

GET READY TO ACT

Unusual Warlike Activity is Shown at Washington.

OFFICERS ARE ASSIGNED TO COMMAND

Admiral Sigsbee Retires and Captain Sampson Succeeds Him.

FIGHTING BOB EVANS TAKES THE IOWA

Spanish Torpedo Flotilla Leaves the Canaries.

THIS ACTION MAY HASTEN A CONFLICT

Cabinet Officers Hold Important Conferences with the President, and a Protest May Be Sent to Spain.

WASHINGTON, March 24.—The last day before the arrival of the report of the Maine court of inquiry was one of unexampled activity in all official quarters.

Advices came early that the Spanish torpedo flotilla had sailed from the Canaries for Porto Rico and from this moment the most energetic warlike measures followed on another in constant succession.

The movement of this fleet has been watched with the keenest interest, as it was felt to involve serious possibilities which might compel the United States government to protest against the movement as of a hostile character.

Immediately on the receipt of the official dispatch from one of our naval attaches abroad, briefly announcing the sailing of the fleet, and an earnest conference was held between him and Secretary Long and Assistant Secretary Roosevelt.

The seriousness of the movement was fully considered and the president was advised that naval strategists regarded it as essential that this torpedo fleet should not be allowed to reach western waters.

What, if any, conclusion was reached is not known.

Later in the day the Spanish minister, Senor Pats y Bermejo, called at the State Department and spent some time with Judge Day.

It was naturally inferred that the approach of the Spanish flotilla was one of the subjects referred to.

Whether there was any suggestion against the move was not disclosed by Judge Day or the Spanish minister.

Both of whom maintained the strictest reticence regarding the conference and refused to speak concerning it.

SIGSBEE IS RETIRED.

Following the flotilla announcement important news followed rapidly.

The first was the announcement by Secretary Long indicating the placing of our squadron and fleet on a war footing.

Admiral Sigsbee has been granted leave, very much to the regret of the Navy department, and altogether on account of his health.

Captain Sampson has been made commander of the fleet at Key West.

The orders to the squadron in Hampton Roads have not yet been issued.

Captain Sampson, who now assumes command of the North Atlantic squadron, is regarded as one of the best equipped officers in the navy.

Having seen active service during the civil war and since then having occupied many important positions.

He is a high authority on naval ordnance, and before taking command of the Iowa was chief of the bureau of ordnance of the Navy department.

He is between 50 and 60 years of age, a student of naval affairs, of genial temperament and is considered an officer of exceptional executive ability.

The retirement of Admiral Sigsbee has the effect of raising Captain Sampson to the rank of commodore.

He is a native of New York, entered the service in September, 1857, and has been over forty years in active service, nearly fourteen of which were spent on the sea.

He concluded his last cruise in 1892, since which time he has served as chief of the bureau of ordnance up to the time of his assignment to the command of the Iowa.

Hardly less important than the assignment of Captain Sampson was the practical determination to place Commodore W. S. Schley in command of the fleet now assembling at Hampton Roads.

ON THE YELLOW KID'S TRAIL

Running Down a Sensational Rumor About Maine Disaster.

STORY SHOWN TO BE VERY WILD FAKE

Report that Spanish Diver Killed a Mine and Was Afterwards Planted in Shows Up as False.

CALL ON THE PRESIDENT.

Throughout the day the White House presented an animated appearance.

Senators and representatives from both political parties called to confer with the president.

Among the callers were: Senators Cullom, Fairbanks, Lodge, Aldrich, Jones (Ark.) and Spooner, and Representative Bailey, the democratic floor leader in the house.

The president said to several of his visitors today in discussing the situation that he would do everything consistent with the honor and dignity of the country to avert war, and he still believed war would be averted.

He also said he was anxious for peace as we are, but at the same time he did not hesitate to admit the gravity of the situation.

The president frankly acknowledges that he believes the report of the board of inquiry will find that the Maine was blown up from the outside.

His program has been definitely decided. It is his purpose to treat the blowing up of the Maine as an incident.

He will call the board to order on Monday with a very brief message relating to the events leading up to that point and informing congress that the facts contained in the report have been cabled to Madrid to be laid before the Spanish government by Minister Woodford.

No demand will be made upon Spain, but the laying of the facts before the Spanish government will be an equivalent to calling on Spain for an explanation and such action as it may deem proper.

It is the purpose of the house leaders to refer the report and message to the committee on foreign affairs without debate.

To this purpose, it is believed, the democrats of the house have acquiesced, reserving the right to demand action if the report from the committee is too long deprecating the Spanish government.

Much will then depend on Spain's response, but there are those close to the president who believe that by the time the report is sent to congress it will drop out as a factor in the situation.

CALL FOR INTERVENTION.

The second part of the president's program reached the main question and involves intervention on humanitarian grounds within a week or ten days after the report of the board goes to congress.

It will be to relieve the starvation in Cuba and upon Spain's acquiescence in or objection to this act will depend peace or war.

A prominent member of the house said today that in his opinion the next two weeks would determine what it would be.

Such information as exists here leads those close to the president to believe that the Spanish government will go to any length it dares to prevent war.

It is especially anxious to prevent war and it is believed the ministry will go just as far as it can without jeopardizing its own existence and survival of the present Spanish dynasty.

The Navy department was advised today of the sailing of the monitor Terror from New York to Key West, the arrival of the Texas at Hampton Roads, the Puritan at Newport News and of the monitors Monitor, Albatross and Monterey at San Francisco.

The battleship Texas came up from Key West, making an exceptionally quick run for a vessel of its class.

The Spanish authorities here have been informed that some time ago Captain Sigbee asked permission to use dynamite in the destruction of the Maine. This was refused by Captain General Blanco, for the reason, it is explained, that there are even now in the harbor of the Maine was blown up from external causes.

Spanish authorities do not want the wreck destroyed, as it affords all the evidence obtainable as to the actual cause of the disaster.

MASON WOULD FIGHT.

Senator Mason of Illinois was at the Navy department during the morning and was the first to learn that the Spanish torpedo flotilla has left the Canaries.

He talked with the officers on this move, and later, when asked what he thought of this action by Spain, said:

"It means that they are coming to this side either to fight the insurgents or to fight us. The insurgents are in the mountains and the torpedo boats will hardly be used to fight them, unless they succeed in putting wings on them. That seems to me the first and only purpose of their coming. I do not know what the naval authorities intend to do about this move, but if I had my way, I would send the Iowa back to Key West."

Secretary Long had a busy morning. Aside from seeing the president, he saw Senators Hawley, Lodge and many other public men.

His knowledge of the purchase of a torpedo boat in Germany. It was reported that this purchase had been closed yesterday, but the fact is not known to the Navy department.

The Navy department is informed of the departure of the cruiser Cincinnati and the gunboats Castine and Wilmington from Port Antonio, Jamaica, last evening, but officials decline to say where they are bound.

It has been reported that they have just gone off on a short cruise and will return to the Jamaica port.

OBJECTS TO DESTROYING MAINE.

Spain is Very Emphatic Against Such a Course.

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The party was met at the steps of the car by Lieutenant Ward of the Navy department, the sole representative of Secretary Long. He informed Commander Marix that the secretary would not receive the report tonight, and gathering the tired travelers under his protecting wing made for the hack stand through the rapidly thickening crowd which, balked of its prey at the gate, had swarmed out over the pavement to get a glimpse of the outside of the much heralded wreck.

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