

IN GOD WE TRUST

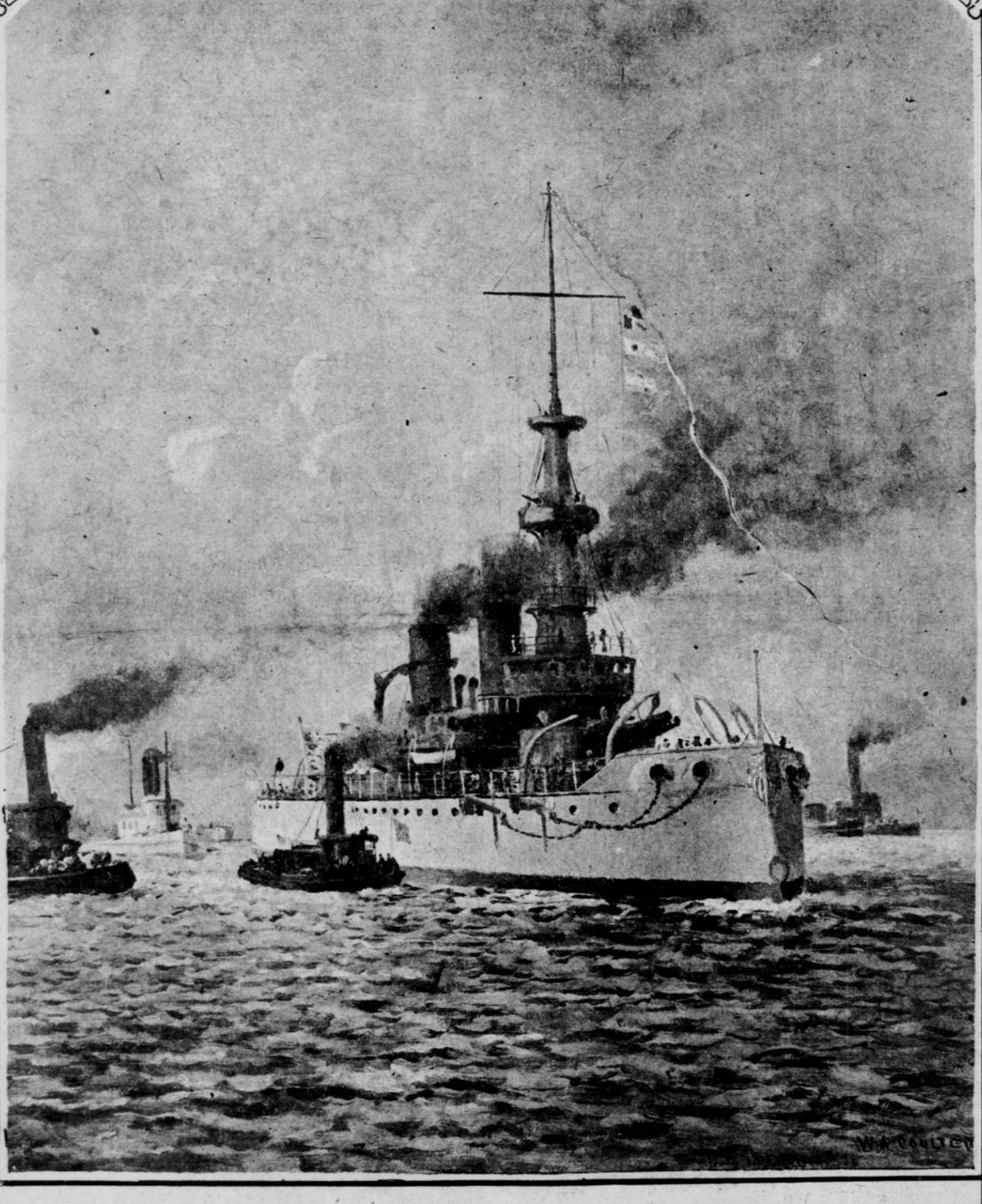
FIRST FOURTH
1898

Battle of Santiago
de Cuba

From a Description Written by Dennis E. Smith,
Corporal, U. S. M. C.

The Fourth of July and the "Oregon"

U. S. BATTLESHIP OREGON



AFTER the famous run of the Oregon along the South American coast we coaled at Key West, and on May 29, 1898, joined the Havana blockade. The assembled ships cheered the Oregon, and the band on the Indiana played the "New Bully." The next morning, in company with the flagship New York, we steamed away for Santiago de Cuba, and then came the weary days and nights of watchfulness on the Santiago blockade. On the 24 of July we were detailed as guard ship. About noon that day smoke was sighted in the distance and, by order from the Brooklyn, the Oregon immediately gave chase under forced draft until she overhauled what we all felt sure was a prize, but proved to be only a newspaper boat making for Mole St. Nicholas with all possible speed to transmit news to the United States.

Often afterward the merry laugh of Captain Clark rang out on the still Santiago air as he told how some officers of the fleet had comically sung out when the Oregon started on her chase after the tug. "There goes Clark; he's off for the Pacific again. Things are too slow for him here. Good-by."

The sinking of the Merrimac was the first exciting event until the 6th of June, when after breakfast the buglers sounded "Clear ship for action," the men went quickly to their stations and soon everything was in readiness for firing. Slowly the American ships steamed within range of the forts and opened a fierce cannonade, which was returned with almost equal fury by the shore batteries. Now for the first time we were in the midst of flying shells. Our big guns belched forth their ponderous projectiles and the forts returned the fire, but with poor marksmanship. Battery after battery on shore was silenced by the American gunners. The Americans finally withdrew without the least damage from the enemy's fire, but with a positive assurance that the enemy had been greatly damaged, though they were at a loss to find out the exact results.

On June 16 we were at Guantanamo for coal, and on that day forty marines from the Oregon, in company with twenty marines from the cruiser Marblehead, were sent ashore under arms, thus forming the first successful landing of armed troops on Cuban soil. When we had finished coaling the big guns were turned upon the town of Calmanera, a distance of 7500 yards, and several shells were thrown into the town, doing great damage, many of the inhabitants deserting the city in haste.

From this on until the first of July we continued the same routine before Santiago. It was getting monotonous and we longed for decisive action.

On the morning of the 1st of July we had an early call to general quarters. With guns manned we steamed under the very guns of the shore batteries, but for some reason no firing was done and the American fleet withdrew after inviting the fire of the Spanish. They would not open fire on us though we were within easy range of their guns. On the afternoon of that same day the flagship New York and the Oregon threw shells over the hills into the city of Santiago. The firing lasted for about two hours, after which they returned to their respective positions on the blockade.

Early on the morning of the 24 we were again called to general quarters and bombarded the fortifications for over two hours. Old Morro, which thus far had been spared, was fired on and pierced by numerous shells, which exploded with terrific force and rent asunder her mortared sides. Great clouds of dirt and rubbish were thrown up, which at times partially obscured the ancient, picturesque building, which, like a lonely sentinel, seemed to have watched the movements of the American fleet since the first day of its arrival there. The ensign of Spain, which for centuries had waved over Morro, was shot down at 6:51 a. m. by a projectile from one of the Oregon's big guns. When the clouds of dust cleared away and it was seen that the flag of Spain was down cheers echoed from every ship of the blockade.

The Oregon then steamed to within 700 yards of Morro and to the very entrance of the harbor and fired upon and silenced the Punta Gorda battery—a battery which until this time had remained intact.

Sunday morning, July 3, dawned beautiful and bright. The waters before Santiago harbor were as calm and beautiful as the moonlit waters of a mountain lake. The decks were washed down in good old navy style and officers and men were attired in their neatest and cleanest suits of white. It was the first Sunday of the month, and every one was in readiness to attend general muster and give an attentive ear to the reading of the articles of war, a customary rule in the navy on the first Sunday of every month. First call for quarters had sounded and the men were assembling in their respective divisions when suddenly the gongs clang and we hear that the Spanish fleet are coming out at last to battle with us. A man's first battle

on sea is something to remember to the grave.

Scarcely had the first ship cleared the harbor entrance before a shot from one of the Oregon's six-pounders, manned by marines, sounded sharp and clear, and the battle of the century was on. The American ships closed in, and the Spanish opened with a volley, which was immediately returned. At this juncture the torpedo boats had cleared the entrance and were heading for our ships at full speed with a view of torpedoing them. Word was passed to man the starboard guns. The secondary batteries of all the ships within gun range were immediately trained upon the torpedo boats, but it was a well-directed shot from the after six-inch starboard gun of the Oregon that struck one of the torpedo boats amidships and seemed to part her in two, after which she headed for the shore, barely able to reach it. The other torpedo boat was sunk by the secondary batteries of all the ships.

Great shells from the Spanish ships were passing over us, and their mad rush through the air told their destructive powers. The Oregon was a sheet of flame from the firing of other guns and dense columns of smoke partially obscured our view of the enemy. The men below deck were heaving coal into the

yawning furnaces. The thunderous roar of the big guns was deafening and the saltpeper from the powder smarted our eyes.

Suddenly some one shouted "She's on fire," and the cheers rang loud. Presently another vessel is on fire and the sweating, battle-frenzied men again cheer madly. The Maria Teresa is on the beach a mass of flames, her crew in distress, her flag lowered and the Oquendo is likewise heading shoreward meeting a similar fate, but fighting and doing the best she can.

By this time the Colon and Viscaya have steamed well ahead and are nearly out of range. The Oregon is rushing madly on, shelling the Oquendo as she passes. The Oregon continues to gain, firing upon the Viscaya. The other American ships are far behind, save the Brooklyn, which is on our port bow and well out. The Viscaya, too, is on fire and we are rapidly gaining and continuing a fierce fire with all the guns that can be brought to bear upon her. Soon she is hit in the quarter by a big shell which seems to raise her stern out of the water and she is headed full speed for the shore. She lowers her flag and the Oregon steams on, leaving the Viscaya to the American ships coming rapidly astern.

Now there is but one left, the fleeing

Colon, far ahead. The Oregon and the Brooklyn steam within close proximity of the Colon with guns trained on her. A boat from the Brooklyn is sent to receive the surrender. Our men cheer Captain Clark again and again. In a broken voice he begs them to cheer themselves. "It was you who did it, not I, men," he says.

That night we remained in the vicinity of the sunken Colon. When the morning of the Fourth broke we steamed back over the scenes of our triumph and viewed with deepest curiosity the deeds of cruel war.

We arrived among the fleet and took our usual station. At noon we fired a national salute in honor of the Fourth. We had three wounded prisoners from the Colon on board, and when the salute was fired they became frightened and feared another battle was on.

After resuming our station Commodore Watson transferred his broad pennant to the Oregon and said he would have given his right leg to have been aboard the Oregon during the fight. We pray God that the Oregon may know many other happy Fourth's—but we who lived through it feel that she can never know a more glorious, memorable Fourth of July than that of '98 with Santiago and the Spanish fleet her own.

SECOND FOURTH
1899

Manila Bay

From the Log of W. K. Morris, Ship's Writer, Oregon.

The second Fourth of July was not such a stirring one for the Oregon as that never-to-be-forgotten Fourth at Santiago. The Oregon had been in the Lingayen Gulf, where she had come some fighting and had rescued the Paragua, which had run aground and was surrounded by insurgents, who fired on her from block-houses. Provisions were short on all the gunboats, and the Oregon's plentiful stock was sadly depleted through sharing

the larder. The men were on extremely short rations, and when the order came to go to Manila everybody was happy, for square meals were in sight. We arrived at Manila on the Fourth, but too late to take on supplies.

The other ships in Manila Bay were dressed in gala attire, bands playing, flags waving and happy voices calling across the water. Hunger was gnawing too hard for our hearts to beat very high. But it was the dear old Fourth, and with the comforting thought that on the morrow our larder would be replenished, we managed to be cheerful and even join in the national songs as the music of the bands was wafted our way.

So, cheered by the promise of the fat days to follow the lean ones, we watched the Fourth go out on Manila Bay to the boom of salutes and the blare of the bands.

THIRD FOURTH
1900

On the Rocks in the Gulf of Pechili

From the Log of E. T. Bennett, Ship's Writer, Oregon.

Who would ever have predicted that the stanch Oregon would spend her third Fourth of July listed on the rocks at Howky Light Straits, in the Gulf of Pechili? No one knew at what moment our beloved Oregon would be swallowed by lashing waters. For days and days she had been on the rocks there, with but a dim hope of ultimate safety. We on board were prepared to jump for the already lowered lifeboats at the first sign that the ship could no longer hold its own. But the fact that our lives were comparatively safe did little to lessen our sorrowful fears lest the Oregon should come to harm. "The Fourth will be the fatal day," we said all along, as the tugging and straining to get her off proved unsuccessful. We made up our minds that she would slide off or sink on the Fourth of July.

We had left Hongkong on June 23, and on the 28th a heavy fog and strong currents carried us out of our course, and we struck the rocks. Collision quarters sounded and the men went to their stations to close the water tank doors. Then we stood by to abandon ship. We loved the Oregon, every one of us, and the thought of her going down unerved us more than the danger to our lives. When she gave evidence of holding her own for a while at least Captain Wilde gave orders for the men to go to work.

Night and day those men worked as men only work when their hearts are in accord with their hands. If they could save the Oregon they didn't care whether they ate or slept. The diver reported that the hole was eighteen feet wide and twenty-four feet long and she was listed to the starboard within two degrees of keeling over. The English wrecking company from the other side of the island sent a large crew and a steam launch and two ten-inch pumps. Through the heroic assistance of the men of the Oregon they managed to cork up the hole with canvas, sacks or any available stuff. The Russian, English, Japanese and Chinese cruisers did everything in their power to help us. But she broke nine-inch hausers and could not move off the rocks. All around us lay the hulls of vessels that had gone to their doom in that treacherous strait. So far the weather had been perfect, but we knew a storm meant sure disaster—a heavy swell would have dashed her to pieces.

On the afternoon of the 3d of July we commenced to dress the ship for the morrow. If she went down, we meant that she should meet old Neptune in Fourth of July attire. All day long on the Fourth they tried to tow her off, but they couldn't budge her. We had pinned our faith to that day of days, and when night fell like a pall over her, still fast to the rocks, we almost lost hope.

But on the morning of the 5th, of her own free will, at high tide, the majestic Oregon floated off the rocks. She struck a second reef, but again floated off that, and on July 17 we were safely at Kure, the Japanese naval station, where she was repaired.

We had dressed the Oregon in flags, not knowing whether they would be her shroud or the symbols of new life. It was as though the doughty ship herself, stirred by those emblems of the country she had served so well, made one last mighty effort to escape the rocks that gored her. Still flaunting her Fourth of July attire, the Oregon floated off to the sea and safety.

Since 1815 the Rothschild family has raised for Great Britain alone more than \$1,000,000,000; for Austria, \$250,000,000; for Prussia, \$200,000,000; for France, \$400,000,000; for Italy, \$200,000,000; for Russia, \$125,000,000; for Brazil, \$70,000,000. In 1835 they took \$15,000,000 of the February loan of the United States through the Belmont-Morgan syndicate.

The underground telegraph cable which the postal authorities have just completed between London and Birmingham in place of the overhead wires is the longest subterranean cable in the world. It is 117½ miles long.

E. PLURIBUS UNUM