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THE SINKING OF THE BATTLESHIP TEXAS.

That most unlucky of all the ships of our navy, the Texas, has added one more accident to the long list which lies to her credit by going to the bottom as she lay at her moorings at the Brooklyn Navy Yard last week.

As far as can be learned at this early stage of the inquiry, it looks as though the accident was due to an attempt to make repairs upon the ship's starboard injection valve while she was afloat. The injection valve controls the admission of sea water to the condensers, and is situated near the entrance of a pipe, which pierces the ship's bottom, and conducts water directly from the sea to the condensers. It appears that this apparatus was being overhauled, and that a temporary valve had been put in with a view to enabling the repairs to be made without placing the Texas in dry dock.

The valve by which the main injection pipe is closed is operated by a screw which works in a stout yoke. It appears to have been this yoke which parted and allowed the sea water to flow in through the 13 inch pipe, with the result that the engine room and stokehold were flooded, the water gaining so rapidly that the Texas sank until she rested upon the mud at the bottom of the East River. That she did not disappear altogether is due to the fact that there was not sufficient depth of water at this point to cover her; had the accident happened in deeper water, this battleship would now be out of sight, possibly for good.

The accident has created quite a sensation, and it is being freely asked what is the value of watertight compartments and the powerful pumping machinery of our warships if a paltry 13 inch hole can send them to the bottom in a sheltered navy yard. The accident happened in the early morning, and it will probably transpire that the watertight doors were open and that the water rose to the furnaces and put them out before any effective pumping could be attempted. It is customary to keep these doors open in harbor, and especially in dock, when repairs are under way, as a matter of convenience; but we think that in view of the very critical nature of the repairs which were under way, prudence would have suggested the closing of all doors leading into the starboard engine room, into which the disabled injection valves opened.

This accident teaches the same lesson as the melancholy loss of the British battleship Victoria. In the subsequent inquiry it was shown that when she was rammed by the Camperdown her watertight doors were open, and it is now generally agreed that had they been closed this noble ship might be afloat to-day. The evidence showed that during peace maneuvers, it was customary for convenience to leave them open.

These modern battleships are as intricate and as delicate as they are ponderous and costly. All the elaborate precautions of minute subdivision, bulkheads, and powerful pumping machinery is after all dependent upon the "human element" for its efficiency. It may surely be laid down as a general rule that, no matter where a battleship may be, whether in storm or calm, at sea or in dock, watertight doors are fulfilling their function only when they are closed; that this should be their normal position—the rule and not the exception.

Looked at in any light the mishap is a most deplorable occurrence, and coming as the crowning trouble in a long list of casualties it is liable to shake the confidence of the people at large in the Navy Department just at a time when it should be confirmed. It is just a piece of the sheerest good luck that that one of the most costly ships in the navy is not now lying at the bottom of the sea, lost beyond recovery. Had the Texas sunk a few feet-out in the river, or off Staten Island, or in any locality where the water was deep enough to have covered her protective deck, she would, in all probability, have proved a total loss. Had the accident occurred at sea, and at night, it is more than likely that three or four hundred souls would have gone down with the ship. That the Texas is still afloat is due to the fact that the water in which she sank was not deep enough to cover the top of the watertight bulkheads, and consequently it was possible to pump her out.

What with the mishap to the Columbia at the Southampton dry dock, when she came near having her back broken, the recent collapse of the Brooklyn dry dock, and now the sinking of the Texas, the recent record of the Navy Department has not been such as to bring to it much credit or strengthen the confidence of the public in its efficiency. The wretched mishap which is now the subject of inquiry might easily have involved the loss of a whole ship's company and done irreparable damage to the prestige of the navy, and it is earnestly to be hoped that the whole matter will be thoroughly ventilated and the blame placed where it rightly belongs.

THE CLOSE OF THE VENEZUELAN DIFFICULTY.

The cause of civilization has won a bloodless victory in the agreement which has recently been reached by the governments of the United States and Great Britain on the Venezuelan question. That the result was anticipated robs it of none of its value or significance.

It is but a few months since the two greatest nations upon earth, who claim to be the exponents of all that is best in modern civilization, were confronting each other almost with hand upon the sword-hilt. There was discernible an ill-suppressed exultation among those nations which are as yet under the thralldom of despotic power at the bare suggestion of a struggle to the death between the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race, which, under systems of government that differ chiefly in name, have proved that the freedom of the individual and the sovereignty of the people are the true secret of national wealth, power, and contentment. The mere thought of war made two things apparent, namely, that it would have been the most awful conflict in the history of mankind, both for its intrinsic horrors and for its irreparable loss; and that the cause of civilization would have been thrown back half a century.

But it was not to be. The spread of education, the broadening of international sympathies, enlightened views of the true relations of peoples and nationalities to one another, and above all the increasing control of passion by reason in the individual, are responsible for the present amicable settlement of the difficulty. "Peace hath her victories as well as war," and no triumph of arms, however brilliant, could have shed the glory upon either nation which is cast upon them collectively in the hour of their mutual forbearance.

The first definite announcement of the event came from Lord Salisbury at the banquet attending the installation of the Lord Mayor of London; an occasion on which the Prime Minister is always expected to make important announcements of a political nature. He said: "You are aware that in the discussion had with the United States on behalf of their friends in Venezuela, our question has not been whether there should be arbitration, but whether arbitration should have unrestricted application, and we have always claimed that those who, apart from historic right, had the right which attaches to established settlements should be excluded from arbitration. Our difficulty for months has been to define the settled districts, and the solution has, I think, come from the government of the United States, that we should treat our colonial empire as we treat individuals; that the same lapse of time which protects the latter in civic life from having their title questioned should similarly protect an English colony, but beyond that, when a lapse could not be claimed, there should be an examination of title and all the equity demanded in regard thereto should be granted."

"I do not believe I am using unduly sanguine words when I declare my belief that this has brought the controversy to an end."

It will thus be seen that the compromise secures a broad recognition of the vital principles contended for by each nation. The jealous care with which Great Britain guards the person and property of the meanest of her subjects is abundantly vindicated and is allowed to extend itself to every subject who can justly lay claim to it in the present case; while the rights of the United States under the Monroe doctrine as defined by the present administration in the case of Venezuela are acknowledged by Great Britain. The Venezuelan incident is practically closed, and closed in a common sense and harmonious way. The abiding effect will be beneficial to both parties, and will lead, it is hoped, to "arbitration" as the only civilized method of settling the household quarrels of the two great branches of the one great race.

Indiana as an Oil Field.

More than 2,700 oil wells were bored in Indiana in 1895, and hopeful, well informed men expect that enormous total will be surpassed in 1896. The oil industry of Indiana is coming to be one of the greatest in the State, and it is confidently predicted in some quarters that the State will soon rank with Pennsylvania and Ohio in the quantity of oil annually taken out of the ground. Last year was the first in the history of Indiana's oil industry that no serious accidents or explosions occurred.

The main oil field of Indiana borders on the north-west extension of the gas belt. It has the form of a huge L, extending east from Van Buren Township, Grant County, to Geneva, Adams County, and south from Geneva to Winchester, Randolph County. The first venture made for oil in the State was on the J. J. Clark farm, in Crawford County, in 1862-63. Oil and water were encountered in this well at the depth of 648 feet. In the Miffin well, drilled in 1865, some oil was found at the depth of 135 feet.

A writer in the Indianapolis Journal holds that the Indiana field is only an infant. He looks for a remarkable development within the next few years. While 2,711 wells were completed, only 754 went dry in the year just passed.