

A QUIETUS PUT ON WAR SENSATIONS.

A Statement From Secretary Long

Relative to News About the Maine Disaster.

Navy Department Knows No More About Its Cause

Than It Did After the Receipt of First Dispatches From Sigsbee.

Says Public Opinion Should Be Suspended Until Some Official Information is Received From the Board of Inquiry.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 24.—Rumors of startling discoveries in the wreck of the Maine were less frequent, but there were enough of them still to float today to warrant Secretary Long in making this statement to newspaper men:

"Summing up the situation, I should say that the Navy Department knows to-day nothing more about the cause of the disaster than it did five minutes after the receipt of the first dispatches from Captain Sigsbee."

Until the conclusion of the investigation of the court of inquiry at Havana, the principal business of the Navy Department in connection with the Maine will relate to the conduct of the wrecking operations. Captain Lemley, the Judge-Advocate-General, who has this branch of the work immediately in charge, to-day received telegrams from the Merritt & Chapman Wrecking Company at New York, stating that the tug Underwriter, with the Chief, would leave New York Saturday for the same place.

The only exact information received by the Navy Department from Havana during the day was conveyed in Captain Sigsbee's telegram, as follows:

"Havana, February 24.—Long, Secretary of Navy: Wrecking tug Right Arm arrived yesterday. Begins work to-day. Much encumbering metal must be blasted away in detail. Navy divers down aft seven days, forward four days. Bodies of Jenkins and Merritt not found. Two unidentified bodies of crew found yesterday. After compartments filled with detached, broken and buoyant furniture and fittings, mud and confusion. Spanish authorities continue offers of assistance and care for wounded and dead. Everything that goes from wreck to the United States should be disinfected. Wrecking company should provide for this. Surgeon of the Maine, after consulting with others, recommending that all bedding and clothing should be abandoned. Might go to acclimated port. Useless fittings and equipments might be towed to sea and thrown overboard. Will take all immediate responsibility, but invite department's wishes. Shall old metal of superstructure and like be saved? Friends of dead should understand that we are in the tropics. Chaplain Chadwick charged with all matters relative to the dead. His conduct is beyond praise. Don't know what reports are being printed, but the intensely active representatives of the press here have been very considerate of me and my position. SIGSBEE."

Secretary Long immediately answered Captain Sigsbee, approving all his recommendations. He was directed to have Lieutenant Waterwright, the executive officer of the Maine, make arrangements with the wreckers for the disinfection of everything sent to the United States. The recommendation that all bedding and all clothing be abandoned, and if need be given to the acclimated port, was approved without comment. The same approval was given to the suggestion that useless fittings and equipment be towed to sea and thrown overboard, it being left to Captain Sigsbee's judgment to determine how far this destruction should be carried on.

To the Captain's inquiry as to the saving of old metal and parts of the superstructure, the answer was given that such material was of no use to the Bureau of Equipment. It was left to Captain Sigsbee to say what of this shattered material was worth preserving. His statement that much blasting will be required to clear away encumbering material indicates that it is essential to further destroy the upper portions of the wreck in order to get at what is more valuable beneath.

Captain Sigsbee'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 the explosion," as he expressed it.

The Navy Department to-day gave out the figures showing the strength of the naval militia up to date. This shows a total force of 4,445 officers and enlisted men, which is a gratifying increase from the 3,703 shown by the last report. The number of officers and men by States is as follows: California, 296; Connecticut, 165; Florida, 1,03; Georgia, 225; Illinois, 523; Louisiana, 202; Maryland, 240; Massachusetts, 441; Michigan, 138; New Jersey, 364; New York, 472; North Carolina, 250; Ohio, 216; Pennsylvania, 216; Rhode Island, 130; South Carolina, 152; Virginia, 44. Total, 4,445. Aside from the forces shown in the above list new brigades are in process of formation which promise to swell the total to much larger figures at an early day.

In his last report Assistant Secretary Roosevelt gave that the State naval militia, in the event of a sudden emergency, could be utilized at once for manning the smaller cruisers. It could be depended upon mainly, he said, as a second line of defense, and also as being well high safe and secure from attack by water. The fortifications at Fort Washington and Sheridan Point, on the opposite side of the Potomac, are sufficiently advanced to be able to repel an ordinary fleet of invaders, and in case of necessity they could be vastly strengthened in a comparatively short time. These defenses are considered sufficient to keep all hostile vessels beyond the range of gunshot of the national capital. Moreover, the river has been blocked off and prepared for mines and torpedoes at a point below the fortifications already mentioned, so that it is probable some of the ships of an enemy would be blown out of the water before it would be necessary to use the guns at the forts.

The officers of the British warship Hood to-day cabled from the island of Crete expressing deep sympathy over the disaster to the Maine.

Thanks to the promptness and efficiency of the Chief of Engineers and the Chief of Ordnance of the army, the city of Washington is now regarded as being well high safe and secure from attack by water. The fortifications at Fort Washington and Sheridan Point, on the opposite side of the Potomac, are sufficiently advanced to be able to repel an ordinary fleet of invaders, and in case of necessity they could be vastly strengthened in a comparatively short time.

The appropriation of \$50,000 made by Congress to aid the work of the naval militia would be apportioned among the States in a few days.

It can also be stated upon authority not to be questioned that the public has been fully informed as to all matters connected with the disaster to the Maine which have come to the knowledge of the Government. Nothing has been withheld of the least public interest, and this policy will be continued until the problem has been solved and the whole truth brought to light.

It is known that the Government has not received any information from official sources tending to show with any degree of certainty that the explosion was the work of enemies.

Secretary Long this morning, in answer to inquiries whether the department was suppressing information concerning the disaster to the Maine, wrote the following:

"Navy Department, Washington (D. C.), Feb. 24.—No telegram has been received from either Admiral Sigsbee or Captains Sampson or Sigsbee since yesterday afternoon, and the department has received no information with regard to the disaster that has not already been made public. The department is waiting the results of the inquiry, and the public judgment should be suspended until some official information is received."

"JOHN D. LONG." No orders have been issued as yet for any vessel to go to Havana to replace the Maine. Secretary Long said some days ago that a vessel would be sent to Havana later, and that either the Nashville or the Montgomery would be sent to the disaster that has not already been made public. The department is waiting the results of the inquiry, and the public judgment should be suspended until some official information is received.

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but the ordinary thin hull plates of about half an inch structural steel. All of the armor, even that worked into the protective deck, was entirely above the magazines, and it is possible that an explosion of the armor might easily have been tossed upward.

The Navy Department has not been informed of the probable length of time it will take to complete the court of inquiry in its work. Such a court, it is said, has the greatest liberty of action and greater than a court-martial, which is strictly limited by the naval regulations. Of course, it is possible that the court will leave Havana in the course of a day or two for Key West, in order to take there the testimony of such of the surviving officers and crew as are now quartered at Key West. The latter are not subject to release from their position until the court has declared that it has concluded their testimony, and as many of these survivors are expected to be shot because of absence in order to see their families and friends it may be that the court will cut short its stay at Havana in order to accommodate them.

It is believed, however, that in case the court develops unexpectedly significant developments before the court leaves Havana it will return to that place later on, in order to ascertain from the work of the divers the cause of the explosion.

In view of the many expressions of doubt regarding the advisability of raising the wreck of the Maine, the message sent yesterday to the Navy Department by Admiral Sigsbee has some weight. The Admiral reported that the court of inquiry, which is on the spot and has had the advantage of opinions of divers, had declared that the most powerful appliances would be necessary to remove the wreck of the ship. The latest expression is taken to mean that the court had so far not concluded that it would be impossible to raise the wreck of the Maine, else the language would seem to have been unnecessary; an unwarranted supposition in the case of expensive cablegrams.

It can be stated that up to this time the naval officials have given no thought to the relief of Admiral Sigsbee as Commander-in-Chief of the naval forces on the North Atlantic station. They do not believe that the Admiral's health is seriously impaired, and it is safe to say that no movement will be made toward his relief until a suggestion comes first from himself. The Admiral has been in command of the squadron less than a year, and is, by legal practice, entitled to retain that command for another year at least, if he so desires.

Nothing has been heard from General Lee at Havana since day before yesterday in the shape of a cablegram, and as the Consul-General has been prompt heretofore in informing the State Department of any developments of significance, it is supposed that there has been some delay in the receipt of his report. In the mail this morning to him was a copy of a condolence received by him from Captain-General Blanco in the following terms:

"Mr. Consul: It becomes my painful duty to express to you my profound sorrow for the disaster which occurred yesterday on board the American ship Maine. I associate myself with all my heart to the grief of the nation and of the families who have lost some of their members, and upon doing so I do not only express my personal sentiments, but I speak in the name of the inhabitants of Havana, witnesses of the catastrophe which has afflicted so many homes.

"God guard you many years. RAMON BLANCO. Havana, February 16, 1898. To the Consul-General of the United States.

Representative Boutelle, Chairman of the House Committee on Naval Affairs, conferred with Secretary Long again to-day. Mr. Boutelle said that his visit was confined wholly to the question of relief for the sufferers of the Maine. The relief bill which he introduced will carry about \$167,000, and it is in its present form. It has been suggested, however, that a general law was passed in 1885, under which relief may be given for the actual loss suffered by those in the naval service in case of disaster. How far this general law will affect the special relief extended to the Maine sufferers, cannot be determined, but in any event, it will cover only the actual loss of clothing, etc., while the relief measure is designed to give a bulk allowance equivalent to twelve months' pay. Mr. Boutelle stated that his call had nothing to do with the question of new ships and naval equipment to be provided by the naval appropriation bill in course of preparation under his Chairmanship.

Referring to the rumors of treachery in connection with the Maine disaster, he said: "I feel that any man who, by spoken or written utterance, adds a spark to inflame public sentiment at this juncture, is as guilty as the man who would touch a match to the powder magazine of a vessel. This is a time for the calmest judgment, instead of unguarded talk, wholly without basis of established fact, of a war which would entail the lives of hundreds and thousands of our people."

This was diplomatic talk at the State Department, and it brought the usual number of callers upon the Secretary of State and Assistant Secretary Day.

The Portuguese Minister came early, and was followed by Mr. Dubois, the Spanish Charge d'Affaires. His stay was not long, and it is believed that the purpose of his visit, aside from such matters of routine business as usually brings the diplomats to the State Department on Thursday, was to ascertain if the officials had any news from the wreck of the Maine that could properly be communicated to him. In this respect he was disappointed, because there have been no telegraphic advices from Consul-General Lee of recent date, while the naval dispatches all have been made public from time to time.

Late to-night the Navy Department received two brief telegrams from Captain Sigsbee at Havana. One related to some routine matter of expenditures in connection with the work on the Maine, and the other is as follows: "Divers report more bodies in the wreck. Some in hammocks involved in debris. Probably the bodies of the crew. This dispatch indicates that the divers have finally secured at least a partial entrance to the quarters in the forward part of the vessel, where the crew were asleep when the explosion occurred, and under which were the magazines. On this point the divers were unable to extricate the bodies, shows the fearful obstacles against which they are working, and bears out the belief that the work of submarine investigation will necessarily proceed slowly."

At no time since the war of the rebellion has the military branch of the Government been so active as it is to-day. It is a significant fact that within the last two days there has been a remarkable change of opinion in the Navy Department in regard to the explosion of the Maine. When the first news arrived here last week experts at the department were very nearly divided as between an accident and design. But to-day, after studying the later reports, and especially the photographs sent from Havana, nine out of ten of the officers of the department express the belief that the Maine was anchored over a submarine mine. The only difference of opinion seems to be as to whether that mine was exploded by Spanish officers acting under orders or some enthusiast. The latter opinion is generally held, but it is said that this does not lessen in any great degree the responsibility of Spain for the horrible catastrophe.

WILL ACT PROMPTLY. ST. LOUIS, Feb. 24.—General William H. Powell of Belleville, Ill., who is in command of the regiment in which President McKinley served during the civil war, and who was recently appointed Collector of Internal Revenue for the Southern Illinois District, returned from Washington to-day. The General, who is a personal friend of President McKinley, said that while at the Capital he discussed the Maine disaster and its possible results with the Chief Executive.

"The President stated to me," said the General, "that he was only waiting for a complete report of the Naval Board of Inquiry, and that should it report that our sailors had met their death through Spanish treachery, he was prepared to act at once, and in a manner which would meet the approval of every loyal American citizen."

General Powell said preparations for war were being pushed with the utmost vigor, and added: "I am convinced that President McKinley is the right man in the right place, and that as soon as Spanish treachery has been proven his policy will be rigid enough to meet the approval even of the most pronounced jingo."

SPANISH LEGATION. Seeking to Allay Everything Which Might Inflame Public Sentiment. WASHINGTON, Feb. 24.—At the Spanish Legation much interest is manifested in the developments of the Maine inquiry, and the earnest hope is expressed that conservative judgment will not be influenced by reports which, by the Spanish Legation, are regarded as unworthy.

Mr. Dubois and his staff are maintaining a calm attitude and are seeking to allay everything which might inflame public sentiment. Recently an incident occurred at a small city which might have given the ground for official attention, had it not been smoothed by tactful action by the Spanish officials at the place of the incident. The aggressive element prevailing in this local community found expression against the Spanish Consular Agent located at that point. Under ordinary circumstances, it would have brought the indignities to the attention of the Spanish officials, in which case it would, of necessity, have been made the subject of official attention. Instead of so doing, however, the Spanish agent appealed to the Mayor of the city, and the matter was adjusted without any appeal to the authorities here. The incident was thus closed before there was even the opportunity of friction, and it is cited as an instance of the desire of the Spanish authorities to show every forbearance and tenderness.

The Spanish cruiser Vizcaya probably will sail to-morrow for Havana. That, however, is a matter wholly within the discretion of Captain Eulate. It is probable that she would have gone before this time, if it were not for the misleading impression which an early departure might occasion. Reports received to-day at the Legation speak with satisfaction of the courtesies which have been shown to officers and men of the ship.

Captain Sobral, late Naval Attaché of the Legation, came to Washington yesterday and conferred with Senator Dubois. Any misunderstanding which has occurred as to his official status is dispelled by the fact that the official notification of the termination of his service has not come to him from the naval chiefs under whom he served. The decree was formally gazetted, however, and during Captain Sobral's visit here he received orders from Madrid to report there at once. He therefore will take an early steamer, and this apparently disposes of the incident with which his name has been connected.

The whereabouts of the steamer Dauntless, said to have sailed from Florida with a filibustering expedition, is beginning to excite much comment. The expedition is said to have sailed over a week ago and there has been ample time for her to reach Cuba. No reports to this effect have been received, and it is felt that she must have encountered heavy weather, and is possibly disabled or else has made a quiet landing, and is cruising about for a safe avenue of escape from the Spanish boats which are watching.

NOT AN ACCIDENT. A Washington Paper's Correspondent on the Maine Disaster. WASHINGTON, Feb. 24.—The "Evening Star" has received the following cablegram from Charles Pepp (Continued on Eighth Page.)

ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY. President McKinley Frankly Expresses His Views. CHICAGO, Feb. 24.—The "Tribune" this morning printed the following dispatch from Washington: "I do not propose to do anything at all to accelerate war necessary or inevitable. I would be lax in my duty, however, if I did not prepare for the future. The situation is grave, and the policy of the administration will be determined almost entirely by the course of events from time to time. There is no necessity of alarming the

people, but Congress must be ready to assist the administration without making too many inquiries as to the course of current events."

To a Senator who called upon him yesterday in order to ask some serious questions as to the policy of the administration, President McKinley with the utmost frankness uttered the above words. There is no doubt of the fact that the Government of the United States is actually preparing for war with Spain. It does not follow that war will come, but the activity in both the War and Navy Departments is too unmistakable to be concealed.

The President and his Cabinet unite in the belief still, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, that the explosion of the Maine was the result of an unfortunate accident, but they recognize the fact that the contrary may prove true at almost any hour, and if it is shown even inferentially that Spain had a hand in the catastrophe there will be but one thing to do, and that will be to seize the island of Cuba by force of arms.

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FARMERS AGAIN MADE HAPPY.

A Generous Downpour of Rain Throughout the State,

Except in the Extreme Southern Counties, Where the Fall Was Light.

Gives Assurance of Good Crops From Merced Northward to the State Line—San Joaquin County Gets the Most Welcome Drenching in Years.

SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 24.—Reports from all parts of the State indicate that a general rain has fallen during the past twenty-four hours, except in the extreme southern portion of the State, to the great benefit of the growing crops, which had been suffering from the long-continued drought. Owners of flocks and herds are much encouraged for the pasturage had become very bare, and fruit growers are particularly pleased with the outlook for a favorable season.

Speaking of the crop condition this morning, W. H. Mills of the Central Pacific Company said: "The deposit of snow on the mountains is satisfactory, guaranteeing a good stage of the rivers during next year. The rain increases crops from Merced northward to the State line. The summer fallow has been kept in good condition. The winter sown grain is barely up. The set is very light, but this rain will do much to bring it out. It will require but little more rain this season to guarantee good crops on all summer fallowed land north of Stockton. In some portions of the State, notably the coast valley south of Monterey, the wheat came up and died on the ground. It is too late to reseed the ground. It has not rained in the last twenty-four hours in the Salinas Valley. The crops in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties never looked better at this season of the year than now."

A MOST WELCOME RAIN. STOCKTON, Feb. 24.—This section was visited this afternoon by the most welcome rain it has known in years. After missing the last showers which reached San Francisco and the coast, Stockton and San Joaquin County were exceedingly anxious for the downpour. Reports say that the rain was general over the entire county, and extended for some distance up the valley. The fall here was 2.5 of an inch, making 4.83 inches for the season, against 9.79 inches last season. The indications are for other showers before morning.

Upon the severity of this storm depends much. The crops are in splendid condition at present, and should two or three inches' precipitation result from this storm, the harvest of grain in this county will be immense. This fact is conceded by old farmers and grain men throughout the county. Up to now there has been considerable anxiety among raisers of wheat, but the present outlook for a protracted storm has given things a much brighter aspect.

ALL FEAR OF FAILURE DISSIPATED. SAN JOSE, Feb. 24.—It is still raining, and the valley is rejoicing in the best soaking it has had since the winter opened. The rain began to fall at 3:30 this morning, and ceased temporarily at nightfall, to begin again shortly after midnight. Total for the storm, 4.5 of an inch for the season, 4.98. There is but one feeling among the orchardists and farmers, and that is, that all fear of failure has been dissipated. With a few more showers, which are likely to come in March, the growing crops will receive all the stimulus they need. The success of the fruit crop is already assured, though in some sections there may be a lack of water for irrigation. But in these same districts there have been good yields without the extra wetting.

ANOTHER DOWNPOUR NEEDED. FRESNO, Feb. 24.—All indications have been favorable for a good rain during the past twenty-four hours, but only .65 of an inch has fallen. The grain crop is badly in need of another heavy downpour, and if it does not come soon, all is off for the present year except in the sub-irrigated districts. Most of the grain is so late in starting that plenty of rain is necessary to make a crop. Sheep and cattlemen have not been complaining since the last rain, which started the feed, and the present storm will assure all of plenty of feed for their stock.

LIGHT RAIN AT LOS ANGELES. LOS ANGELES, Feb. 24.—A light rain commenced falling throughout Southern California at 6 o'clock this evening, and while the precipitation up to midnight was hardly more than sufficient to lay the dust, the farmers are encouraged, as the sky is still heavily clouded. Grain and all vegetation is suffering for the want of a thorough soaking. The need for a heavy downpour is very great, and it is an open question whether or not there will be late for early sown grain to derive much benefit, even if copious rains come. Supplies of water for irrigation and domestic purposes are very low. The hay crop will be light, even with plenty of rain now and showers to-night. Fruit will be backward.

WATER SCARCE IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY. SAN DIEGO, Feb. 24.—The weather conditions in San Diego County are much better in the foothill valleys of the county than on the coast. The total rainfall in San Diego to date is 3.11 inches, against 9.08 inches last year at this time. Only six hundredths of an inch of rain has fallen here this month, and although it is cloudy here, there is no wind, and prospects are not favorable for more than showers to-night. The grain crop in valleys twenty miles from the coast is about half the average crop. The principal anxiety is lack of water for irrigating and city supply next summer, as reservoirs are all very low in this section, and unless rains come will not last the season out.

BEST RAIN OF THE SEASON. SANTA ROSA, Feb. 24.—Sonoma County is now having the best rain of this winter. Rain began yesterday, and is continuing in generous showers all day, about three-quarters of an inch having fallen during the storm. The rainfall here for this season is now 12.14 inches against 22.24 at the same time last year.

GOOD CROPS INSURED. MAINTENANCE, Feb. 24.—Rain began falling at 12 o'clock last night, and continued all day. The fall for the storm is 1.36 inches, making the total for the season 8.01 inches. Last season up to date the fall was 20.62 inches. At Brentwood 0.19 of an inch fell. The rain has been a wonderful help to fruit trees. The hills are green and stock is not suffering.

GOOD FALL AT WATSONVILLE. WATSONVILLE, Feb. 24.—Rain fell steadily from 7 a. m. until 1 p. m. During the afternoon there were occasional showers, and there are indications of a storm to-night. The precipitation to-day amounted to nearly an inch.

HEAVY AT SANTA CRUZ. SANTA CRUZ, Feb. 24.—Heavy rain fell to-day, and there were occasional showers of hail. A strong wind is blowing.

CROP OUTLOOK GOOD. TEMPESTON, Feb. 24.—It has rained all day, and the wind is in the southwest. Feed is short, but there will be good crops, if showers continue. The rainfall to-day amounts to 0.35 of an inch.

MUCH GOOD TO NAPA COUNTY. NAPA, Feb. 24.—Rain began falling at 12 o'clock last night, and continued ever since. It was greatly needed, and will do much good to-day.

CROPS NEVER LOOKED BETTER. WALNUT CREEK, Feb. 24.—Nearly 2 inches of rain fell to-day. The crops in this valley never looked better.

PROMISING OUTLOOK. MILTON, Feb. 24.—A heavy southwest wind prevailed here last night, followed by rain, which has continued all day. The outlook for this season's crops is now very promising.

THE SENTENCE OF ZOLA.

APPROVED BY THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES.

M. Laborie, Counsel for the Novelist, Lodges an Appeal on Behalf of His Client. PARIS, Feb. 24.—The Chamber of Deputies was through to-day, and it was decided to request the Premier, M. Meunier, to immediately discuss the interpellations of M. Hubbard and Gauguier relative to the conviction and sentence of M. Zola yesterday.

M. Viviani declared that the Socialists, although they might be divided relative to the Dreyfus case, were in entire accord in regard to the prerogative of civil over military power.

M. Meunier replied that democratic justice had given a verdict after a military court, and you will accept it. General Billot, Minister for War, gave no order to Generals summoned to testify before the tribunal of the country. One General had been accused on account of his utterances. Undoubtedly he spoke a word too much, but you must remember the frightful charge thrown in his face."

Continuing, M. Meunier said that the charges made against the army were unjust, and he asserted that there was not a shadow of evidence against the guilt of plotting against the country, even in his dreams.

"The Government," continued the Premier, "intends to impose peace upon all, and will take the measures which the circumstances demand. No one after yesterday's verdict could raise the question of a general amnesty. Undoubtedly he spoke a word too much, but you must remember the frightful charge thrown in his face."

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EBANKS CASE.

The Supreme Court Reverses One of the Appeals. SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 24.—The criminal department of the State Supreme Court to-day heard arguments in the appeal cases of Murderer John Miller of this city, Murderer Ebanks of Santa Cruz, convicted of mayhem. The Miller and Ebanks cases were submitted, but on the confession of error on the part of the Attorney-General, one of the appeals in the Ebanks case was reversed. It was based on the order of the Superior Court of San Diego in sentencing Ebanks to death pending his appeal on habeas corpus to the United States Supreme Court. The decision, of course, has no effect in Ebanks' case now, and the murderer will hang soon.

Gen. Brick to be Retired To-day.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 24.—General Samuel Brick, Adjutant-General of the army, will be retired to-morrow on account of age, and it is altogether probable that his successor will be Colonel Henry T. Corbin, who is in direct line for promotion.