

THE AFFAIR AT MATANZAS.

AN ACCOUNT WRITTEN FROM THE FLAGSHIP NEW-YORK.

WHAT IT IS TO BE ABOARD A WARSHIP IN ACTION—PERFECT DISCIPLINE AND SELF-CONTROL EVERYWHERE—ADMIRABLE MARKSMANSHIP.

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On the Flagship New-York, off Havana, April 28 10 a. m., via Key West, April 29.—The bombardment of the Matanzas batteries is now a matter of history. The flagship has returned to her station off El Morro. As already briefly stated in these dispatches, the bombardment accomplished its purpose in full, and that without any loss of life on the American side. It is believed the Spaniards must have sustained some loss of life, in addition to having their nearly completed earthworks and fortifications torn up by the explosion of shells. The capture of the city was not contemplated, the object being to stop the erection of the batteries.

This engagement, the first in which the United States Navy has participated for about thirty years, occurred quite unexpectedly. The New-York was lying about twenty miles east of Havana at 10:30 o'clock yesterday morning, when Rear-Admiral Sampson decided to steam to Matanzas. At the entrance to the harbor the monitor Puritan and the cruiser Cincinnati met the flagship. A stiff wind was blowing, and the waves rolled over the low bow and stern of the monitor. At slow speed the flagship proceeded toward the harbor, the Puritan following half a mile astern, and the Cincinnati about two miles to the westward. Admiral Sampson and Captain Chadwick stood on the bridge, carefully surveying the forts which had the comers to fire on the United States torpedo boat boats.

When about three miles from Punta Gorda, the extreme point of the western arm of the harbor, a long yellow streak was seen on shore. It looked like a newly erected earthwork. Closer inspection revealed a number of men clustered around the shore. Still the New-York went slowly ahead until it was ascertained without any doubt that the Spanish troops were busy in erecting what seemed to be a sand battery, and had already got several guns into position.

THE FIRST SHOT.

Admiral Sampson decided that this was detrimental to a pacific blockade. "General quarters" was sounded. The men rushed to their guns. When the New-York was about four thousand yards from Punta Gorda her helm was put to starboard and "begin firing!" the bugler blew. Cadet Boone, in charge of "Walst," the 8-inch gun amidships on the port side, had the honor of firing the opening shot. The flagship shook from stem to stern as the first projectile aimed by the United States at the shore of Cuba flew from the muzzle of the big gun. This was at 12:36 p. m. Fifty pairs of glasses were levelled from the flagship at the shore. It seemed minutes before the yellow smoke cleared away, but in reality it was less than five seconds. Then a little cloud of dust was seen to rise at the right of the earthworks. For the first attempt at 4,000 yards it was by no means a bad shot.

Without the aid of glasses the objective point could be clearly defined. With a defensing roar the 8-inch gun in the forward turret let fly its iron missile. It landed high. The after turret came next with the same sized projectile. A shout of delight went up from the flagship as a dense cloud rose slowly from the very centre of the earthworks, showing how true had been the aim. Then from the entire port side a fearful fusillade was poured on the shore, the four turret guns firing almost simultaneously, and the 6-inch guns adding their smaller hail. When the smoke blew away Punta Gorda was dotted with dust clouds that looked like miniature geysers springing suddenly from the earth. Each showed where a shot had struck.

At this stage the guns in the Quintas da Recreo battery were observed to be firing on the flagship. This fort is on the eastward arm of the harbor, 7,000 yards from where the flagship was lying. It is provided with four 8-inch guns. The flagship's fire was at once directed upon it.

OTHER SHIPS JOIN IN.

Up to this period the New-York had been firing alone. Captain Harrington on the Puritan, and Captain Chester, on the Cincinnati, had drawn up and were vigorously signalling for permission to fire. When this was reported to Admiral Sampson he said, "All right; tell them to go ahead." So, while the New-York was opening fire on Quintas da Recreo, the Puritan took a position to the eastward and opened on the same point. The Cincinnati went to the westward and pounded a rapid-fire broadside into the earthworks on Punta Gorda.

Occasionally shots from Quintas da Recreo could be seen coming in the direction of the New-York. All fell very short, and at no time threatened the ship. Only about ten shots are believed to have been fired from this battery during the whole engagement. However, there may have been more. It is possible that its guns have been disabled, as two 8-inch shells were distinctly seen to land square in the fort. Its distance from the ship was so great, and the smoke, which the wind took in its direction, so thick, that it was hard to judge the effect of the fire, and still harder to get good aim. For about five minutes Quintas da Recreo got the full benefit of the port broadsides of the New-York and the Puritan.

GETTING CLOSER TO THE MARK.

What its ultimate fate would have been is hard to tell had not attention been diverted from it by a shell from Punta Gorda that whizzed over the New-York and fell a little short of the Cincinnati. Leaving Quintas da Recreo to the tender mercies of the Puritan, which was still merrily banging away, Captain Chadwick put his helm to starboard until the port battery once more bore on the Punta Gorda earthworks. Another shell came from shore whizzing along over the flagship. "Too high, but a better shot than I thought they could make," said an officer. Then the Cincinnati and the New-York poured shot into the yellow earthworks and the surrounding land until the smoke hid everything from view. Only one more shot from Punta Gorda was noticed. It fell short of the New-York by about two hundred yards. It was believed to have come, not from the earthworks, but from a field battery on the brow of a slight hill about half a mile further inland than the earthworks. In fact, it is doubtful whether any shots were fired from the earthworks after the two or three broadsides had been poured into them.

What became of the soldiers seen on Punta Gorda is not known. Some declared they saw them running to the brow of the hill where the field battery was thought to be stationed. But this, as well as the estimate of the enemy's number, which ranged from four hundred to four thousand, was purely supposition, distance and smoke preventing accurate knowledge.

"CEASE FIRING."

At 1:15 p. m., when the bombardment was at its height, and after it had been in progress for nineteen minutes, Admiral Sampson ordered "cease firing" to be sounded. A few shots rained out from the Cincinnati and the Puritan before they caught the signal.

On shore all was quiet. Not a soul could be seen there, and there was no more firing. The earthworks a quarter-hour before had presented a fairly regular outline, but now they had a jagged appearance. Big gaps were plainly visible at Quintas da Recreo. There was not a sign of life there. Admiral Sampson had effectively stopped the work on Punta Gorda. He had drawn the fire of the enemy, and had discovered exactly the quality and location of their batteries, besides affording three ships good target practice. Incidentally he had put the fear of American guns into Spanish hearts. It

would have been perfectly feasible for these three ships unaided to have steamed past the fortifications right into Matanzas and taken it or shelled it at pleasure. The only risk run would have been from mines.

After satisfying himself that his object had been accomplished, Admiral Sampson headed back for Havana. The Puritan and the Cincinnati were left to look out for Matanzas, and they will take care that it is not the scene of much work on fortifications in the near future. The readiness to assume this task can be judged from the fact that shortly after the signal, "cease firing," had been given, Captain Chester asked permission to reopen. This was refused. Admiral Sampson evidently thinking Matanzas had had enough for one afternoon.

A PERFECT MACHINE.

During the bombardment the New-York's engines at intervals went slowly astern, keeping a steady range of four thousand yards on Punta Gorda and seven thousand on Quintas da Recreo. The machinery worked perfectly, not only in the engine-room, but throughout the whole ship. This is especially true of the electric ammunition hoists and turret training gear, two of the most essential parts of a ship's equipment during action.

From a naval point of view few, if any, lessons were learned from the bombardment, though the range at which the shooting was carried on was a satisfactory test of marksmanship. The distance, however, prevented the staff from ascertaining the effect of the heavy explosive projectiles on the earthworks. Quintas da Recreo appeared to be an old style of fort, low, and lying near the water's edge. The battery was probably behind a recently constructed sandwork.

BRAVE AND STEADY.

From the lay point of view the bombardment appeared to demonstrate several things. It proved that the officers from Admiral Sampson down are perfectly cool in the face of danger and in the midst of action; that they have superb control over their men at exciting and trying moments, and that the latter are as steady and courageous when the guns roar and the shells whistle as when they muster to morning and evening quarters in times of peace. All these qualities are taken for granted by any naval officer. They are the postulates of his discipline. He would be surprised if they were otherwise.

In the second place, the bombardment gave an excellent, though at the same time a frightful, illustration of a warship's death-dealing powers. Tremendous broadsides poured without cessation on the little streak of earthworks. Had a single ship been in the place where the shells fell it seems as if she would have been blown to bits before she could have returned the fire. When a 10,000-ton ship, usually as steady as a rock, shakes and trembles like a frightened child, when firmly fitted bolts start from their sockets and window-panes and wood-work are shattered, when the rear peals up from port and starboard, and you feel your feet leaving the deck and your glasses jumping around your forehead, while a blinding, blackening smoke hides everything from sight, then it is that you first realize the terrible power of a modern warship's batteries.

SCENES ON THE NEW-YORK.

Scenes of intense human interest occurred on the flagship's deck during the bombardment. The centre of attraction, naturally, was the forward bridge, where Admiral Sampson paced up and down, his long glass in hand, pausing now and then to watch the effect of the shots. Impassive as if at submarine target practice off the Dry Tortugas, Captain Chadwick was at his side, in the dual capacity of chief of staff and captain of the ship, equally calm, and giving orders continuously regarding the direction of the fire and the handling of the ship. Lieutenant Stanton, assistant chief of staff, Lieutenant-Commander Potter, executive officer of the ship, and Lieutenant J. Roller, the navigator, all were on the bridge, and as busy as they could be. Three men were at the wheel, and the usual staff of lookouts and signal boys were in their places. The conning-tower, with its heavily protected sides, was without an occupant. Directly beneath the bridge on the superstructure, just aft and slightly above the forward turret, stood Chaplain Royce. The chaplain and the three doctors were the only persons on board who sincerely hoped they would have no work to do. All others were at their regular stations, directing the gun crews, rushing up ammunition from below or standing patiently in the engine-room, waiting to back or go ahead, as the telegraph signalled.

THE MEN AT THE GUNS.

The way the "jackies" worked at their guns was splendid. Many of them were stripped to the waist. The muscles stood out on their bare, tattooed arms. The penetration ran down their faces, and, mixing with the gunpowder, made grim streaks of black over their skins. When "cease firing" sounded, disappointment was written visibly on all their faces. But the crews were quickly swept, the shrouds rehooked, the guns cooled and washed, and at dinner, when the band played "The Stars and Stripes Forever," there were few signs to show that the flagship New-York had been into action for the first time in her career.

About three hundred shots were fired during the bombardment, 104 of which were from the New-York. The total cost of the bombardment was about \$3,500, expended entirely in ammunition. The cruiser Cincinnati did wonderfully quick and rapid work with her batteries. The monitor Puritan probably fired fewer shots than the others, apparently not using her rapid-fire guns, but taking careful aim with her 12-inch monster at Quintas da Recreo.

To those on board the flagship who had never before been on a warship when she was firing both batteries at once, and who had never heard the shells whistle through the air, the experience was not so bad as was anticipated. The noise of the guns deafened some slightly, but a timely application of wool to the ears deadened its effect considerably. Taken all in all, the shock of the broadsides was not so great as had been expected.

The town of Matanzas at no time was in danger from the fire. It lies well to the south of Punta Gorda. If the Spaniards had any killed it must have been in the fortifications. Several persons on board believe the Spanish loss was severe, and advance more or less plausible theories. Admiral Sampson and Captain Chadwick venture no statements on the subject.

SICK MEN WANTED TO BE IN IT.

The most characteristic incident of the bombardment of Matanzas, and one that will go down in history as an instance of Yankee pluck occurred in the sickbay on the flagship. Sick sailors were lying there, listening to the shots, all eager to get on deck. Suddenly, as if moved by a common impulse, four of them sprang from their cots. One had malaria, two had grip and another a high fever, but their ailments were forgotten as they rushed out to their gun divisions and took their usual stations. Despite their entreaties to be allowed to stay, they were ordered back to the sickbay, to stay, they were sorrowfully returned. It is hardly necessary to say that these four splendid specimens of "the man behind the gun" were not reported for breach of discipline.

GUNBOATS DRIVEN BACK.

It was reported to the flagship on its return to Havana station that two torpedo gunboats had endeavored to run the blockade during the day, and had been forced back into Havana by the Wilmington and the Iowa. A sharp lookout was kept throughout the night lest these tiny craft should try to repeat the attempt. The torpedo-boat Winslow arrived from Key

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West last night, and Major Meade, of the marines, was put on board the flagship. The Winslow proceeded to her station. The night was quiet, and no incident of interest occurred.

BLANCO'S REPORT OF THE FIGHT.

SPANISH LOSS, ONE MILE—AMERICAN INJURY, ONE SMOKESTACK HIT.

Madrid, April 29.—The following is the substance of the official report made by Captain-General Blanco on the bombardment of the forts of Matanzas by ships belonging to Admiral Sampson's squadron on Wednesday:

Three American cruisers fired on the batteries of Fort Morillo, at Matanzas, without doing any damage. We fired fourteen shots, to which the Americans replied with a multitude of mitrailleuse (quick-firing) guns shots, which did not do any injury. The American squadron also fired fourteen cannon shots at the Sabanilla battery, only one mule being killed, to which the Spanish battery only replied with four shots, as the squadron was beyond range.

The whole squadron of five ships then threw several shells into the town, without doing any damage. The French and Austrian Consuls have protested against the bombardment, as it was begun without any previous warning to foreign subjects.

The troops manning the stations are full of fight. It appears that our shots did some damage to the American ships. One funnel was certainly hit.

During the bombardment Colonel Alfaro with a column of troops attacked a rebel band under Benicour at Matanzas, south of Matanzas, capturing their positions and killing twenty men, including two chiefs. A quantity of arms, horses, stores and the insurgent camps were captured. Fifty mounted rebels and a chief, Ajona, surrounded.

In official circles the stories of the bombardment received from the United States are read with shouts of derisive laughter. The newspapers continue their efforts to belittle the United States fleet and its work. The "Imparcial" says:

All the world now knows that America tried to bluff Spain by war threats which she is unable to fulfil. America, on being called, shows a wretchedly weak hand. Its real strength is exactly known—five ironclads, two belted cruisers, three unbelted, the fastest and most powerful cruisers, and twelve other cruisers. All the rest are theatrical suppers.

Continuing, the "Imparcial" says it regrets Daudet did not live to write "Le Tartarin-Yankee Admiral," based on "Sampson's glorious eighteen minutes' bombardment of Matanzas, resulting, as the official dispatches inform us, in the death of a mule."

General Correa, Minister of War, in the Chamber of Deputies today, replying to inquiries for particulars in regard to the bombardment of the forts at Matanzas, said the Government had decided to publish "all the news received, good or bad." Continuing, General Correa told the Deputies that the United States squadron fired sixty projectiles, and that the only victim was a mule, a remark which aroused laughter among the Spaniards. The general next informed the House that the American warships were injured by the fire of the Spanish batteries. He also asserted that the insurgents were acting in conjunction with the United States forces, as they advanced in the direction of Matanzas while the bombardment was proceeding, "but they were completely routed."

In conclusion, General Correa remarked, "It was a glorious day for the Spanish arms."

THEIR SALARIES HELD UP.

Controller Coler has decided to hold up the salaries of all persons appointed to city offices since March 31, on which day Governor Black signed the Brush Civil Service Act, in view of a declaration made by the Civil Service Reform Association. The Brush act provides that the rules of the local Civil Service Commission must be approved by the State Commission before they go into effect. The association has said that the appointments are illegal as the State Commission has not approved the city rules. The few employees affected will get their pay when the question is settled.

TO SAIL FOR EUROPEAN SHORES.

Among those who will sail on the Umbra to-day are Henry White, First Secretary of the United States Embassy to the Court of St. James; Monaghan P. J. McNamara, Mme. Marie Barne, General and Mrs. A. L. Bressler and Mrs. M. S. Lawrence.

On the Kaiser Wilhelm II are, among others, Miss Mary S. Legett, Mrs. Anna Fuller Russell, Mrs. John Townsend Souder and W. H. Wood. On La Normandie are the Count and Countess de Gaillet, H. W. Harper and Raphael Navarro. Among the passengers expected on the incoming Cunard steamer Umbra are Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Wilson, Mrs. Helen Stokes, Mrs. John W. Mackay, Baroness Halkett and Mr. and Mrs. John Glover.

YANKEES AT HOME IN ENGLAND.

From The London Chronicle. Here is a story which Mr. Smalley might at the present moment very well relate to his American correspondents in "The Times." Ever since the war of course, that he lived in London for years, and made many friends here. When he first came he set about looking for a furnished house, and soon he heard of one likely to suit his requirements. The conditions when the owner had laid down for the purchase of the house were provided that the house should not be let to a foreigner. "Well," Mr. Smalley, "what about me?" "In an American," "Nothing could be better," replied the house agent. "An American is never a foreigner in England."

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