

# IT WAS A MINE

## The Maine Court of Inquiry So Reports to the President.

### SPAIN IS NOT MENTIONED

### Captain Sigsbee and the Vessel's Crew Are Completely Exonerated.

### THE PLATES BENT UPWARDS

### President's Message to Congress Does Not Mention Possibility of War.

### Transmits the Report to Congress with No Startling Statement as to His Intention—Asks for Deliberate Consideration.

Washington, March 23.—The president Monday sent the following message to congress:

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

Accordingly, on the 24th of January last, after conference with the Spanish minister in which the renewal of visits of our war vessels to Spanish waters was discussed and accepted, the peninsular authorities at Madrid and Havana were advised of the purpose of this government to resume friendly naval visits to Cuban ports, and that in that view the Maine would forthwith call at the port of Havana.

**The Maine at Havana.** This announcement was received by the Spanish government with appreciation of the friendly character of the visit of the Maine and with notification of intention to return the courtesy by sending Spanish ships to the principal ports of the United States. Meanwhile the Maine entered the port of Havana on the 25th of January, her arrival being marked with no special incident besides the exchange of customary salutes and ceremonial visits.

The Maine continued in the harbor of Havana during the three weeks following her arrival. No appreciable excitement attended her stay; on the contrary, a feeling of relief and confidence followed the resumption of the long interrupted friendly intercourse. So noticeable was this immediate effect of her visit that the consul-general strongly urged that the presence of our ships in Cuban waters should be kept up by retaining the Maine at Havana, or in the event of her recall by sending there a vessel to take her place.

#### The Fatal Evening.

At 40 minutes past nine on the evening of the 15th of February the Maine was destroyed by an explosion, by which the entire forward part of the ship was utterly wrecked. In this catastrophe two officers and 200 of her crew perished, those who were not killed outright by her explosion being pennon and decked by the tangle of wreckage and drowned by the immediate sinking of the hull. Prompt assistance was rendered by the neighboring vessels anchored in the harbor, aid being especially given by the boats of the Spanish cruiser Alfonso XII and the Ward line steamer City of Washington, which lay not far distant. The wounded were generously cared for by the authorities of Havana, the hospitals being freely opened to them, while the earliest recovered bodies of the dead were interred by the municipality in a public cemetery in the city. Tributes of grief and sympathy were offered from all official quarters of the island.

#### Caused Intense Excitement.

The appalling calamity fell upon the people of our country with crushing force and for a brief time intense excitement prevailed, which in a community less just and self-controlled than ours might have led to hasty acts of blind resentment. This spirit, however, soon gave way to the calmer processes of reason and to the resolve to investigate the facts and await the material proof before forming a judgment as to the cause, the responsibility and, if the facts warranted, the remedy due. This course necessarily recommended itself from the outset to the executive, for only in the light of a dispassionately ascertained certainty could it determine the nature and measure of its full duty in the matter.

The usual procedure was followed, as in all cases of casualty or disaster to national vessels of any maritime state. A naval court of inquiry was at once organized, composed of officers well qualified by rank and practical experience to discharge the onerous duty imposed upon them.

Aided by a strong force of wreckers and divers the court proceeded to make a thorough investigation on the spot, employing every available means for the impartial and exact determination of the causes of the explosion. Its operations have been conducted with the utmost deliberation and judgment, and while independently pursued no source of information was neglected and the fullest opportunity was allowed for a simultaneous investigation by the Spanish authorities.

#### The Finding of the Court.

The finding of the court of inquiry was reached, after 23 days of continuous labor, on the 21st of March inst., and having been approved on the 22d by the commander in chief of the United States naval force of the North Atlantic station, was transmitted to the executive.

It is herewith laid before 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 5/8 to 6 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 eight o'clock in the evening of February 15, everything had been reported secure and all was quiet.

At 40 minutes past nine o'clock the vessel was suddenly destroyed.

**Two Explosions.** 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 prolonged, is attributed by the court to the 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 concurrent external cause the finding of the court is as follows: "At frame 17 the outer shell of the ship, from a point 11 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 be now about four feet above the surface of the water; therefore, about 34 feet above where it would be had the ship sunk uninjured.

**Plates Bent Inward.** "The outside bottom plating is bent into a reversed V shape, the after wing of which, about 15 feet broad and 32 feet in length (from frame 17 to frame 25), 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 keel bent into an angle angular to the angle formed by the outside plates. This break is about six feet below the surface of the water and about 20 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 bot-

1. That the United States battleship Maine arrived in 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. The United States consul general at Havana had notified the authorities at that place the previous evening of the intended arrival of the Maine.

**Discipline Was Excellent.** 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 away in accordance with 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 eight p. m.

**Temperature Was Normal.** The temperatures of the magazines and shellrooms were taken daily and reported. The only magazine which had an undue

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 eight p. m. by reliable persons, through the proper authorities, to the commanding officer. At the time the Maine was destroyed the ship was quiet, and therefore least liable to accident caused by movements from those on board.

**Were Two Explosions.** 3. The destruction of the Maine occurred at 9:40 p. m. on the 15th day of February, 1898, in the harbor of Havana, Cuba, being at the time moored on the same buoy to which she had been taken upon her arrival.

There were two explosions of a distinctly different character with a very short but distinct interval between them, and the forward part of the ship was lifted to a marked degree at the time of the first explosion.

The first explosion was more in the nature of a report, like that of a gun, while the second explosion was more open, prolonged and of greater volume. This sec-

## TOLD BY WITNESSES.

### Extract of Important Testimony Taken by the Court.

#### Lieut. Powelson's Story Told on the Third Day of the Session—Important Discoveries Made Up to That Time.

Washington, March 23.—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 boat 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 in board. Continuing, he

"What is the condition of the starboard turret?" witness was asked.

"To my knowledge it has not been found, sir," was the reply. He understood something had been found under the place where the turret formerly was, but its exact character had not been determined.

#### Impressions of Ensign Powelson.

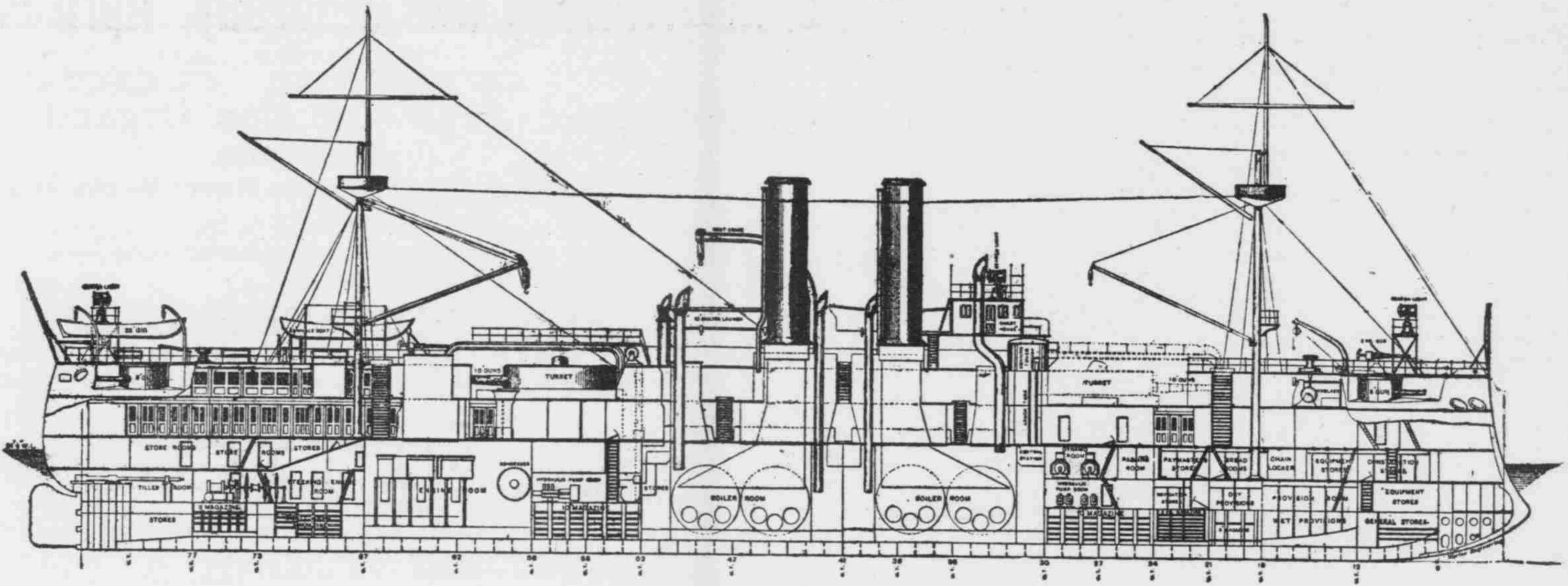
"What impression is produced upon your mind by the reports, as far as you have quoted them?" Ensign Powelson was asked. "From reports alone or from the appearance of the wreck?"

"Either from such reports or the conditions which you believe to exist."

"The impression produced upon me," replied the witness, "is that an explosion took place well to port of the midship line, and at a point in the length about opposite the conning tower."

"Witness in reply to further questions said his opinion was based upon the observation of things above water. He gave no weight to Mr. Morgan's statement about falling into a hole on the port side because Morgan might have been mistaken about it. Referring to his notes made of things on the Maine, Ensign Powelson said that the arc of the engine room telegraph and the shaft of the steering gear coming down through the armored tube (turret) was bent from port to starboard. The port side of

## THE LATE SECOND-CLASS BATTLESHIP MAINE.



PROFILE VIEW.

Scale 1-32 inch to one foot.

tom of the ship, at about frame 18 and somewhat on the port side of the ship."

#### Conclusions of the Court.

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 submarine 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 gov-

amount of heat was the after ten-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 wardroom, and neither caused nor participated in the destruction of the Maine. The dry gun cotton primers and detonators were stowed in the cabin aft and remote from the scene of the explosion.

The waste was carefully looked after on board the Maine to obviate danger. Special orders in regard to this had been given by the commanding officer.

Varnishes, driers, alcohol and other combustibles of this nature were stowed on or above the Maine deck and could not

and explosion was, in the opinion of the court, caused by the partial explosion of two or more of the forward magazines of the Maine.

#### Condition of the Wreck.

4. The evidence bearing on this, being principally obtained from divers, did not enable the court to form a definite conclusion as to the condition of the wreck, although it was established that the after part of the ship was practically intact, and sank in that condition a very few minutes after the destruction of the forward part of the ship are, however, established by the testimony:

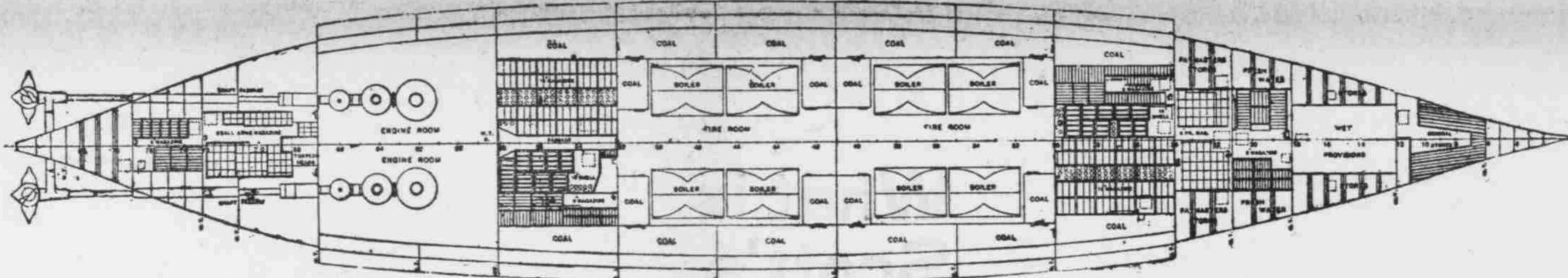
described with close detail the condition under the main deck on the port side. The fixtures were completely wrecked, while fixtures in the same position on the starboard side were in some cases almost intact.

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 on the starboard side. The fireroom 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 larboard side bent down.

the protected deck was covered with a greasy deposit, the starboard side being comparatively free from it.

The forward smoke pipe, between the main and superstructure decks, did not show signs of the internal pressure of gases. On the main deck forward of the conning tower where the fore and after angle bulb beam was located the planking was blown off on the only remaining plate of the main deck on the port side while the wood was still attached to that part on the starboard side between the conning tower base and the turrets. What witness saw would indicate that the pressure lifted the protective deck on the port side, and the protective deck on the starboard side

## THE HOLD PLANS OF THE MAINE.



Scale 1-32 inch to one foot.

ernment thereon be communicated to the government of her majesty, the queen, 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 was the duty of the executive to advise the congress of the result, and in the meantime deliberate consideration is invoked.

(Signed) WILLIAM M. KINLEY, Executive Mansion, March 23, 1898.

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 store rooms.

#### Coal Bunkers Inspected.

The coal bunkers were inspected. Of those bunkers adjoining the forward magazine and shell rooms four were empty, namely B 3, B 4, B 5 and B 6. A 15 had

That portion of the port side of the protective deck which extends from about frame 30 to about frame 41 was blown up aft and over to port. The main deck from about frame 20 to about frame 41 was blown up aft and slightly over to starboard, folding the forward part of the middle superstructure over and on top of the after part.

This was, in the opinion of the court, caused by the partial explosion of two or more of the forward magazines of the Maine.

#### Plates Forced Up.

5. At frame 17, the outer shell of the ship, from a point 11 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 be now 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 bottom plating is bent into a reversed V shape, the after wing of which, about 15 feet broad and 32 feet in length (from frame 17 to frame 25), 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 plating. This break is now about six feet below the surface of the water, and about 20 feet above its normal position.

#### Caused by a Mine.

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 port side of the ship.

6. The court finds that the loss of the Maine, on the occasion named, was not in any respect due to fault or negligence on the part of any of the officers or members of the crew of said vessel.

7. In the opinion of the court the Maine was destroyed by the explosion of a submarine mine, which caused the partial explosion of two or more of her forward magazines.

8. The court has been unable to obtain evidence fixing the responsibility for the destruction of the Maine upon any person or persons.

W. T. SAMPSON, Captain, U. S. N., President. A. MARIX, Lieutenant Commander, U. S. N., Judge Advocate.

#### The Findings Approved.

The court, having finished the inquiry it was ordered to make, adjourned at 11 a. m. to await the action of the convening authority.

W. T. SAMPSON, Captain, U. S. N., President. A. MARIX, Lieutenant Commander, U. S. N., Judge Advocate.

U. S. Flagship New York, March 22, 1898. Off Key West, Fla.—The proceedings and findings of the court of inquiry in the above case are approved.

A. SICARD, Rear Admiral, Commander in Chief of the U. S. Naval Force on the North Atlantic Station.

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 deck, two beams under a sharp angle, 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 outward 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 armored gratings of the engine room track were blown off. A composition 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 from the firemen'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 sheared 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 any 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 the Ensign Powelson's report 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 ten degrees, he should judge with the apex to the starboard and bent upward and folded backward at a point where the ten-inch shell room should be they discovered ten-inch shells regularly arranged, but the ship had sunk down so much that some of the shells were in the mud.

Gunner Morgan reported that in walking on the bottom he fell into a hole on the port side and went down in 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 the plates seemed to have been pushed over to the starboard and then bent down.

Ensign Powelson then said that a six-inch powder tank that he saw appeared to be an empty tank broken by the explosion, and that the divers reported to witness that it was not badly dented and merely ripped the length of the section. A ten-inch tank was badly battered out of any conceivable shape.

Continuing, the witness said the divers up to the night before he was then on the board had not been reported to witness that the mud was too deep for them to walk on the bottom.

held fast and bent that deck downward. Witness here exhibited two sketches of the court showing diagram of various parts of the sunken ship and explained them to the court.

The witness's evidence about the strip on the starboard side of the outside plating of the ship which was folded and rolled back, was recalled to him, and Powelson said he could see plate underneath it was bent outward, as he could see it, as it was only two feet under water where the shear occurred.

Witness had taken soundings and had found five fathoms of water on both sides of the Maine down to the mud. Taking a 14-pound lead line and dragging with a wherry for obstructions on the port side, dragging close to where he thought the water ways would be found, he found no obstructions whatever. On the starboard side he found obstructions for 20 feet where he had reason to believe the waterways had originally been.

In answer to questions he said there was nothing left of the port plating at all. He dragged along the outside to see if anything had fallen out and found nothing. Witness thought the ship on the port side was entirely gone opposite a point indicated on a diagram handed the court. It was entirely blown out.

This concluded Ensign Powelson's testimony on the third day.

#### A Diver's Story.

Chief Gunner's Mate Olsen, of the United States steamer Iowa, told how he had been sent to Havana for the purpose of doing diving duty on the wreck. He had descended four times, making about eight or nine hours of total examination.

Olsen told how on his first descent he went over the forward part of the ship. To use his own expression, he said: "I found the wreck all blown up. I found a lot of grate bars down there. The second time he went down further forward and there located a lot of ten-inch shells. Forward of these the plates were bent inboard over them."

Asked if he imagined himself looking forward he stated that he did. Going over the plates he struck into a lot of six-inch shells with the slings on them. Going to the right witness stated he found a lot of wreckage. It seemed to have been blown over the starboard. Olsen stated that he put his hand into the cranks and brought out several six-pounder shells.

The next time he went down, Olsen testified he went outside the ship, forward of the crane on the port side. He followed the bottom along and found that the starboard side was blown outward and along the crane could be walked on.

"At the part where she was blown up completely," witness said, "part of her bottom plates are turned up. Then you follow the bottom from there up, and the plates are blown outward. At the top and underneath the bottom they are blown inboard and bent in. About three feet forward of that bent in, a piece of iron laid along the bulkhead. The skin of the inside of the double bottoms is curled like a sheet of paper inboard from stem to stern."

"Amidships on the same place there is an armor plate, one plate complete, the top of the plate standing up. The plate is inclined over the starboard completely. It stands up with the thick part of the plate down. It is inclined forward, and over to starboard."