

THE PREPARATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE.

Great Work Done the Past Week

Getting the Country on a War Footing.

Immense Orders for Supplies Have Been Placed.

While Sea Coast Fortifications Have Been Greatly Strengthened.

Administration Absolutely Has No Knowledge of the Cause of the Maine Disaster, No Report of Any Kind Having Been Received From the Board of Inquiry.

WASHINGTON, March 12.—While to-day was not marked by particularly important events, the history of the week just closed will form a splendid record of what can be accomplished by the Nation in a short space of time under the necessity to provide for the national defense.

Beginning with the appropriation of \$50,000,000 to be expended by the President without limitation, there followed rapidly the placing of orders for enormous quantities of war supplies, the institution of negotiations for the purchase of ships abroad, the enlistment of men for the navy, the creation of two regiments of artillery, the commissioning of monitors, cruisers and rams, the manning of new posts along the sea coasts, and finally the re-arrangement of the great military departments to meet modern conditions in military practice.

NO POINTS LEFT UNGUARDED.

The sending of the Oregon, now at Mare Island, away from San Francisco is an exhibition of the far-sightedness with which the Secretary of the Navy is observing the situation of today. The vessel's orders are to cruise down the Pacific Coast, touching in from time to time at various ports where cable connections exist, to receive any orders that the Department may have to give. In this way it is expected that she will work as far south as Valparaiso, Chile, where she will await orders. Valparaiso is very much nearer to Cuba and to Admiral Sigsbee's fleet than Mare Island, while if it should be desired to send the ship to the Asiatic station this can be done almost as conveniently from Valparaiso as from San Francisco. At Valparaiso the Oregon will be where she can be most useful to be manipulated in case of an emergency.

NO KNOWLEDGE OF CAUSE OF MAINE DISASTER.

The President held a conference at the White House about noon to-day with Secretaries Alger, Long and Gage. It is presumed the subject of discussion was the finances of the situation, a subject which could not be fully treated at the Cabinet meeting yesterday owing to the short session.

After the conference the statement was again made, with the emphasis that has characterized every utterance on the subject by the President's constitutional advisers, that up to date the Administration has absolutely no knowledge of the cause of the disaster of the Maine, and that it has no report of any kind from the Court of Inquiry, or any one connected with it.

AUXILIARY BRANCH OF NAVY.

The Board of Naval Bureau Chief, find it impossible to pass judgment in Washington upon the fitness for naval service of vessels that may be offered for the auxiliary branch of the navy at the various seaports, so they have been aided in their work by the creation of a special board, which will undertake to visit each of the ports where ships may be offered and make a careful personal inspection of the various craft. The board will consist of Captain Rodgers, Lieutenant-Commander Kelley, Passed Assistant Engineer Dixon, Assistant Naval Constructor Taylor, and Lieutenant Sargent. Lieutenant Kelley, having been specially charged with the inspection of the merchant vessels for naval service, will be of great service as a member of the board.

MOVEMENTS OF WARSHIPS.

The Nashville arrived at Key West to-day, while the Marblehead arrived at Tampa. The naval officials will not visit the purpose of the Marblehead's state to Tampa.

A FLOOD OF SUGGESTIONS.

The war talk has had the usual result of bringing before the War and Navy Departments a perfect flood of

suggestions and inventions. Many of these are most remarkable—balloons, flying machines, kites and the like, centipede-like steamers with manifold propellers and torpedoes of fearful and wonderful destruction. All of them are given attention, and are offered to the proper authorities for investigation, but not much is expected from them.

SHOT AND SHELL FOR BIG GUNS.

The War Department will, on Monday, open bids for one of the largest orders for shot and shell for the heavy caliber guns ever given, including armor piercing projectiles and deck piercing torpedo shells. The number and character of these follows: 330 twelve-inch deck piercing shells, weighing 1,000 pounds each; 1,241 twelve-inch deck piercing shells, weighing 800 pounds each; 481 ten-inch armor piercing shot capped; 140 eight-inch armor piercing shells; 150 eight-inch armor piercing shot capped.

These projectiles are for the heavy fortification guns now mounted along the coast. Their purchase is not to be made under the \$50,000,000 defense appropriation bill, but is in anticipation of the fortification bill, which grants \$943,000 for a reserve supply of projectiles and powder.

As the making of the heavy projectiles will take considerable time, the contract will be let ahead of the passage of the bill, assurances having been given from men in Congress that no question would be raised as to the regularity of this proceeding.

The entire amount is designed to give all the heavy guns now installed, and these to be put in place during the coming year, a full quota of projectiles and powder. The 12-inch shot are among the largest made. The cost of a single round of this class of projectiles is \$511.

Aside from the large order to be placed Monday, the emergency bill will permit additional orders to meet the requirements of such fortification guns as may be mounted for emergency. The present order is for the actual needs of the guns now mounted without reference to any existing emergency, although it has been made all the more imperative by the Spanish crisis.

CONDITION OF CUBAN RECONCENTRATEDS IMPROVED.

The Spanish Minister, Senor Polo, received a dispatch to-day from Captain-General Blanco stating the condition of the Cuban reconcentrateds was greatly improved. General Blanco stated also that he had prepared full data on this subject to be forwarded to Washington.

It will be a timely contribution to the official material on the condition of these unfortunate people, and is doubtless drawn out by the harrowing stories of distress and starvation which have induced the sending of large relief supplies to Cuba by Americans.

Senor Polo has not yet opened business negotiations with the State Department, except in the formalities of presenting his credentials. He is first attending to the several duties incumbent on a new Minister, and after calling on the President to-day, he spent the rest of the day in calling on Embassadors and Ministers.

EMERGENCY PREPARATIONS.

Continue With Activity at War and Navy Departments.

WASHINGTON, March 12.—Emergency preparations were continued to-day in all branches of the Navy and War Departments.

The Bureau of Construction of the Navy Department finds itself exceptionally well prepared for any emergency work that it may be called upon to perform in connection with the auxiliary cruisers. It is due to an organization which, in ordinary times, is so arranged that the force can be made speedily available for emergency demands. It is said that less than an hour's work would be required to organize here to complete all the plans for the transformation of two of the best ships on the Atlantic into auxiliary cruisers.

The detailed work of reconstruction could be accomplished with like dispatch at the League Island navy yard. At that point there is a naval constructor and ample force of draughtsmen. Work on the battleship Alabama is now in progress at Cramp's yard, but as there is no present prospect of completing her, the large force of men could be withdrawn from the Alabama and set at work on the auxiliary cruisers. It is not doubted that the Cramps yards would give the Government every facility in the way of workmen at their disposal.

The same readiness for quick work of construction exists at Newport News and at Norfolk. At Newport News there are a Naval Constructor, three assistants and thirty draughtsmen. Work on the battleship Connecticut is now in progress at Cramp's yard, but as there is no present prospect of completing her, the large force of men could be withdrawn from the Alabama and set at work on the auxiliary cruisers. It is not doubted that the Cramps yards would give the Government every facility in the way of workmen at their disposal.

The Secretary of Navy has directed that a recruiting station be opened in Washington immediately, the special purpose being to secure ordinary seamen and machinists. He telegraphed to the present on duty at the Washington Navy Department, will be in charge of the navy station, which will begin on next Monday.

THE NAVAL INSPECTION BOARD.

The Naval Inspection Board has gone down to Norfolk to examine the purpose being to secure ordinary seamen and machinists. He telegraphed to the present on duty at the Washington Navy Department, will be in charge of the navy station, which will begin on next Monday.

THE BLOWING UP OF THE MAINE.

Theories of Captain Peral. It is Said, Are Not Substantiated.

An American Officer Tells of the Effects of Torpedoes and Mines.

Depends on Depth of the Water Where the Explosion Occurs as to What Effect Would be Visible on the Surface—The Lack of Dead Fish Explained by the Fact That No Fish Inhabit the Waters Where the Maine Was Anchored.

NEW YORK, March 12.—The enlistment of skilled mechanics, machinists, seamen and ironworkers was continued to-day at the Brooklyn navy yard, but all applications of apprentices, landmen and coal passers were refused, as there is already a full complement of these classes.

The torpedo boat Stiletto has been put in condition for sea. The work of transporting ammunition from the yard to the steamers down the bay was continued to-day.

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COALING OF WARSHIPS. PORTSMOUTH (N. H.), March 12.—Orders have been received at the Portsmouth navy yard from Washington to certain how many warships could be coaled here, and the quickest possible time which would be required to supply a vessel. The Washington authorities have been informed that four battleships and seven cruisers could be coaled at the navy yard here in a continuous run of 24 hours if coal could be supplied. The work of equipping the fortifications is proceeding steadily.

AT MILITARY POSTS. Artillery Batteries Preparing to Go to the Sea Coast. CHICAGO, March 12.—Quartermaster-General Lee of the Army, Department of the Lakes, is making arrangements to transport batteries of artillery to the West coast of the United States, to the Atlantic seaboard and Gulf of Mexico. To-day the Western railroads having headquarters at St. Louis and other Western cities were invited to telegraph by the 15th inst. proposals for the transporting of batteries of artillery from Fort Riley, Kas., to Fort Monroe, Va., and from Fort Snelling, Minn., to New Orleans, La., and a third from Fort Riley to Savannah, Ga. Each battery consists of five officers, sixty-five men, fifty-seven horses, four guns with caissons, battery forges and camp equipments.

The equipment must go through from the initial point without change and will be ready to leave Fort Riley by noon on the 16th inst.

ARRAIS FOR NAVAL RESERVES. ST. LOUIS, March 12.—Lieutenant-Commander Felix H. Hunnicke of the St. Louis naval reserves to-day received a communication from Assistant Secretary of the Navy Roosevelt inclosing a bond, upon the execution of which the Department will authorize the loan of 220 12-caliber rifles, 45-caliber, with belts. The letter concludes as follows: "As the State of Missouri does not share in the appropriation for arming and equipping the naval militia, the Department can be put to no expense in dispatching these rifles. The cost of these rifles will have to be borne by your organization, and as the Department cannot lend small arm ammunition, this, too, will have to be furnished by the organization."

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Telegraphic reports stating that the troops are en route are erroneous. KANSAS CITY, March 12.—A rumor in persistent circulation this afternoon that troops had been ordered from Fort Leavenworth, Kas., to the Pacific Coast is denied by army officials at this point.

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Secretary Long to-day telegraphed orders to the commander to leave San Francisco and cruise down the southern coast. The vessel will report from time to time by cable to the Navy Department, and receive such instructions as changes in conditions may warrant. About fifty tons in all, which was unloaded at the powder station when the ship went north last fall to have bilge keels put in place at the Bremerton naval station. As soon as this work is done she is expected to sail southward.

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THE MONTGOMERY NOT INJURED.

Commander Converse Sets at Rest the Sensational Story.

That the Warship Has Met With a Mishap in Cuban Waters.

THINKS IT WOULD BE WELL FOR SENSATION MONGERS TO GIVE SOME THOUGHT TO THE FEELINGS OF THE WIVES AND OTHER RELATIVES OF THE OFFICERS AND CREW AT HOME BEFORE CAUSING DEEP ALARM BY SUCH BASELESS STORIES.

HAVANA, March 12.—Mail day keeps the newspaper correspondents busy, but many of them succeeded in getting to Matanzas, in order to report the distribution of the relief supplies taken there on board the dispatch boat Fern.

Consul-General Lee was misinformed as to the remission of the fine of \$500 imposed upon the American yacht Anita, which brought the Congressional party here, because her papers were alleged to be out of order. The Anita was not allowed to go to Matanzas last night, a pilot being refused her account of the fine. The fine will probably be remitted to-day, and the Anita will sail later for Matanzas or Sagua la Grande, as she may desire.

In an interview had by the correspondent of the Associated Press with Commander Converse of the cruiser Montgomery, regarding the report circulated in the United States that the cruiser had been injured, the officer dictated the following:

"The report is absolutely false. No damage of any kind to the hull or machinery has been done to the Montgomery during the nine months she has been under my command.

"Would it not be well for sensation mongers to give some thought to the feelings of the wives and other relatives of the officers and crew at home before causing deep alarm by such baseless stories?"

There is general indignation over the story. The correspondent was also requested to deny the rumors telegraphed from here, which he saw to-day for the first time.

"First, that Captain Sigsbee is indisposed; and second, that Consul-General Lee and Dr. Bruner, the United States sanitary physician, are on bad terms. Both stories are declared on the authority of the men named in them to be without color of truth. Captain Sampson seems to be all right again."

The court of inquiry did little work to-day. The members examined two divers, went over drawings and plans and photographs in the cabin of the Mangrove, and read over the stenographic report of some past testimony.

The water is very rough, making the work of the divers difficult. The wrecking tug is anchored a cable length from the port side of the Maine, sending down divers. It is hard to see any marked advance in the work of the divers.

The Montgomery was to-day visited by several Spanish army officials, accompanied by two ladies, all coming on the Governor-General's barge. The usual naval and official courtesies were extended by everybody to the officers and cadets of the Austrian training ship, Donau.

The members of the court of inquiry are deeply interested in the account given by this correspondent of the interview had by him with Captain Peral, President of the Spanish court of inquiry. Each member asked questions, rather than giving any testimony.

Additional advices received by this correspondent from Matanzas show that the 1,500 pounds of quinine on the Fern and Bergen cannot be distributed without orders from the Government, and fears are felt that the work of distribution will be delayed, because the Red Cross Society did not make proper arrangements beforehand. However, all have confidence in Consul Brice.

The great damage done by the attempt to smother some posts into Havana is shown now in the delay in transit caused by the strict examinations. The officials say they will act as quickly as possible. The Fern, as soon as the slow work of unloading is finished, will take the same amount of stores to Sagua la Grande. The Fern hopes to reach Sagua to-morrow. She must anchor there, as at Matanzas, to lighten. At Matanzas she had to use her own small crew to transfer the freight, no adequate provision of stevedores having been made by the Red Cross Society.

The news that there was food in Matanzas spread rapidly through the town, and hundreds of poor people crowded to the wharves with sacks and boxes, only to be disappointed, and told that they must wait.

A report, though it has not yet been verified, is that the stores sent to Matanzas by the Red Cross Society ten days ago are still in the railroad warehouse, and that none has been distributed.

READY TO BATTLE.

Ex-Confederates Would Enlist to Defend the Flag.

OWOSSO (Mich.), March 12.—General J. B. Gordon of Georgia, who lectured here last evening on "The Last Days of the Confederacy," has received a telegram from his State saying:

"One hundred and fifty thousand of your comrades stand ready to follow your lead in the protection of our national honor."

Said the General: "I think I hear rebel yells and Yankee hurrahs mingled, as our common country unites in protection of our flag."

A RAILWAY OFFICIAL TIL.

NEW YORK, March 12.—J. G. Schrieber, General Traffic Manager of the Southern Pacific Railway Company, with offices in New York, is very ill at the Hoffman House.