AN OUTSIDE EXPLOSION WRECKED THE MAINE

EVIDENCE OF TREACHERY IS CONCLUSIVE

OFFICIALS NOW ALMOST CONCEDE IT

Grave Fear Spain Will Not Be Able to Punish the Guilty.

Upon the Strength of the Sagasta Ministry Will Depend the Congregated of War Between the Two Nations.

Havana, Feb. 23.—There is now little doubt that the report of the board of inquiry investigating the cause of the wreck of the Maine will be to the effect that the prime cause of the explosion was a submarine mine or torpedo dropped under her keel.

The board can hardly come to any other decision from the evidence that will be placed before it. The unofficial testimony of those officers who gave it as their opinion that the Maine had been sunk by a submarine mine was the main cause for the expedition had caused the explosion of the forward magazine has been borne out by the reports of the divers from the first day they went down into the forward part of the ship.

Operations yesterday were conducted under improved conditions and the evidence gathered was more convincing. Of course, the deliberations of the board of inquiry are in absolute secrecy, but I am in a position to say that they yesterday obtained the most important evidence.

Among other things found at the bottom of the harbor were several cases of powder, perfectly intact. Had the explosion first occurred in either of the forward magazines every grain of powder, it is argued, would have disappeared, but if the explosion first came from the outside the cases might easily wash out without exploding.

Besides powder cases the board may have other evidence. It is impossible to say just what evidence they do obtain, for the Spanish officials are constantly at the wreck and jealously watch what the divers may bring up and eagerly hear what they have to say.

The divers, however, make all their reports on board the Fern, and all suspicious finds are merely located and not brought to the surface.

At the bottom of the harbor they are waist deep in mud and searching is slow work. There is only one diver's lamp at present available. The men at the bow of the Maine used this yesterday. He was below fully three hours in the afternoon. Part of that time was spent in examining the hull of the ship. The investigations are being watched here with great interest, and in some quarters with alarm. The

The United States Lighthouse Tender Mangrove, on Board of Which the Maine Board of Inquiry is Conducting Its Investigations in Havana Harbor.

Rep. W. T. T. Clark of the House of Representatives has received a letter from Com. C. P. P. Prout, of the Maine, stating that the officers of the ship are not inclined to give up a court-martial, and that they believe that the court will find the cause of the explosion to be something which has never happened before.

The Maine was commissioned under a court of inquiry, and the court will have to find that there was no act of treachery. The only act of treachery which the court can find will be an act of murder, and it is impossible to believe that the court will be able to find that the cause of the explosion was an act of murder.

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