place.

He then stated that he had been in Havana in 1872 and again in 1878. He could not state whether the Maine was placed in the berth for men-of-war, but said that he had heard remarks since the explosion, using Captain Stevens, temporarily in command of the Ward line steamer City of Washington, as authority, for the statement that he had never known in all his experience, which covered visits to Havana for five or six years, a man-of-war to be anchored at the buoy; that he had rarely known a merchant vessel to be anchored there, and that it was the least used buoy in the harbor.

In describing the surroundings when first moored to his buoy, Captain Sigbee stated that the Spanish man-of-war Alphonso XII, was moored in position now occupied by the Fern, about 250 yards to the northward and westward of the Maine. The German ship Gneisenau was anchored at the berth now occupied by the Spanish man-of-war Segaspe, which is about 400 yards about due north from the Maine. He then located the German man-of-war Charlotte, which came into the harbor a day or two later, which was anchored to the southward of the Maine's berth, about four or five yards.

In describing the surroundings at the time of the explosion Captain Sigbee stated that the night was calm and still. The Alphonso XII was at the same berth. The small Spanish dispatch boat Segaspe had come out the day before and taken the berth occupied by the German man-of-war Gneisenau, which had left. The City of Washington was anchored about 200 yards to the south and east of the Maine's stern, slightly on the port quarter. The Maine cooled at Key West, taking on about 150 tons, the coal being regularly inspected and taken from the government coal pile. This coal was placed generally in the forward bunkers. No report was received from the chief engineer that any coal had been too long in the bunkers and that the fire alarms in the bunkers were sensitive. In so far as the regulations regarding inflammables and paints on board, Captain Sigbee testified that the regulations were strictly carried out in regard to stowage, and that the waste also was subject to the same careful disposition. As to the situation of the paint room, he fixed it, as in the "eyes of the ship," just below the berth deck, the extreme forward compartment. As for the disposition of inflammables, they were stowed in chests, according to regulations, and when inflammables were in excess of chest capacity, they were allowed to be kept in the bathroom of the admiral's cabin. Regarding the electric plant of the Maine, Captain Sigbee stated that there was no serious grounding nor sudden flashing up of the lights before the explosion, but a sudden and total eclipse. As for regulations affecting the taking of temperature of the magazines and so on, Captain Sigbee said there were no special regulations other than the usual regulations required by the department. He examined the temperature himself and conversed with the ordnance officer as to the various temperatures and the contents of the magazines, and, according to the opinion of this officer, as well as Sigbee, the temperatures were never at the danger point.

"I do not think there was any laxity in this direction," said the captain, in reply to a question of Judge Advocate Marix.

He had no recollection of any work going on in the magazines or shell rooms on the day of the explosion. The keys were called for in the usual way on the day in question and were properly returned. At the time of the disaster the two after boilers in the after fire room were in use, because the hydraulic system was somewhat leaky.

Speaking generally of his relations with the Spanish authorities, Captain Sigbee stated that with the officials they were outwardly cordial. The members of the automatic council of

ST. JOHNSBURY AND LAKE CHAMPLAIN R. R. WINTER ARRANGEMENT, JAN. 10, 1898. Trains Leave St. Johnsbury.

GOING WEST. For Danville, Hardwick, Morrisville, Cambridge Junction, Burlington, St. Albans and Rutland 6.40 a. m. and 3.20 p. m.

GOING EAST. For East St. Johnsbury, North Concord, Miles Pond and Lunenburg, 3.00 a. m., 2.45, and 4.45 (mixed) p. m.

BOSTON & MAINE R. R. PASSENGER DIVISION. WINTER ARRANGEMENT, OCT. 4, 1897. Trains Leave St. Johnsbury.

GOING SOUTH. For Concord, Manchester, Nashua, Lowell and Boston via White River Junction, 12.30 and 9.00 a. m., arriving at Boston 8.15 a. m. and 4.35 p. m.

MAINE CENTRAL R. R. Through the White Mountains. To Lancaster, Colebrook, North Conway, Boston, Portland, Lewiston, Bangor, Bar Harbor and St. John.

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