

THE BATTLE OF SANTIAGO

Captain Robert D. Evans, USS IOWA

USS IOWA, First Rate, Off Santiago de Cuba, 4 July 1898

I have the honor to make the following report of the engagement with the Spanish squadron off Santiago de Cuba on the 3^d of July.

On the morning of the 3^d, while the crew was at quarters for Sunday inspection, the leading vessel of the Spanish squadron was sighted at 9:31 coming out of the harbor of Santiago. Signal, "Enemy's ships coming out," was immediately hoisted, and a gun fired to attract attention. The call to general quarters was sounded immediately, the battery made ready for firing and the engines rung full speed ahead.

The position of this vessel at the time of sighting the squadron was the usual blockading station off the entrance of the harbor; Morro Castle bearing abs. north, and distant about three to four miles. The steam at this time in the boilers was sufficient for a speed of five knots.

After sighting the leading vessel, the *INFANTA MARIA TERESA*, it was observed that she was followed in succession by the remaining three vessels of the Spanish squadron, the *VIZCAYA*, *CRISTOBAL COLON* and *ALMIRANTE OQUENDO*.

Immediately upon sighting the leading vessel fires were spread, and the IOWA headed toward the leading Spanish ship. About 9:40 the first shot was fired from this ship at a distance of about 6,000 yards. The course of this vessel was so laid that the range speedily diminished. A number of shots were fired at ranges varying between 6,000 and 4,000 yards. The range was rapidly reduced to 2,500 yards, and subsequently to 2,000 and 1,200 yards.

About 10 o'clock the enemy's torpedo boat destroyers *FUROR* and *PLUTON* were observed to have left the harbor and to be following the Spanish squadron. At the time that they were observed, and in fact most of the time that they were under fire, they were at a distance varying from 4,500 to 4,000 yards. As soon as they were discovered the secondary battery of this ship was turned upon them, while the main battery continued to engaged the *VIZCAYA*, *OQUENDO* and *MARIA TERESA*.

The fire of the main battery of this ship, when the range was below 2,500 yards, was most effective and destructive, and after a continuance of this fire for perhaps twenty minutes it was agreed that the *MARIA TERESA* and *OQUENDO* were in flames and were being headed for the beach. Their colors were struck about 10:29, and they were beached about eight miles west of Santiago.

After having passed, at 10:35, the *OQUENDO* and *MARIA TERESA*, on fire and ashore, this vessel continued to chase and fire upon the *VIZCAYA* until 10:36, when signal to cease firing was sounded on board, it having been discovered that the *VIZCAYA* had struck her colors.

At 11 the IOWA arrived in the vicinity of the *VIZCAYA*, which had been run ashore, and as it was evident that she could not catch the *CRISTOBAL COLON*, and that the *OREGON*, *BROOKLYN* and *NEW YORK* would, two steam cutters and three cutters were immediately hoisted out and sent to the *VIZCAYA* to rescue her crew. Our boats succeeded in bringing off a large number of officers and men of that ship's company, and in placing many of them on board the torpedo boat *ERICSSON* and the auxiliary *HIST*.

About 11:30 the *NEW YORK* passed in chase of the *CRISTOBAL COLON*, which was endeavoring to escape from the *OREGON*, *BROOKLYN* and *TEXAS*.

We received on board this vessel from the *VIZCAYA* Captain Eulate, the commanding officer, and 23 officers, together with about 248 petty officers and men, of whom 32 were wounded.

This ship was struck in the hull, on the starboard side, during the early part of the engagement by two projectiles of 6 inch caliber, one striking the hull two to three feet above the actual water line, and almost directly on the line of the berth deck, piercing the ship's side between frames 9 and 10, and the other piercing the side and the cofferdam

between frames 18 and 19. The first projectile did not pass beyond the inner bulkhead of the cofferdam, A41–43. The hole made by it was large and ragged, being about sixteen inches in a longitudinal direction and about seven inches in a vertical direction. It struck with a slight inclination aft, and perforated the cofferdam partition bulkhead (A41–43, 45–47). It did not explode and remained in the cofferdam. The second projectile pierced the side of the ship and the cofferdam A105, the upper edge of the hole being immediately below the top of the cofferdam on the berth deck in compartment A104. The projectile broke off the hatch plate and coamings of the water tank compartment, exploded and perforated the walls of the chain locker. The explosion created a small fire, which was promptly extinguished. The hole in the side made by this projectile was about five feet above the water line and about two to three feet above the berth deck. One fragment of this shell struck a link of the sheet chain wound round the six pounder ammunition hoist, cutting the link in two. Another perforated the cofferdam on the port side and slightly dished the outside plating. These two wounds, fortunately, were not of serious importance. Two or three other projectiles of small caliber struck about the upper bridge and smokestacks, inflicting trilling damage, and four other small projectiles struck the hammock nettings and the side aft.

There were no casualties among the ship's company to report. No officer nor man was injured during the engagement.

The officers and men of this ship behaved admirably. No set of men could have done more gallant service.

I take pleasure in stating to you, sir, that the coolness and judgment of the executive officer, Lieutenant Raymond P. Rodgers, deserves, and will, I hope, receive, a proper reward at the hands of the government. The test of the executive officer's work is the conduct of ship and crew in battle. In this case it was simply superb. The coolness of the navigator, Lieutenant W. H. Schueize, and of Lieutenant F. K. Hill, in charge of the rapid fire guns on the upper deck, is worthy of the greatest commendation.

So long as the enemy showed his flag they fought like American seamen, but when the flag came down they were as gentle and tender as American women.

In conclusion, sir, allow me to congratulate you on the complete victory achieved of your fleet.