

THE BATTLE OF SANTIAGO

Seaman Alfred Schaefer to his Father

USS TEXAS, Santiago Harbor, 12 July 1898

I suppose you have heard about the great victory we had on July 3. The Spanish fleet came out Sunday morning at 9:30. It was something we never expected and they took us quite by surprise. We were laying off the entrance when our mate, the one that was lying alongside of us in the North River, at the Grant Monument celebration, came out. As soon as she did she fired an eleven inch shell at us, but it didn't touch us. It was the *MARIA TERESA*. After her came the *ALMIRANTE OQUENDO*, the *CRISTOBAL COLON*, the *VIZCAYA* and the two torpedo destroyers, *FUROR* and *PLUTON*. Well, we didn't start fighting until they were out of the entrance; then we let drive for all we were worth. One of our six inch shells cut the *PLUTON* right in half and killed all hands aboard of her. The little *GLOUCESTER* then came up and sunk the other one. Meanwhile we started on the big ships. As soon as the *VIZCAYA* got out she fired a whole broadside at us, but did not kill anyone. We were hit four times. The *IOWA* and *OREGON* thought we were sunk because they could not see us on account of the smoke. They got between us and the *VIZCAYA*. When the *VIZCAYA* fired that broadside all hands aboard of her started to cheer and throw up their hats, but when the smoke cleared away and they saw us afloat you can bet there was some tall Spanish spoken aboard. When we saw the *VIZCAYA* fire that broadside we thought we were gone, but as the captain said, after the battle was over, 'God's blessing was with the *TEXAS*.' It is a miracle that we were not sunk or blown up because we lay right off the entrance and every ship that came out fired right at us and we were right in the thick of it until the very last. The two torpedo destroyers were sunk before we knew it. The *MARIA TERESA* was next. The *VIZCAYA* and the *COLON* got away from us, but we soon caught them. The *BROOKLYN* sank the *VIZCAYA* after a twenty mile chase, but the *COLON* still kept going and after forty miles more of a chase she was run ashore and hauled down her flag just as the *BROOKLYN* and the *OREGON* got up to her.

Soon after we all lowered boats, took all her crew prisoners and put them aboard the *ST. LOUIS*. Altogether here is the damage our fleet did: Two torpedo destroyers sunk, three first class cruisers sunk, one surrendered and 1,800 prisoners including Admiral Cervera taken. Two hundred Spaniards got back to the city and 1,000 were killed. On our side there were two men killed. We lay by the *COLON* all that night and on Fourth of July morning we came back to Santiago. As we sailed along the coast we could hardly believe our eyes as we looked at the fine ships on the beach and on fire. All that day there were dead and mangled bodies floating around.

It was a fine moonlight night again as we lay at the entrance to the harbor. The *REINA MERCEDES*, one of the ships left behind, tried to come out but the *MASSACHUSETTS* sunk her right in the entrance. Everything is quiet here now except the fighting ashore between our soldiers and the Spaniards. They will surrender pretty soon now as they are starving. We are taking it easy now, as the rest of the fleet has left us. The *BROOKLYN*, *NEW YORK* and the *GLOUCESTER* are the only ships here now. Everything is over and they are waiting for the Spaniards to surrender.

This is all the news I have to give at present, but I will be able to tell more when I get home, which will be very soon. The State of Texas is going to give every one of us a medal for gallantry and bravery."

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