

The Big Stone Gap Post

VOLUME VI.

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NUMBER 9.

SINKING IN MUD.

The Wreck of the Maine is Slowly Settling.

The Court of Inquiry Continues Its Investigation.

The Tug Right Arm Will Salvage Small Portions of the Wrecked Maine.

Americans in Havana Treated With Kindness by the Citizens.

Neither the Officers of the Court of Inquiry Nor the Witnesses Will Give the Slightest Indication of the Testimony or the Conclusions Formed From It.

HAVANA, Feb. 22.—Consul General Lee says the Spanish officials are not interfering with the investigation into the causes of the disaster. He has notified the captain of the port that the wrecking tug Right Arm will be here Tuesday from the Merritt & Chapman Derrick and Wrecking Co. No objection will be made to the presence of the tug or her prospective work. She probably will make an early attempt to save the big guns and if possible the more valuable parts of the Maine's machinery.

Monday afternoon the court of in-

quary personally inspected the wreck of the Maine by the invitation of Capt. Paré, appointed by the Spanish government as a special judge to investigate the disaster, and his secretary viewed the divers at work. Capt. Paré expressed his appreciation of the courtesies shown to him by the court of inquiry.

A number of bodies were discovered Monday in the forward hatch. It was not possible to remove them, but they probably will be removed Tuesday.

HAVANA (via Key West), Feb. 23.—The situation Tuesday night was more grave than at any time since the Maine explosion a week ago.

Although the officers of the naval board of inquiry preserve an impenetrable reserve, the World correspondent learns that some of the best naval experts now believe that the explosion was the result of treachery.

They do not believe that Spanish officers were part of the conspiracy. From evidence now in their possession they believe the Spanish government, Gen. Blanco and all his military subordinates were guilty alike of knowledge of or participation in the crime. It is believed to have been set off by a fanatic.

HAVANA, Feb. 23.—The court of inquiry opened at half-past ten and took a recess at half-past twelve. Lieut. G. E. W. Holman, navigator and ordnance officer of the Maine, was examined at the morning session. The court met for the afternoon session at half-past one, and Lieut. Commander E. Wainwright, executive officer of the Maine, was called to the witness stand. Lieut. Commander Wainwright has been in immediate charge of the wreck since the explosion.

Nearly all the possible salvage has now been made from the cabin aft. The efforts to reach the ward and mess rooms are frustrated by some unknown obstacle. It is expected to find bodies in those rooms. Two cases of ten-inch ammunition have been found, the one having exploded, the other full of powder. These were found forward.

Among the salvage were table ware and the silver service of the Maine.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23.—The navy department received a dispatch from Capt. Sigbee Tuesday evening saying that 14 more bodies had been recovered from the wreck of the Maine. All the remains are unidentified.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 24.—Much interest was shown in a dispatch received shortly before 3 o'clock from Adm. Sigsbee giving the recommendations of Capt. Sampson, of the court of inquiry, as to the raising of the wreck. The view of naval officers was that Capt. Sampson and his associates were giving this advice, not as a court, but as officers in a position to speak as to the best methods to be adopted for wrecking the Maine. Various interpretations were put on the expression "forward half completely destroyed."

HAVANA, Feb. 24 (via Key West).—

anything material to what was known.

At the afternoon session the divers were examined more fully than before. Their testimony is taken from day to day. The court expects now to finish here Thursday and to sail on the Mangrove for Key West, where the other officers and men will be examined.

The wrecking tug Right Arm did not go north, as was expected, Wednesday. She is now moored beside the poop of the wreck and will save the smaller portions as far as possible in advance of the arrival of other tugs with better facilities for heavy work.

In reply to a question put by this correspondent to a high American official as to what the outcome would be if it were proved that the disaster was due to an outside agency, the official in question said:

"Sir, the American people could not be restrained. I mean war. Still I doubt whether it would be necessary to fire a shot. Adm. Sicard could anchor the Iowa, the Indiana, the Massachusetts and the New York outside Havana harbor to prevent the ingress of the food supplies, without which the city could not exist a fortnight. Cuba is a waste of ashes and desolation. Even the hotels and cafes here in Havana live from hand to mouth on supplies brought from the United States.

"If Adm. Sicard demanded the surrender of Havana, giving 24 hours for the removal of the women and children, surrender would follow. The forts are old structures and could be demolished by a six pounder. Such new guns as have been mounted are short of ammunition and have never been tried. If Gen. Blanco should decline to surrender, the Spanish merchants here who represent 80 per-

cent of the property and pay 75 per cent. of the taxes of the island, would compel him to accede to Adm. Sicard's terms. As for volunteers, the men are, for the most part, the employees of these merchants, and the volunteer officers are largely their sons or their junior partners.

"It is well to look these things in the face. At the same time it is well for the Americans to restrain themselves until there is some proof of an outside agency of explosion. We can afford to wait a little longer, seeing that we have waited so long. We could not wait after it had once been proven that the Maine disaster was the result of a dastardly plot. Spanish officers from the old country hold to the unaccountable belief that their arms would overcome us in a few weeks, but the Cuban merchants have no such delusion, and they would control the situation. Hence I believe that no shot from a big American gun would be necessary."

"Summing up the situation, I should say that the navy department knows Thursday nothing more about the cause of the disaster than it did five minutes after the receipt of the first dispatch from Capt. Sigbee."

Capt. Sigbee's statement that the divers have been down aft seven days and forward four days, gave the navy department the first information of the time that the divers had been in the vicinity of the "zone of explosion," as he has termed it. This zone is confined to the forward part of the ship, and while the divers have been down aft for the last week, their work forward in the vicinity of the large magazine has been in progress only four days, which presumably began on Monday and included Thursday.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23.—The Evening Star has received the following cablegram from Mr. Charles M. Pepper, its staff correspondent in Cuba:

At this writing divers are developing important results. From examination of the interior wreckage they have secured evidence which seems conclusive that the explosion came from underneath the ship.

Some of the smaller magazines may have exploded. The main ten-inch magazine did not explode. The condition of the interior of the ship shows further probability of the wreck having been due to outside force.

The further the investigation progresses the more untenable becomes the theory which the Spanish government added to show accidental cause. It is evident the Spanish cause will be based on the claim that a fire preceded the explosion.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23.—In view of the widely published report that the harbor of Havana contains a system of sub-marine mines, a statement around which has centered the chief public interest in connection with the disaster to the battle ship Maine, Senator Du Bose, Spanish chargé d'affaires at Washington, Friday night made a letter to the court, but did not add

which, coming from such authority, may be considered an official denial.

"I wish to state on my own official knowledge that no mine exists inside or outside of Havana harbor; nor is there any sub-marine defense of any kind. The report is so absolutely false and ridiculous that it could only have originated in the minds of those persons anxious to incite the evil passions of both nations for their own miserable ends. I consider the very suggestion of such a thing an insult to Spain."

The friends of the victims of the Maine disaster have discovered that they can not have their bodies brought to this country in cases where they have already been interred. This is due to the fact that the Spanish laws forbid the exhumation of corpses until the expiration of the period of five years after burial.

The prohibition had its origin in the fear of infection from contagious diseases. Some applications have already been made to have bodies brought to the United States by private individuals and they have encountered this obstacle.

Whether an effort will be made to have it removed is not yet apparent.

HAVANA, Feb. 26.—The wreck of the Maine is slowly but surely sinking into the mud. Before the hull could be raised it would be necessary to remove the guns and deck debris. For lack of proper appliances practically nothing in this line has been accomplished.

Aside from the officers and cabin effects the salvage thus far has been pitifully small. The cloudy weather and rain made the work of the divers unsatisfactory Friday and very little was done. It is said that a hole has been made by the divers in one of the forward hatches, and it is hoped that a number of bodies will be recovered. The court of inquiry sat longer than usual Friday,

the six divers being examined more in detail than heretofore. The time of the departure of the Mangrove with the court for Key West has not been determined. Capt. Sampson said Friday that it was doubtful whether his vessel would sail Saturday; that all depended on the developments of the testimony.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 26.—In spite of the stories that come from unofficial sources in Havana as to sensational developments in connection with the work of the divers in the Maine's hull, the administration remains firm in its statement that there is no credible evidence one way or the other as to the cause of the disaster and holds to its purpose to await the conclusion of the investigation now making by the court of inquiry.

TAMPA, Fla., Feb. 28.—Capt. Hanlon, of the Plant steamship, which arrived here Sunday night from Havana, was granted an audience Saturday by Consul General Lee, and took breakfast with him at Hotel Inglaterra. To him Gen. Lee positively denied the reports to the effect that he had advised Americans to leave Havana, and that he has discovered no evidence of any anti-American feeling there, and that he anticipated no unfriendly demonstration whatever the finding of the court of inquiry in the Maine disaster might be.

Capt. Hanlon states that the body guard of Gen. Lee consists of only three soldiers, and that fewer soldiers were in evidence on the streets of Havana than usual, and that no excitement among the people there had been caused by the rumors of war published in the papers of this country. Gen. Lee admitted to Capt. Hanlon that both Cubans and Spaniards are intensely interested in the result of the investigation by the board of inquiry, but said that further than that reports of excitement or threatened demonstrations were groundless.

HAVANA, Feb. 28.—The excitement in the city, growing out of the Maine investigation, continues unabated. An outbreak of some kind, sooner or later, is expected.

Commerce Destroyers to Be Put in Commission.

PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 28.—It is stated at the League Island navy-yard that the commerce destroyers Minneapolis and Columbia will be put into commission as soon as men can be got to man them. Work is being pushed at the navy-yard to put the monitor Miantonomoh and ram Katahdin in readiness for instant service.

Attempt to Assassinate King George of Greece.

ATHENS, Feb. 28.—An unsuccessful attempt was made Saturday to assassinate King George of Greece.

AT KEY WEST.

The Court of Inquiry Leave Havana on the Vessel Mangrove.

The Members of the Court of Inquiry Will Say Nothing as to the Result of Their Work—Admiral Sicard Has Frequent Consultations With Capt. Sampson.

KEY WEST, Fla., Feb. 28.—The light-house tender Mangrove, bearing the members of the court of inquiry, arrived from Havana at 7 o'clock Sunday morning. The court resumed its sessions in the United States district court room in the Federal building at 10 o'clock Monday morning and will probably return to Havana on Wednesday.

The most important witness to be examined here is Lieut. Blandin, the officer of the deck when the explosion on the Maine occurred. The testimony of the other survivors will take only a short time.



Capt. Sampson, Capt. Caldwell and Lieut. Commander Potter came ashore and arranged preliminary details for the sessions of the court.

Martin Redding, a diver, returned here Sunday. He was taken to Havana to work on the wreck and his arrival caused much comment, it being said that he had talked too much at Havana and had been removed in consequence. On his arrival he held forth at considerable length before a street corner audience and but little credence could be given to his numerous statements.

Rr. Adm. Sicard has had frequent conferences with Capt. Sampson and other members of the court of inquiry at the hotel. He said Sunday night: "I think they ought to get away on Wednesday. As yet there is nothing that can be said about their work."

In reply to a question as to the rumored removal of the war ships to Cuba, Adm. Sicard said: "The fleet is now moving and I know nothing about it going to Cuba. Still you know I have steam up and could go anywhere if ordered."

He was asked if anything had happened to justify the statement that the situation was more serious to-day than it had been, and he replied: "They know at Washington about that. Just how strained our relations are with Spain I am unable to say."

The excitement Saturday after the arrival of the Cuban filibusters, headed by Gen. Nunez and Capt. John O'Brien, completely eclipsed all the doings and sayings of the court of inquiry officers. Their quick departure prevented very much being learned as to the expedition, but the Cubans here are elated. An expedition has been preparing to get away from Key West for some time, but it probably will suffer another delay, as the plot has leaked out through two Spanish spies.

HAVANA, Feb. 28.—Senator Proctor, of Vermont, arrived here Saturday. He comes on a mission similar to that of Calhoun last year, and will make a special investigation of the general conditions prevailing in Havana and in the island, as well as into the Maine disaster. He expects to remain ten days or two weeks.

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STEAMER LA CHAMPAGNE

Towed Into Port at Halifax in a Badly Damaged Condition.

HALIFAX, N. S., Feb. 28.—The overdue French steamer La Champagne was towed into Halifax Sunday afternoon by the steamer Roman. At 5:15 La Champagne let go the hawser by which she was towed into port by the Roman and dropped her anchor in midstream, off the center of the city, while the Roman steamed to her dock. Hundreds of people flocked to the wharves to watch the two big steamers move slowly up the harbor.

After drifting for five days on the Newfoundland banks with her engines disabled and the screw shaft battered, the great Boston-bound freight steamer, Roman, from Liverpool, came along, picked her up and brought her into Halifax without further mishap of consequence. Great was the joy on board the big French steamer when the cloudy Sunday morning broke with the shores of Nova Scotia in sight and the word was passed that Halifax would be reached before dark.

The damage to La Champagne is a most serious one and will necessitate the ship going into dry dock.

La Champagne mails, consisting of 250 bags, were landed here Sunday night and given in charge of the post office authorities, and they, with the saloon passengers, will be forwarded to New York, leaving here at 8 o'clock Monday.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23.—SENATE.—After Washington's farewell address was read by Mr. Lodge, the chairman of the committee on military affairs, called up the bill providing for the enlistment of two additional regiments of artillery for service for manning the heavy coast defense batteries in South Carolina, known as the "Lodge bill." The bill was finally passed. On motion of Mr. Bailey, the democratic leader, the house voted 58-35 to observe Washington's birthday by adjourning over Tuesday on the day after the next session three weeks ago. The feature of the day was the spirited contest over the bill to pay Newberry college. Lutheran institutions in South Carolina, known as the "Lodge bill." The bill was finally passed. On motion of Mr. Bailey, the democratic leader, the house voted 58-35 to observe Washington's birthday by adjourning over Tuesday on the day after the next session three weeks ago. The feature of the day was the spirited contest over the bill to pay Newberry college. 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