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SCRANTON, FEBRUARY 18, 1898.

If bill for rights had been accorded to Cuba one year or even one month ago, the Maine would be at sea today.

Consequences.

The significance of the explosion of the Maine grows upon reflection. If it shall be proved that the demolition of this great war craft was the work of design the importance of the affair is obvious. In that event demand would be made upon Spain for immediate compensation and indemnity, and the alternative would be war. The administration could not withstand the public opinion which would press it onward along this course. No power on earth could.

But the matter will not be less important if the board of inquiry shall find that the Maine blew up because of causes peculiar to itself. Such a finding would amount to a condemnation of the whole trend of modern naval development. Not only would it fill the minds of every American citizen with suspicion as to the utility of the armored giants of the deep which we have been launching from time to time with so much pride, and tend to check future progress along this line but inevitably the effect must also be to cause the great masses of Europe to view with apprehension their similar investments. To expend vast fortunes and hazard precious lives in warships as dangerous in time of peace as in time of war would become in the light of such a finding a policy of such senseless folly that the enlightened governments of the world would naturally recoil from it by instinctive accord.

It is entirely, therefore, that a commission of inquiry consisting of naval experts whose interests and sympathies are all on the side of naval progress will accept the theory that the Maine was destroyed by accident until the evidence before them shall have made this conclusion irresistible. The American people can afford to await in patience the result of the navy department's investigations and if those shall indicate accident as the cause they will be fully warranted in accepting the verdict unreservedly and dismissing from their minds the last vestige of the suspicion now instinctively directed against Spain.

For the sake of the new navy, Cuba and several other things there are those who hope the Spanish will be found guilty.

The Proper Spirit.

Senator Morgan, of Alabama, is the recognized dean of the jingo fraternity in congress, but for all that we like his pluck. This was what he said six hours after the word had come from Havana of the Maine's destruction: "Whether the calamity was due to accident or treachery, I should like to see introduced in congress today a joint resolution providing for the immediate construction of two battleships equal in size and equipment to the Maine, and costing not a dollar less than the ill-fated Maine cost. That resolution I would have passed by both branches of congress today. Such a response as that to last night's calamity in the harbor of Havana, whether it was due to accident or treachery, is the one to make in the circumstances. One of these vessels should be constructed on the Atlantic and the other on the Pacific coast, and there should not be the slightest delay in their building. Action of that kind by us would indicate to the world that whenever or wherever one of our battleships was cut off two would at once grow in its place." Talk like this may prove offensive to some, but only because they who object to it lack national spirit. If congress had shown this spirit earlier in the proceedings we should now have a navy which would not be seriously weakened by the loss of one ship under circumstances of peculiar humiliation.

If any ship had to go better the Maine than another. The records show that it has been a trouble-maker since the day it was launched.

True and False Economy.

Recent and pending complications with foreign powers, not perhaps carrying the immediate menace of war but certainly bringing into unusual prominence the possibility of war between this country and a European power, have lately added impetus to the public demand for better coast fortification. This demand proceeds from no silly eagerness for war, but is rather the expression of the conservative and peace-loving citizenship of the nation. In all respects akin to the feeling which impels the thoughtful household, upon retiring at night, to lock up his valuables and bolt the outer doors.

Some years ago a commission of experts, known as the Endicott board, after careful study, outlined a plan of coast fortification and seaboard defense which has served consequently as the ideal of those statesmen who have possessed the wisdom to appreciate the necessity for this kind of national life and property insurance. A considerable beginning has been made toward the gradual adoption of this plan when the present national house of representatives reached the consideration, a fortnight ago, of the fortifications appropriation bill. It had been the intention to build these fortifications on the installment system, running through a series of years, so as not to concentrate an unwieldy burden in any one year. With this purpose in view the last congress appropriated within a small percentage of what the war department had asked for. This year, responding at the wrong place to the necessity for economy, the house voted less than one-third of the sum asked for in the estimate. These had contemplated \$15,000,000. The house voted a fraction over \$4,000,000.

The senate, with far superior wisdom and with a truer appreciation of

values, on Wednesday increased the house appropriation to \$9,000,000, this being substantially the same sum voted for last year. In the debate which preceded this vote in the senate the subject of coast fortifications was discussed with a breadth of view and a show of real interest in the public welfare noticeable for their almost total absence from the earlier discussion in the house. Senators from the far west joined with the senators from the eastern seaboard, and these in turn were reinforced by senators from the non-exposed interior states, in urging a statesmanlike protection of the great coast cities from sudden attack in the event of war. The sentiment of the senate, a sentiment virtually unanimous, was well expressed by Senator Teller, who did not believe the United States was going to have any war and who would not have the nation carry a ship on its shoulder, but who recognized that a great war among the European nations seemed not far off and who, in any event, wanted his own country to be put and kept in condition to take care of itself.

If this plain bit of common sense shall receive due attention the house will accept the senate amendment and a pressing duty will not be put off.

The sacrifice of a \$5,000,000 warship, counting equipment, and the loss of the lives of more than 250 brave men is a big price to pay for the sympathy of Europe; but maybe it will prove cheap in the end. There is now no land in the intelligent part of Europe which would not at least in sympathy be at our command in case the United States government should feel called upon in vindication of humanity and of its own honor to take a fall out of Spain.

Prince or Pauper—Which?

One of the already noticeable consequences of the animated state of Pennsylvania Republican politics at this time has been a boom in the boiler plate industry. The boiler plate industry, as may explain, is that industry which supplies to economical newspapers, ready-made reading matter measured by the yard. Politically, this supply is rationed to the beneficiary's order and then distributed free among editors who can be induced to take it, the hope being thus to influence public opinion. This species of bunco business may influence a certain kind of public opinion, but rarely does it influence in the way desired that portion of the public whose opinion is of any particular consequence. Its effectiveness even among fools is doubtless doomed to gradual extinction by reason of the fact that even fools are liable in course of time to learn to distrust those who make a practice of fooling them.

A brief time ago the boiler plate industry was held under virtual monopoly by the indefatigable boomers of Colonel William A. Stone. They had the benefit of the mailing lists of the Republican state committee; they included among their number some of the more prominent officers and members of that committee, whose identification with the boiler plate bureau tended at the outset to give it dignity and tone; and they flooded the state with hand-me-down literature lauding the unrivalled virtues of the gentleman from Allegheny and deftly applying the sand bag to such of his fellow citizens as had the hardihood to aspire to compete with him for the gubernatorial nomination. The Stone boiler plate department, in other words, ran along joyfully and exuberantly for quite a time, without a rival in sight.

But now, alas, its sway is to be disputed. A Richmond has appeared in its field. In the Wilkes-Barre Times of recent date, in a boiler plate special dated Harrisburg, we read: "No man in the state, rich or poor, will be deceived by the cry that opposition to Quay and his gang of bosses is composed of millionaires. There wasn't a man at the house meeting which invited John Wanamaker to become a candidate for governor that was worth a million, or a half a million, or a quarter of a million of dollars. It was composed of farmers, merchants, lawyers, doctors and editors. It all becomes Senator Quay's friends to the cry that millionaires are behind the movement to crush his power. No man interested in fighting Quayism owns a \$5,000 residence in Allegheny county; another fine residence in Beaver county; a mansion in Washington, a 200 acre farm in Lancaster county, another big farm in Chester county and a plantation in Florida. And Quay owns all of these; has bought them within the past twenty years, and out of a salary of \$5,000 a year! The fight this year is against millionaires Quay and the corporations which have always helped him to maintain his grip on the state. It is really the fight of the people against the millionaires."

There is more to the same effect, but this specimen quotation suffices to bring out our point. Brother Wanamaker's coy silence of the past fortnight is now explained. He has quietly been naming a coup d'etat. While his literary lieutenant, Senator Kauffmann, has been rigging up and re-selling the old boiler-plate mill, the crafty merchant prince has been disposing of his millions to charity in order to hop into a poor man's fight against the pampered and the plutocratic Quay. Swiftly have conditions changed. A year ago it was Wanamaker who wore the broadcloth and Quay who donned the blouse.

If Quay is now a bloated child of mammon we hope he knows it.

The total loss to the government as a result of the disaster at Havana is officially announced to be \$1,089,251. This embraces the cost of hull, machinery, equipment, armor, gun protection and armament, both in main and secondary batteries. It includes the cost of ammunition, shells, coal, current supplies, and in short, the whole outfit.—Washington dispatch in the Sun.

If it shall become necessary to collect compensation from Spain it will be wise to add a few millions in the form of exemplary damages.

Russia has just contracted with the Carnegies for armor plates at \$525 a ton, which is \$125 more than the Carnegies offered to charge the United States. But, then, Russia means business.

It is pointed out by advocates of the accident theory that the Maine's case had had parallels. In 1885, the United States man-of-war Missouri, then lying at Gibraltar, was totally wrecked by the explosion of her magazine. Another case famous in naval history is that of Her Majesty's ship Doterel. In 1857 she was lying at an-

chor off Punta Arenas, in the Straits of Magellan. An explosion wiped the ship from the face of the waters, and left almost none of her crew alive. But since those days ship construction has materially improved. It ought not now to be considered plausible that our naval officials should have failed to take lessons from these sad examples.

President Compers' refusal to meet Judge Woodward will not break the latter's heart.

Opinions on the Loss of the Maine.

Philadelphia Press: "Disasters like that of the Maine are inevitable if a nation multiplies its fleet of modern warships with their iron armor, their great guns, their electric machinery, their explosive, combustible, and the chance and hazard of fire from every conceivable cause. The annals of these great vessels in every navy during the twenty short years in which they have been in use are flecked with the record of small casualties and minor accidents, which have brought ship after ship under all flags to the very edge of disastrous explosion. With these facts and this record, under every ensign and in every navy, it behooves the public to face this terrible blow to the self-respect, pride and the prestige of the nation with calm and suspended judgment. Time and inquiry will tell the cause of this irreparable loss of ship and of that irrefragable confidence which long freedom from accident breeds, and until time and inquiry have told it is the duty of every citizen to realize what it may, to face the disaster, to realize its importance, to learn its lesson as it develops and to have neither criticism nor condemnation, neither censure nor recrimination, until all is known. This is not a time for theory or suspicion, for suggestion of treachery without or of carelessness, neither for clamor, nor resolute readiness to wait on events, to learn from them, and even out of this crushing blow to forge and perfect new strength and defense for the old flag."

Some Reflections.

Philadelphia Inquirer: "The thought cannot be evaded that these modern naval monsters, covered with the heaviest armor and armed with great guns, may not be such defensible floating forts, after all. Who knows what would happen if one of them should ever be struck in an engagement by a ball from the enemy? If an explosion from within can hopelessly wreck a battleship what would an explosion from without do to the bursting of dynamite on deck accomplish? Talk of war! It would be a wholesale massacre. Out on the plains and on the border in the olden days it was the man who got the drop on his victim that lived to tell of the event. May it not be that when two immense fighting vessels, despite all their armor, are engaged in a close action, open fire upon each other it will be the one that gets in the first shot that will survive? If over a great battle should be fought all our modern theories will not be smashed into smithereens by the result. There is another thought, too. May it not also be that in the continued invention of high explosive materials, nothing can stand all nations will in the end find the way to peace? When the annihilation of all concerned must be the result of the war between nations will not be apt to meet each other, either in the field or on the water?"

Dangerous in War and Peace.

Philadelphia Times: "No one knows very clearly what would happen to a modern battleship if it ever got into battle, but it has repeatedly been shown to be a very dangerous thing in time of peace. The British have already lost two or three great armored ships that apparently went down from sheer inability to keep aloft in the wake of the Victoria by collision with the Camperdown at Tripoli four or five years ago, when some 350 lives were lost, is recalled to memory by this mysterious affair in the harbor of Havana. The Peruvian, it will also be remembered, lost their best warship and the Chileans two of theirs, during the war between those countries, without the exchange of a shot, and as armor and armament alike increase, the existence of these great fighting machines seems to grow constantly more precarious."

Hard to Understand.

Scranton Post: "It is hard to understand how it is a comparatively new vessel, when every precaution for safety is taken, an accident of this kind could have occurred, and it is equally difficult to understand how it is that the attack at night and place a torpedo against the ship. The officers of the Maine knew that their ship was in an unfriendly port. They knew that almost the same precautions would have to be taken against surprise or treachery as would be necessary in time of war. It is impossible to believe that the vessel was not so faithfully guarded that an enemy could approach at night without being discovered and halted long before any damage could be done."

The Nation's Dead.

New York Sun: "The men of the Maine who lost their lives in Havana harbor are not lost to the nation's dead, and not the less died they for the flag, than if they had died in battle. The honors of war to them, to their families and dependents the abundant provisions which a nation's gratitude will promptly make, and over their graves Old Glory."

Will Respond as One Man.

Washington Star: "For the present there is deep universal sympathy in this country for the families of the men who were killed in Havana harbor and for the mutilated survivors of the disaster. As for the future, no one can predict. The whole public awaits the truth from Havana with a anxious expectation that is intense. If there is cause in the situation for any other national sentiment than that of grief the people will respond as one man."

Philadelphia Record: "It is scarcely worth while to notice the imputations of Spanish treachery except to denounce them as unworthy suggestions of dishonest or deformed minds. There are scores of possible explanations, each of which would seem more reasonable than the base insinuations against the nation whose hostility our naval representatives were enjoying, and whose seamen contended to be rescued of their American comrades in time."

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