

# THE BATTLE OF SANTIAGO

## Commodore Schley

North Atlantic Fleet, Second Squadron, US FLAGSHIP BROOKLYN, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, 6 July 1898

I have the honor to make the following report of that part of the squadron under your command which came under my observation during the engagement with the Spanish fleet on July 3, 1898.

At 9:35 AM Admiral Cervera, with the *INFANTA MARIA TERESA*, *VIZCAYA*, *OQUENDO*, *CRISTOBAL COLON* and two torpedo boat destroyers came out of the harbor of Santiago de Cuba in column at distance and attempted to escape to the westward. Signal was made from the *Iowa* that the enemy was coming out, but his movement had been discovered from this ship at the same moment. This vessel was the furthest west, except the *VIXEN*, in the blockading line; signal was made to the western division as prescribed in your general orders and there was immediate and rapid movement inward by your squadron and a general engagement at ranges beginning at 1,100 yards and varying to 3,000 until the *VIZCAYA* was destroyed about 10:50 AM. The concentration of the fire of the squadron upon the ships coming out was most furious and terrific and great damage was done them.

About twenty or twenty-five minutes after the engagement began two vessels, thought to be the *TERESA* and *OQUENDO*, and since verified as such, took fire from the effective shell fire of the squadron and were forced to run on the beach some six or seven miles west of the harbor entrance, where they burned and blew up later. The torpedo boat destroyers were destroyed early in the action, but the smoke was so dense in their direction that I cannot say to which vessel or vessels the credit belongs. This, doubtless, was better seen from your flagship.

The *VIZCAYA* and *COLON*, perceiving the disaster to their consorts, continued at full speed to the westward to escape, and were followed and engaged in a running fight with the *BROOKLYN*, *TEXAS*, *IOWA* and *OREGON* until 10:50, when the *VIZCAYA* took fire from our shells. She put her helm to port, and with a heavy list to port stood in shore and ran aground at Aserradero, about twenty-one miles west of Santiago, on fire fore and aft and where she blew up during the night. Observing that she had struck her colors, and that several vessels were nearing her to capture and save her crew, signal was made to cease firing. The *OREGON* having proved vastly faster than the other battleships, she and the *BROOKLYN*, together with the *TEXAS* and another vessel, which proved to be your flagship, continued westward in pursuit of the *COLON*, which had run close in shore, evidently seeking some good spot to beach if she should fail to elude her pursuers.

This pursuit continued with increasing speed in the *BROOKLYN*, *OREGON* and other ships, and soon the *BROOKLYN* and the *OREGON* were within long range of the *COLON*, when the *OREGON* opened fire with her thirteen inch guns, landing a shell close to the *COLON*. A moment afterward the *BROOKLYN* opened fire with her eight inch guns, landing a shell just ahead of her. Several other shells were fired at the *COLON*, now in range of the *BROOKLYN*'s and *OREGON*'s guns. Her commander, seeing all chances of escape cut off and destruction awaiting his ship, fired a lee gun and struck her flag at 1:15 PM, and ran ashore at a point some fifty miles west of Santiago harbor. Your flagship was coming up rapidly at the time, as were also the *TEXAS* and *VIXEN*. A little later, after your arrival, the *CRISTOBAL COLON*, which had struck to the *BROOKLYN* and the *OREGON*, was turned over to you as one of the trophies of this great victory of the squadron under your command.

During my official visit a little later, Commander Eaton of the *RESOLUTE* appeared and reported to you the presence of a Spanish battleship near Altares. Your orders to me were to take the *OREGON* and go eastward to meet her, and this was done by the *BROOKLYN*, with the result that the vessel reported as an enemy was discovered to be the Austrian cruiser *INFANTA MARIA TERESA*, seeking the commander-in-chief.

I would mention for your consideration that the *BROOKLYN* occupied the most westward blockading position with the *VIXEN*, and being more directly in the route taken by the Spanish squadron, was exposed for some minutes, possibly ten, to the gun fire of three of the Spanish ships and the west battery at a range of fifteen hundred yards from the ships and about three thousand yards from the batteries, but the vessels of the entire squadron closing in rapidly soon diverted this fire and did magnificent work at close range. I have never before witnessed such deadly and fatally accurate shooting as was done by the ships of your command as they closed in on the Spanish squadron, and I deem it a high privilege to commend to you for such action as you may deem proper the gallantry and dashing

courage, the prompt decision and the skilful handling of their respective vessels of Captain Philip, Captain Evans, Captain Clark and especially of my chief of staff, Captain Cook, who was directly under my personal observation, and whose coolness, promptness and courage were of the highest order. The dense smoke of the combat shut out from my view the *INDIANA* and the *GLOUCESTER*, but as these vessels were closer to your flagship, no doubt their part in the conflict was under your immediate observation.

Lieutenant Sharp, commanding the *VIXEN*, acted with conspicuous courage; although unable to engage the heavier ships of the enemy with his light guns, nevertheless was close in to the battle line under heavy fire, and many of the enemy's shot passed beyond his vessel.

I beg to invite special attention to the conduct of my flag lieutenant, James H. Sears, and Ensign Edward McCauley, jr., aide, who were constantly at my side during the engagement, and who exposed themselves fearlessly in discharging their duties; and also to the splendid behavior of my secretary, Lieutenant B. W. Wells, jr., who commanded and directed the fighting of the fourth division with splendid effect.

I would commend the highly meritorious conduct and courage in the engagement of Lieutenant Commander N. E. Mason, the executive officer, whose presence everywhere over the ship during its continuance did much to secure the good result of this ship's part in the victory.

The navigator, Lieutenant A. C. Hodgson, and the division officers, Lieutenant T. D. Griffin, Lieutenant W. R. Rush, Lieutenant Edward Simpson, Lieutenant J. G. Doyle, Ensign Charles Webster and the junior divisional officers were most steady and conspicuous in every detail of duty, contributing to the accurate firing of this ship in her part of the great victory of your forces.

The officers of the medical, pay and engineer and marine corps responded to every demand of the occasion and were fearless in exposing themselves. The warrant officers, Boatswain William L. Hill, Carpenter G. H. Warford and Gunner F. T. Applegate, were everywhere exposed in watching for damage, reports of which were promptly conveyed to me.

I have never in my life served with a braver, better or worthier crew than that of the *BROOKLYN*. during the combat, lasting from 9:35 until 1:15 PM, much of the time under fire, they never flagged for a moment and were apparently undisturbed by the storm of projectiles passing ahead, astern and over the ship.

The result of the engagement was the destruction of the Spanish squadron and the capture of the admiral and some thirteen to fifteen hundred prisoners with the loss of several hundred killed, estimated by Admiral Cervera at 600 men.

The casualties on board this ship were: G. H. Ellis, chief yeoman, killed; J. Burns, fireman, first class, severely wounded. The marks and scars show that the ship was struck about twenty-five times and she bears in all forty-one scars as the result of her participation in the great victory of your force on July 3, 1898. The speed-cone halliards were shot away and nearly all the signal halliards. The ensign at the main was so shattered that in hauling it down at the close of the action it fell to pieces.

I congratulate you most sincerely upon this great victory to the squadron under your command, and I am glad that I had an opportunity to contribute in the least to a victory that seems big enough for all of us.

I have the honor to transmit herewith the report of the commanding officer and a drawing in profile of the ship showing the location of hits and scars; also a memorandum of the ammunition expended and the amount to fill her allowance.

Since reaching this place and holding conversation with several of the captains, viz., Captain Eulate of the *VIZCAYA* and the second in command of the *COLON*, Commander Contreras, I have learned that the Spanish Admiral's scheme was to concentrate all fire for a while on the *BROOKLYN*, and for the *VIZCAYA* to ram her, in hopes that if they could destroy her the chance of escape would be increased, as it was supposed she was the swiftest ship of your squadron. This explains the heavy fire mentioned and the *VIZCAYA*'s action in the earlier moments of the engagement. The execution of this purpose was promptly defeated by the fact that all the ships of the squadron advanced into close

range and opened an irresistibly furious and terrific fire upon the enemy's squadron as it was coming out of the harbor.

I am glad to say that the injury supposed to be below the water line was due to a water valve being opened from some unknown cause and flooding the compartment. The injury to the belt is found to be only slight and the leak small.

I beg to inclose a list of the officers and crew who participated in the combat of July 3, 1898.

I cannot close this report without mentioning in high terms of praise the splendid conduct and support of Captain C. E. Clark of the OREGON. Her speed was wonderful and her accurate fire splendidly destructive. Very respectfully,

Brooklyn *Eagle* (27 July 1898), page 3.