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THE OFFICIAL REPORT OF THE "MAINE" DISASTER.

It is not within the province of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN to discuss the political aspects of the problem which confronts this country with regard to Cuba. It is not for us to determine whether the present condition of this unhappy island, blighted as it is by all the miseries of a two years' war, can be considered as affording a casus belli between ourselves and Spain.

The blowing up of the battleship "Maine," however, presents a problem of an entirely different complexion—one that has touched the nation to the quick. How deeply we have felt the loss, and appreciate the terrible circumstances attending it, is shown by the significant, the portentous, calmness and self-restraint with which the situation has been endured.

The report of the Naval Court was made public by the President without a word of comment on Monday, March 28, and with regret we have to say that the worst fears have been realized and the suspicion that the "Maine" was destroyed by a submarine mine is fully confirmed.

The summary of the official report has been published in the daily press and is already widely known. On another page we reproduce the most important drawings which accompany the report, by studying which the present condition of the wreck will be made perfectly clear to our readers.

The appearance of the wreck, as indicated by the drawings, proves not only that the ship was wrecked by explosives placed beneath her, but that the mine must have been of vast size and power. No automobile torpedo could have blown the central portion of the hull out of existence and forced the keel at frame 18 right up through the body of the ship through a vertical distance of thirty-four feet.

The scale on which the scheme of destruction was carried out was too elaborate for execution by private individuals, and it is unlikely, on account of the risk to general shipping, that the mine was left to be exploded by being struck by a moving vessel. The "Maine," lying at anchor, would swing about with change of tide over an arc some 700 feet in diameter.

The authors of this horrible catastrophe are unknown. In all probability the solution of the question will ever remain a mystery. It seems, however, impossible that a mine containing many hundred pounds of guncotton or similar explosive could have been placed under the vessel after she was anchored there.

It does not seem to us that indemnity for the loss of the "Maine" would be an improper course for us to take. It is certain, however, that whatever form of indemnity may be determined upon, it must include the ultimate independence of the island of Cuba. We

speak of indemnity, not because we feel that the loss of the poor fellows on the ill-fated battleship is one which can be determined in cold dollars and cents; not because we feel that a punitive award would repay us for the loss of the noble vessel under such circumstances; not because it is possible that an affair in which one's honor is involved can be treated as a commercial contract, but because this is the end of the nineteenth century and the time has been reached when differences, no matter how great their gravity, arising between nations as between individuals should be settled in some other manner than by force of arms.

A "QUEER" PATENT BILL.

At this season of the year Congress is usually deluged with a mass of patent bills, which, as a rule, are a mixture of good and evil. Some of them are drawn in entire ignorance of the aims, purposes or working of our patent system. Some of them are introduced to advance the peculiar theories of some enthusiast or to promote the particular interests of some locality.

One of the bills that falls within one or the other of the kinds of legislation referred to above is H. R. 5764, introduced by Mr. Reeves. This bill provides that any one may manufacture, sell and use a patented invention upon obtaining permission so to do from the Commissioner of Patents. The inventor is required, before the issue of the patent, to file a sworn statement of the estimated cost of manufacture "under favorable circumstances, and with proper machinery."