

THE BLOCKADERS ARE PASSIVE

BUT THE OPERATIONS CONDUCTED ARE THOROUGHLY EFFECTIVE

Department Officials Do Not Believe an Engagement at Manila Is Imminent, and Are Certain That Bombardment of Atlantic Coast Cities Is Utterly Improbable

ASSOCIATED PRESS SPECIAL WIRE

WASHINGTON, April 27.—The war situation is substantially this: The blockading squadron remains passive before Havana, with no present purpose of bombarding or drawing the fire of the shore batteries. The strategic purpose of an effective blockade of the Cuban capital is being accomplished to the entire satisfaction of the authorities here. There is no indication that a part of the fleet will be withdrawn for the purpose of affecting additional protection to North Atlantic ports.

Off the Philippines

As to the reports of the imminence of a naval battle off the Philippines the naval authorities here seriously doubt whether the Spanish fleet will make a stand against the American ships. Their reason for this belief is that the Spanish fleet is very inferior to the American force under Admiral Dewey. The department, therefore, is satisfied that the Spanish fleet will not go out to do battle on the high sea with Admiral Dewey, but will remain in port to secure the protection of the batteries of Manila, and the department is not expecting an engagement for about two days. Without giving any information for setting this time, the department allows it to be surmised that the estimate is based on the knowledge of Admiral Dewey's whereabouts. There is no certainty that there will be an engagement at all in the immediate future, the main purpose of the American expedition being to seize and hold some suitable Spanish territory in the Philippines as a base of operations in Asiatic waters. It is possible that this can be done without attacking Manila at all, by seizing a suitable port on some adjacent island without fortifications, the sympathies of whose inhabitants are towards the insurgents.

No word had come to the department up to the close of office hours of the arrival of the Montserrat at Cienfuegos. The officials are inclined to believe that if she has got into that port she did so before the blockade of Cienfuegos had begun.

The Spanish Fleet

The very fact that the Madrid officials have rather ostentatiously declared that the Spanish fleet has sailed to bombard the cities on the North American coast is taken as a certain indication at the navy department of the utter impossibility of such a movement. If this were contemplated the Spanish officials would be the very last to make their purpose public.

The navy department, as yet, has made no arrangements for the care of prisoners taken by our warships, but the legal officers of the department think they should be sent to the Boston naval prison.

The Cushing Trouble

Some vexation was felt at the injury sustained by the Cushing. It is said that this is the first serious breakdown she had suffered in the nine years of her service. Likely the navy department will be able to replace her shortly, for President Maister of the Columbian Iron Works, called at the navy department this afternoon to announce that the torpedo boat McKee, a 20-knotter, would be ready for trial tomorrow. She will be sent at once to Norfolk to have the finishing touches added and then will join the squadron.

A Fall Campaign

In the war department there is a growing belief that the campaign proper in Cuba will not be in full swing before next fall, when the rainy season has ended. That belief, however, has not prevented the officers whose duty it is to get the troops together from pushing their work with the greatest energy. Thus within twelve hours after the Hull bill became a law the department was able to begin to send out circulars prescribing the methods to be followed in recruiting the regular army up to its full war strength of sixty thousand men. The enormous amount of work involved in thus increasing the army, regular and volunteer, has caused Gen. Miles to abandon his southern trip for the present.

Department Orders

The officials of the department were overwhelmed today with all sorts of protests and appeals against their action in making the assignment of troops among the volunteer forces, and many changes may be looked for.

The state department posted a notice today stating it has been officially advised of the issuance of neutrality orders by Italy, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway and Sweden, Russia and Colombia.

Neutrality Notices

It is supposed also that official notice of Great Britain's and France's neutrality will be received by tomorrow. Including France and Great Britain, four of the six great powers of Europe have declared the neutrality, namely: Great Britain, Italy, France and Russia. There remains of the great powers Germany and Austria, neither of which have yet acted.

The delay of Austria does not cause surprise, as Austria's sympathy with Spain is more pronounced than that of any other country of Europe. It is not doubted, however, that Austria will assume a neutral attitude sooner or later.

The delay of Germany is felt to be due solely to Germany's consulting her own commercial interests before shaping the exact terms of her neutrality proclamation. From the first Germany and Great Britain have opposed the right of search as detrimental to British and German commerce. Thus far Spain has announced a much more radical doctrine than the United States on this matter. The Spanish order, published in the Official Gazette last Monday, announced the purpose of exercising the right of search of all merchant ships on the high seas.

BEGINNING OF BOMBARDMENT

THE DEFENSES OF MATANZAS SHELLS AND ARE SILENCED

Three U. S. Cruisers Join to Prevent the Completion of Earthworks at Punta Gorda—Shells of the Defenses Fall Short and Not One American Sailor Suffers Injury

SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

NEW YORK, April 27.—The Herald's Key West special says: Admiral Sampson this afternoon bombarded, silenced and pretty well destroyed the Spanish batteries in position and in course of construction at the entrance of the harbor at Matanzas. He did it with the flagship New York, the monitor Puritan and the cruiser Cincinnati.

Not one of the American ships was struck, the Spanish gunners being wild. I have no means of knowing the number of dead and wounded on the Spanish side. It must be considerable. While the New York, Puritan and Cincinnati were reconnoitering in force for the purpose of locating and destroying the formidable defenses being constructed, the flagship was fired on by the batteries on Point Rubal Caya and Point Maya, guarding the entrance to the harbor. The New York instantly replied. The Puritan steamed in behind the New York and engaged the fortifications on Point Maya, while the New York went to starboard, close up to the land, and poured her shells into Rubal Caya. The Cincinnati, which had remained well astern under orders, signaled for permission to engage and received it, and soon was firing her guns at the fortification on the west side of the bay. The batteries fired explosive shells, and most of them fell wide of the mark. One burst just beyond the stern of the New York, and a shrapnel shell exploded above her. It took the three ships 18 minutes to silence the batteries.

Sampson Is Satisfied

ON BOARD THE FLAGSHIP NEW YORK, OFF MATANZAS, April 27, 2 p. m.—(Copyrighted 1898 by the Associated Press.)—The New York, the Puritan and the Cincinnati bombarded the forts at the mouth of Matanzas harbor this afternoon. There were no casualties on our side, but it is believed that the hail of iron which pounded in the forts must have caused loss of life to the Spaniards, though nothing is known definitely.

The engagement commenced at 12:57 and ceased at 1:15.

The object of the attack was to prevent the completion of the earthworks at Punta Gorda. A battery on the eastward arm of the bay opened fire on the flagship and this was also shelled. About twelve 8-inch shells were fired from the eastern forts, but all fell short. About five or six light shells were fired from the half-completed battery. Two of these whizzed over the New York and one fell short. The ships left the bay for the open sea, the object of discovering the whereabouts of the batteries having been accomplished. In the neighborhood of 300 shots were put on board from the three ships at a range of from four thousand to seven thousand yards. Rear Admiral Sampson, when asked if he was satisfied with the result, said: "Yes, I am. I expected to be."

The half-completed Spanish earthworks and battery were apparently blown up by the shells.

All the ships engaged showed excellent marksmanship throughout the engagement, and when they were firing at the shortest range nearly every shell took effect. The forts which were bombarded were on a low-lying point and were considered merely earthworks. They did not make a good target, yet when the big guns were fired at the shortest range portions of the fort could be seen flying in the air at every shot. The flagship returned to Havana and the Puritan and Cincinnati were left on Matanzas station.

No Official Notice

WASHINGTON, April 28.—So far as it has been learned the officials of the administration were not notified of the bombardment of Matanzas this morning. The navy department keeps a full-fledged telegraph office open in the building all night and a confidential officer remains to translate the message as received. There was considerable business done over the wires till the early morning hours, but none of the dispatches were sent either to the White House or to the secretary of the navy.

The Spanish Squadron

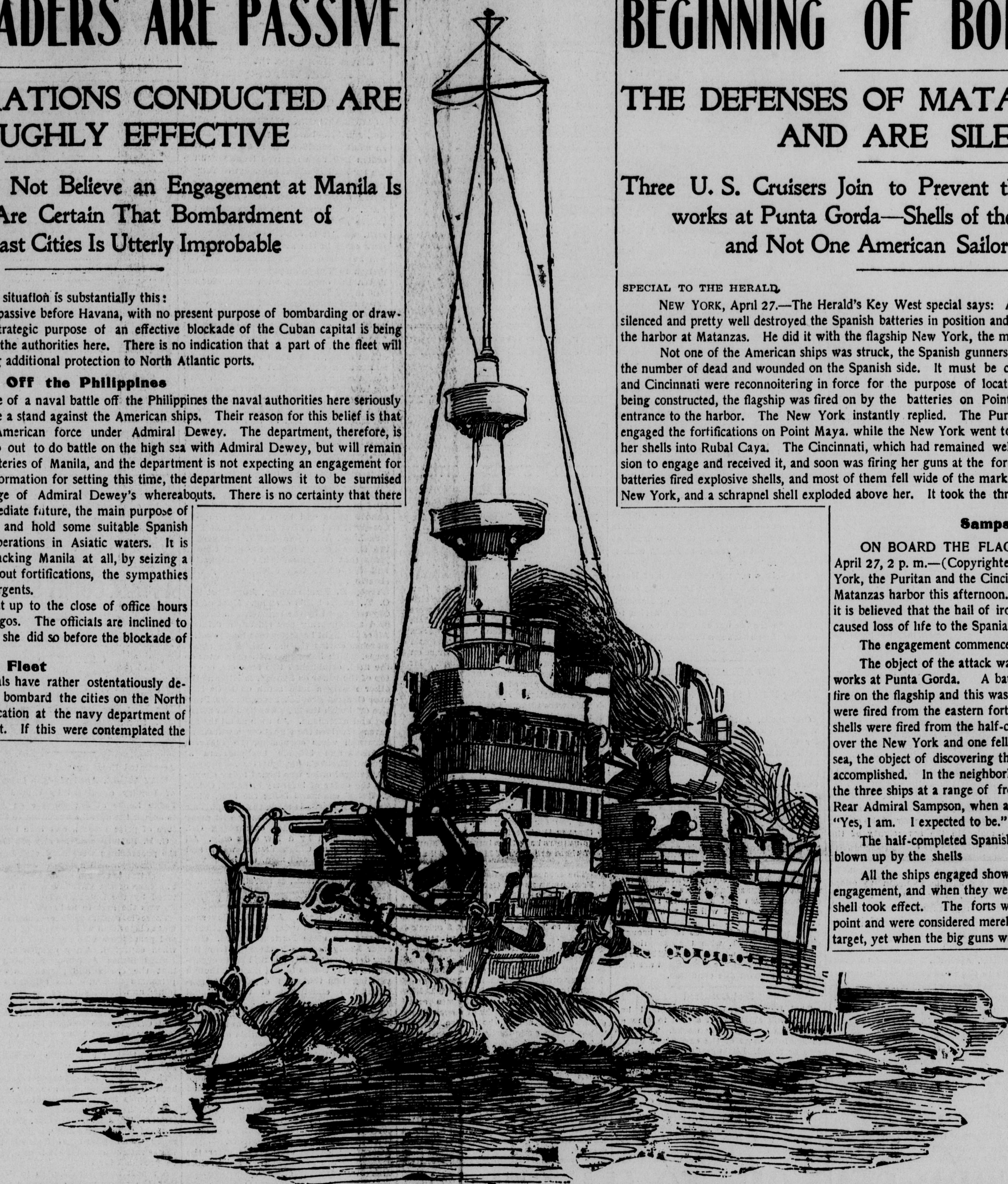
NEW YORK, April 28.—Reports that a Spanish squadron has sailed toward the coast of the United States have nothing to confirm them and the reports seem to have been sent out from Spain to confuse the United States naval authorities. Several Spanish torpedo boats are cruising in the Mediterranean and about the British isles, presumably seeking to capture American merchant vessels. The Teutonic, which arrived here tonight, saw no Spanish warships on the way over, and the American ship Shenandoah has been spoken near the British coast.

A POPULAR LOAN

The Postal Savings Bank Project May Prove to Be an Available Measure

WASHINGTON, April 27.—There was some discussion today in the senate committee on postoffices and post roads of the bill introduced by Senator Chandler to provide for a popular loan through postal savings banks, and the suggestion was made that it might furnish a more acceptable means of raising funds for the war than the bond clause of the house revenue bill. The measure provides for the issuance of postal saving notes of \$50 and \$100, payable to bearer, and bearing 3 per cent interest. A subcommittee was appointed for the consideration of the details of the bill. It was noticeable that all the members of the postoffice committee present, including republicans as well as members of other parties, expressed a desire to avoid a bond issue if possible.

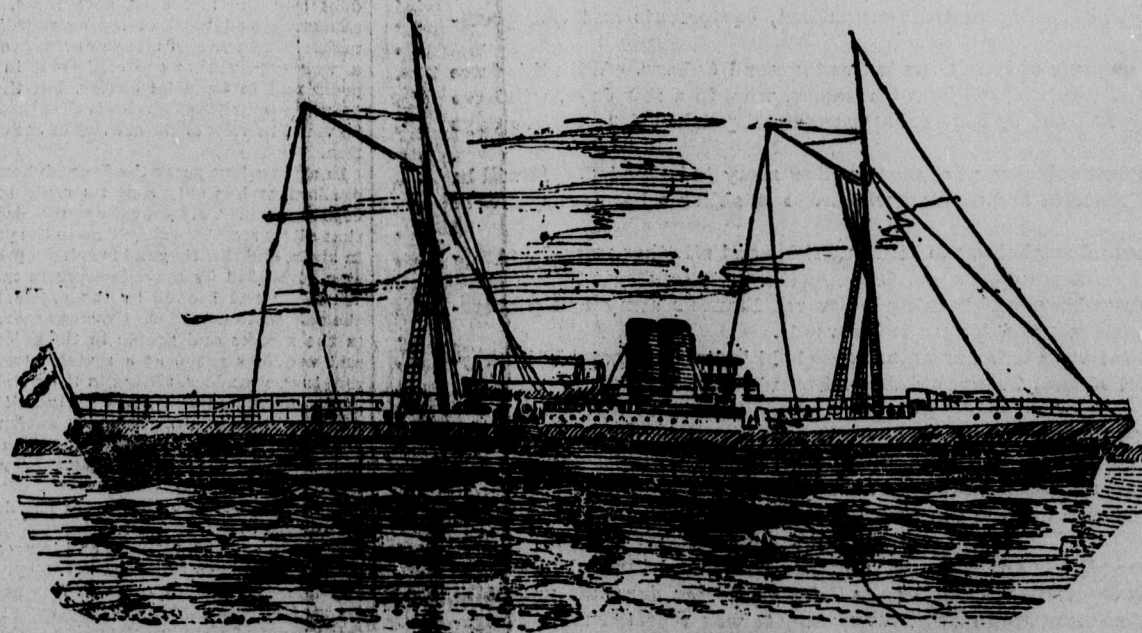
The postal savings bill was also under consideration, and the opinion was expressed that the committee would be able to report upon this measure after one or more meetings.



THE BATTLESHIP OREGON, WHICH MAY MEET THE GUNBOAT TEMERARIO

The War Situation

The most important event of yesterday was the eighteen-minute bombardment of the forts of Punta Gorda, at the mouth of the harbor of Matanzas. The effective and important work was done by the New York, the Puritan and Cincinnati. Matanzas will be made the base of supplies for the invasion of Cuba. News of vital importance may be looked for from the Philippine Islands within the next few hours. The United States fleet which will bombard Manila if necessary and certainly strike a blow at the Spanish fleet, consists of the flagship Olympia, four other cruisers, the gunboat Petrel, a dispatch boat, a storeship and a collier. The Spanish squadron is numerically stronger, consisting of four cruisers, five gunboats and three transports, but is much weaker in armament. It is now rumored that the Spanish squadron at Cape Verde may have been or will be split up to bombard Atlantic seaports and will not attempt to interfere with the invasion of Cuba. The anxiety concerning the Oregon is much allayed. Her captain now knows how to treat the Temerario or any other Spanish vessel he may meet. The Oregon may reach Montevideo today. The Atlantic liner Paris may be expected to reach New York within twenty-four hours.



SPANISH GUNBOAT TEMERARIO