

CHILE'S GREAT NAVAL BATTLE

HOW THE CONDELL AND THE LYNCH SUNK THE BLANCO ENCALADA.

In April, 1891. These Two Vessels of the Balmaceda Navy Sent to the Bottom the Pride of the Congressional Party—The Fight Lasted Only Seven Minutes—Torpedoes Did the Work—Great Loss of Life—Maraga and Fuentes.

VALPARAISO, Chile, June 1.—Lying recently in the harbor of Valparaiso were two long, narrow-beamed war ships of the Chilean Navy, which three years ago attracted, by their exploits, the attention of the civilized world. The two vessels are the Almirante Condell and the Almirante Lynch. They are sister ships, and for speed and all work demanding celerity of movement they have no equals in the Chilean fleet.

It was in the month of April, 1891, that these two ships in combined attack torpedoed and sent to the bottom in an action lasting not over seven minutes the Chilean iron-clad Blanco Encalada. In spite of the fact that the ship destroyed belonged to the party now in power, the affair will ever redound to the credit of Chilean arms. To the military world the attack of the Condell and Lynch demonstrated not only the tremendous prowess of the Whitehead torpedo, but indicated what might be expected

pedoes could be directed. The crew of each ship numbered about eighty-five. Immediately upon the arrival of the Condell and Lynch at Valparaiso, Moraga and Fuentes undertook to place them in readiness for action. It was found necessary to fit a number of new boiler tubes, and this work was completed in three weeks' time. By the middle of April the two commanders were cruising on the coast. Curious as it may seem, a number of the Congressional naval officers actually entertained the idea that no Chilean officer would sink a Chilean ironclad. Moraga and Fuentes were soon to disabuse their minds. On April 18, the Condell and Lynch steamed into Quinteros Bay, and for the succeeding three days practice was had in running torpedoes. While at Quinteros, Moraga received information that a portion of the Congressional fleet might be expected on the morning of April 23 off Caldera. He immediately consulted with Fuentes, and a plan of attack was arranged. This was communicated to the Government naval authorities, and permission was received in return to put it in execution.

Caldera Bay is a short distance to the northward of Valparaiso. A little way inland is the town of Copiapo. On the morning of April 22 the Congressional ironclad Blanco Encalada, with several transports, in company, arrived at Caldera. A force was landed, which, the same day, went by railway and took possession of Copiapo. This shore force was under the command of Capt. Goni. This officer commanded the Blanco Encalada. At about 1:30 on the morning of the 23d Capt. Goni returned on board the Blanco Encalada. In his absence no apprehension was entertained of any attack from Balmaceda's vessels. It is asserted, however, that Capt. Goni was aware that the Condell and Lynch were in the neighborhood.

The Blanco Encalada lay to a buoy in the southern part of the bay. Steam was up and the usual guards on deck were maintained. Of the crew of about 350 men the majority of the best men had been landed for the naval brigade for the advance on Copiapo. About eighty trained men remained. A number of inexperienced

eral men were struck down by this shell, but none was killed. Water entered several of the after compartments of the Lynch, but the pumps kept the vessel free. The Condell suffered little or no injury. Ten minutes after the engagement opened, the Condell and Lynch steamed out of Caldera Bay, their mission accomplished. At 6 o'clock the two boats ran into the entrance of the bay, and at long range examined the work that had been done. As they moved in rather close, they drew upon themselves the fire of an eight-inch Armstrong rifle mounted in North Fort. This caused them to withdraw, and they steamed out to sea as they came, in company.

The Blanco Encalada was one of the first iron-clads which Chile possessed. In company with the iron-clad Almirante Cochrane, she had captured the Peruvian turret ship Huascar. She was a source of great pride to all Chileans. Her loss was deeply deplored. The Blanco Encalada was an English-built war ship. Her principal features were: Length, 210 feet; beam, 45 feet 9 inches; draught, 19 feet 8 inches; displacement, 3,500 tons. The battery consisted of six eight-inch breechloading Armstrong rifles, mounted two in each broadside in the central battery; three six-pounder Hotchkiss rapid-fire guns, mounted one on each side of the forecastle deck and one on the poop; four one-inch Nordenfelt machine guns, mounted one on each side of the fore bridge, one on the after bridge, and one on the poop, and one Hotchkiss revolving cannon and two .45-inch Maxim guns in the tops. The secondary battery had been reduced to provide field guns for the Copiapo expedition, but consisted, at the time of the attack, of the above pieces.

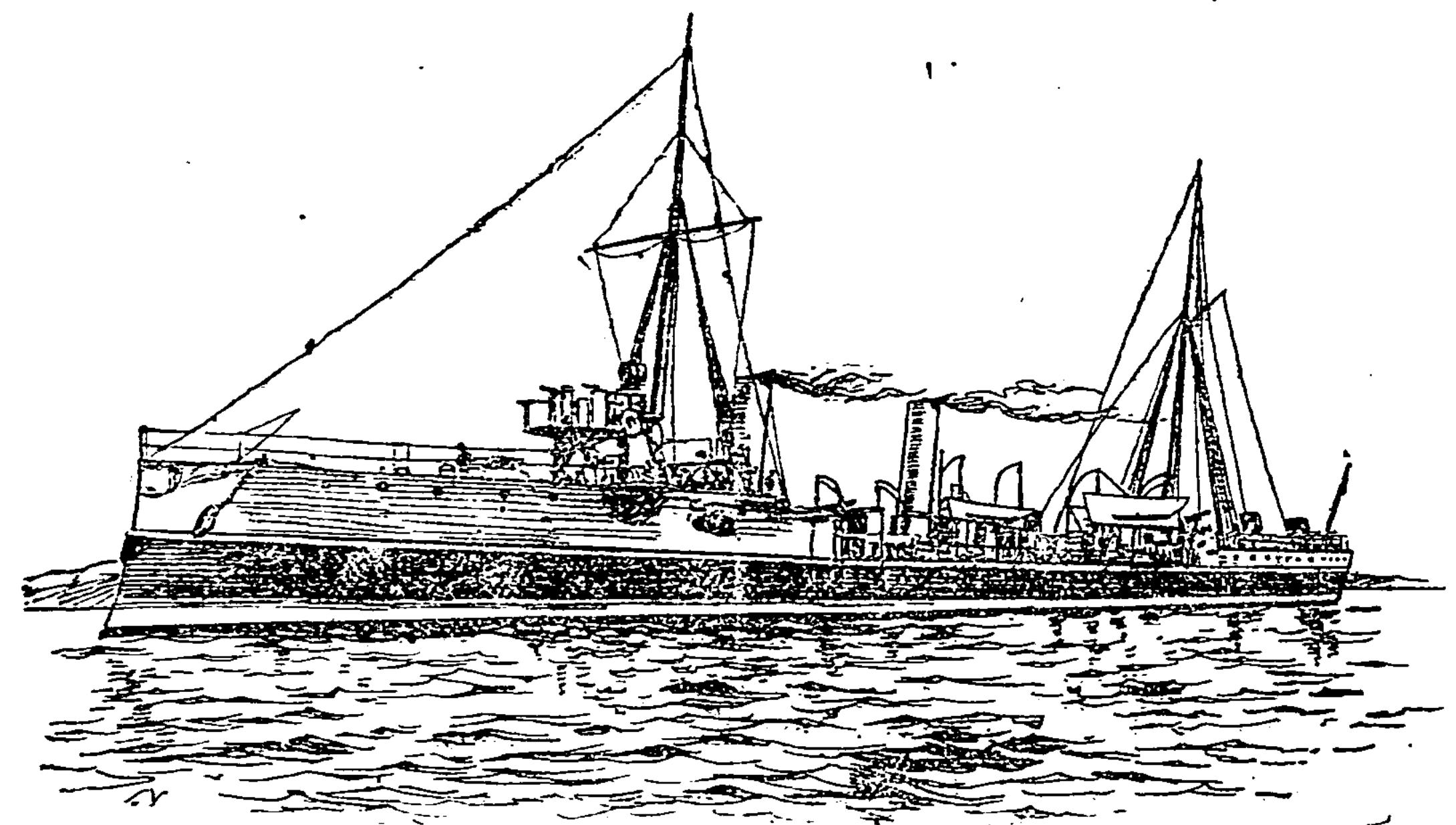
Few of the survivors have a distinct recollection of the incidents of the fight other than that they found themselves, machine-like, at the guns and firing at the craft before them. At the first call to quarters the bugler seems to have mistaken the order and sounded the ordinary reveille. The crew were suddenly awakened to their danger by the crash of Hotchkiss shells. The men were at the guns in an instant, but the ammunition was not served as rapidly as it was needed. The fire opened slowly, but became fairly rapid by the time the Condell had discharged her bow torpedo. Had the Condell's bow tube been skillfully operated, this delay would have been sufficient to have doomed the Blanco Encalada.

In the heat of the attack the Lynch seems not to have been seen until quite close aboard, and her share of the fire was sustained for nearly four minutes by the Condell. The immunity accorded to the Lynch enabled Fuentes to lay his vessel most advantageously. The explosion of the successful torpedo fired by the Lynch was so severe as to throw off his feet every man on the Blanco Encalada's gun deck. One of the starboard eight-inch guns standing in a line over the explosion was hurled from its carriage. All the men of the crew of this gun were killed, as was also nearly every man on the starboard side of the deck. The shock of the explosion was felt even on the bridges, but there only slightly. The second torpedo fired by the Condell is known to have hit the iron-clad, but it failed to explode. This torpedo struck the hull in the vicinity of the dynamo room and extinguished all the lights in the ship. The blow was distinctly felt by those below decks.

As the Condell and Lynch steamed away from Caldera Bay the Congressional transport Aconcagua was sighted coming from the northward. The Aconcagua was commanded by Capt. V. M. Jarpa of the Congressional Navy. She was a steamer of the South American Steamship Company's line fitted up as an armed transport, and possessed excellent speed powers. The Condell and Lynch closed in on the Aconcagua, and for more than one hour kept up a running fight with her. The appearance of a war ship on the horizon caused the sisters to haul off. The stranger proved later on to be the British armored cruiser Warspite. Aconcagua made her way into Caldera Bay and the Condell and Lynch proceeded to Valparaiso.

From the time of the sinking of the Blanco Encalada until the end of the war, in August, the Condell and Lynch were constantly cruising up and down the coast. Their activity was marvelous. They appear to have enjoyed remarkable immunity from the many break-downs common to war vessels. In June, the Condell, accompanied by the Balmacedist armed transport Imperial, made a raid on the coast of Tarapaca, while the Lynch looked out for the coast to the southward of Valparaiso. At the time of the occupation of Quinteros Bay by the Congressional fleet, the Lynch was the only Balmacedist vessel in Valparaiso Harbor. When Valparaiso fell, Fuentes went on board the German flagship Leipzig for refuge. A number of the men of the Lynch stuck to the ship, and were on board when a Valparaiso mob, remembering the part played by this vessel in the destruction of the Blanco Encalada, opened on it from the mole with small-arm fire. The men of the Lynch repelled with several shots from the Hotchkiss guns. The mob, however, managed to swarm on board, and shot down three of the crew. Later in the day, nearly 300 of this same mob were killed in the streets of Valparaiso in a riot, which was put down by the Congressional troops.

At the time of the occupation of Valparaiso, the Condell was in the neighborhood of Coquimbo. Learning of the fall of Balmaceda, Moraga steamed into Callao Harbor, and there turned his vessel over to the representatives of the Congressional Party. At present, Moraga is serving in the navy of Brazil. Fuentes is now an officer in the Mexican Navy.



Chilean Torpedo Gun Vessel, Almirante Condell.

when audacity and skill play a prominent part in modern naval engagements.

Seen as they lay swinging peacefully to their anchors in Valparaiso Harbor, only the eye of a seaman could distinguish the two vessels apart. The Condell carries a light signal yard on her foremast, the Lynch carries a similar yard on her mainmast, a little difference in the paint color of the upper works, and the distinctive characteristics are enumerated. Shift the signal yards or take them down altogether and paint the two vessels alike in every respect and their identity is at once lost. During the Chilean war, when the sister ships were appearing first at one point on the coast and the next day were reported at a point 450 miles in either direction, the observers were never sure whether it was the Condell or the Lynch they had sighted. Inasmuch as the commanders of the two ships are said to have been men possessed of wholly different characteristics, it became, at times, of some importance to know whether the enemy seen was Marago in the Condell or Fuentes in the Lynch.

The story of the sinking of the Blanco Encalada is told to-day in Valparaiso as if the affair had happened only yesterday. It will never grow old, at least not so long as the Chilean pride in its navy exists. It was in January, 1891, when the officers and men of the Chilean fleet, which was then lying in Valparaiso Harbor, rebelled with a major portion of the Senate against the usurpation of power by President Balmaceda. The Chilean Navy at that date consisted of the iron-clad ships Blanco Encalada and Almirante Cochrane, the turret ship Huascar, and the unarmored ships Abtao, Angamos, Chacabuco, Esmeralda, Magellanes, O'Higgins, and Pilcomayo. There were, in addition, several small gun vessels and a number of torpedo boats; but the torpedo boats were not seized by the Congressionalists.

The rebellion of the Chilean fleet robbed the Government of Balmaceda of every available seagoing vessel, and the coast of Chile was practically lost to the Government. To offset the power of the Congressionalists, Balmaceda turned his attention to several vessels building at the time in European yards for the Chilean Government. Two of the number, Almirante Condell and Almirante Lynch, were nearly completed. They were in the hands of Messrs. Laird Brothers of Birkenhead, England. This was the same firm which built the Confederate cruiser Alabama. Three other ships, Capitan Prat and the cruisers Presidente Pinto and Presidente Errazuriz, were building at the yards of Les Sociétés des Forges et Chantiers de la Méditerranée, at La Seyne, France. There was little hope of obtaining the last three during the year 1891.

At the earnest solicitation of the Chilean authorities, the Lairds hastened with all possible speed the work on the Condell and Lynch. On March 21, the two ships succeeded in reaching Valparaiso. The command of the Condell was given to Commander Carlos E. Maraga, the command of the Lynch to Commander Juan Fuentes. These two officers had been educated at the naval school at Valparaiso, and had received torpedo instructions under Capt. Santa Cruz of the Valparaiso Torpedo School. Maraga was the senior of Fuentes. He had the reputation of being courageous. Fuentes had the additional reputation of being skillful. It was upon these two officers that the Balmaceda Government charged the duty of annoying, worrying, and engaging, whenever an opportune occasion presented itself, the ships of the Congressional fleet.

The vessels commanded by Moraga and Fuentes were technically known as torpedo gunboats. They combined in their essentials the high speed of torpedo boats, the ability to attack an enemy with torpedoes, and by reason of their size were able to carry a sufficiently heavy battery of rapid-fire guns to give them the additional distinctive qualities of a gun vessel. Primarily, the two ships relied upon their torpedoes for offensive work. Their batteries of rapid-fire guns assured to them, however, the ability to repel torpedo boats and to engage successfully with artillery such craft as were deemed the legitimate antagonists of gun vessels.

The most marked feature of the two vessels was their great speed. The Condell, on an official trial, had developed as the mean of a three hours' run at sea a speed of 20.313 knots per hour. In attaining this speed her engines had developed 4,850 indicated horse power. The mean number of revolutions recorded were 220 per minute, and the steam gauge showed a mean average pressure of 143 pounds per square inch.

The showing made by the Lynch was even better, the speed recorded by this vessel being, for a mean, as high as 21.22 knots per hour. In general appearance the two ships were not unlike the Vesuvius of the United States Navy, but differing from the Vesuvius in having a raised forecastle and a poop deck. Their general dimensions were: Length, 240 feet; beam, 27 feet 6 inches; draught, 9 feet 6 inches, and displacement, 750 tons. Each vessel was propelled by two screws operated by triple-expansion engines. These engines were designed to develop, collectively, for each vessel 4,500 horse power. The hulls were built of steel. The coal bunker capacity was 100 tons. The coal supply was designed to give to each vessel a steaming radius of 2,500 knots at a speed of 12 knots per hour. The armament of each vessel consisted of five launching tubes for the discharge of Whitehead torpedoes. One tube was fixed permanently in the bow, the remaining four being carried in broadside on the main deck.

In addition to the torpedo battery, each vessel carried three 14-pounder and four 3-pounder Hotchkiss rapid-fire guns, and two machine guns. Two of the 14-pounder guns were mounted en echelon on the forecastle deck, and the third gun in pivot on the poop deck. Two of the 3-pounder guns were mounted in broadside on the main deck, and two on the forward end of the poop deck. The main deck 3-pounder stood on sponsons midway between the broadside torpedo tubes. Fore-and-aft fire was thus possible. The two machine guns were mounted on the bridge, which stood over the after part of the forecastle deck. Directly under the bridge was a steel fighting tower, protected by 1-inch steel armor. A similar fighting tower stood over the forward end of the poop deck. From the fighting towers the discharge of the tor-

cruits made up the remainder of the complement. In all the Blanco Encalada had aboard that night 26 officers and 253 men. On the morning of April 21 Moraga and Fuentes steamed out of Quinteros Bay and headed to the northward. The Condell led. Slow steaming was maintained, and, on the afternoon of the following day, Huasco was reached. Here intelligence was received of the operations of the Congressional forces in Caldera Bay. Moraga and Fuentes consulted, and a plan of attack was agreed upon. By 5 o'clock that evening the Condell and Lynch were steaming away abreast in the direction of Caldera Bay.

It was nearly 4 o'clock when Moraga from the bridge of the Condell was able to peer into Caldera Bay. The morning was still. The sky was overcast at times with clouds, through which now and then the moon shone. From his position on the Condell Moraga could make out but three vessels. One of these, he was sure, was either the Blanco Encalada or the Almirante Cochrane. In either case he saw before him one of the most powerful ships possessed by the Congressionalists. Her destruction would mean much to the cause of the Chilean Government. The Lynch was close astern of him. Giving the signal he pushed in at a speed of about 15 knots, and headed straight for the ironclad. The Lynch followed not over 200 yards in his rear.

For the first 1,500 yards the vessels found their progress unopposed. Five hundred yards distant from the iron-clad they were met with a shower of rapid-fire projectiles. Increasing his speed, Moraga dashed ahead, and at a distance of 100 yards, and when pointing straight at the ironclad, he discharged his bow torpedo. The weapon passed ahead of the iron-clad, and, running on shore, exploded there. The iron-clad's fire was now furious. The quick-firing guns of the Condell and Lynch were equally active. The din caused by their continued firing was terrific. With the discharge of his bow torpedo, Moraga put his helm hard a-port, and at a distance of not more than 60 yards took the whole broadside fire of the big ship. As he rushed past he fired in quick succession the forward port torpedo, and the after weapon on the same side. The first shot struck, but failed to explode. The second shot missed altogether. The belief is that, owing to unskillful setting it passed underneath the ironclad. But the Lynch was close astern. Fuentes had faithfully followed Moraga right in his wake. The men of the iron-clad had had their whole attention taken up by the Condell. They had not noticed this second adversary until he was practically on top of them. The Condell had veered off, and as she did so the Lynch had run in at full speed ahead. Fuentes closed until distant from the iron-clad only 100 yards. Then he discharged his bow torpedo. The weapon missed. Putting his helm hard over he followed the example of the Condell, and ran along the enemy's broadside. As he did so he discharged his forward port broadside torpedo. The big missile shot out with a flash from its carriage. Fifteen feet from the side of the Lynch it dove, and then with a speed of nearly twenty-seven knots per hour rushed straight for the hull of the adversary. The missile had been set to explode at a distance of about sixteen feet below the water. It obeyed with unerring correctness the setting, and at a point midway between the stem and stern struck the ill-fated vessel. The effect of the explosion was overwhelming. A hole 15 feet long and over 7 feet wide was blown through the bottom of the ship. Through this opening nothing could withstand the rush of water, and in two minutes after the shot was fired the Blanco Encalada settled over on her side and sank. So swiftly did she go down that hardly a man below decks was able to escape. The engineer's force perished almost to a man. Others who managed to jump overboard were in large numbers sucked down by the vessel. Out of a total of 248 officers and men, 11 officers and 171 men perished. Only one engineer officer was saved, and he was washed up one of the ventilators as the vessel sank. From him it was learned that nearly every man in the engine room was struck down by the pieces of machinery that flew about.

The rapid-fire Hotchkiss guns of the Condell and Lynch cut down a large proportion of the crew of the Blanco Encalada before the vessel sank. It is estimated that more than forty men were killed in the forward battery by three-pounder missiles. Lieut. Pacheco fell in this part of the ship. He was using strenuous efforts to get his battery into action, and had actually succeeded in discharging one of the heavy guns when a shell from the Condell crashed through the port sill, cutting him down and also every man within fifteen feet of him. Midshipman Sota fell under the same fire, and on the upper deck Midshipman Aguilar was taken off by a three-pounder shell. The fire of the Hotchkiss guns resembled in rapidity more the fire of musketry than artillery. On the Condell and Lynch the three-pounder Hotchkiss guns were being fired at one time at a rate of nearly fifteen shots per minute. These shots were all aimed shots. Wherever the Hotchkiss shells struck unarmored portions of the iron-clad, they penetrated and exploded inboard with deadly effect. Only the armored protection of the central battery saved the guns' crews amidships from being swept away.

Those who witnessed the destruction of the Blanco Encalada say that the affair was all over before they were fully able to realize what had happened. The lightning-like attack, the unearthly crash of the Hotchkiss guns, the explosion of the torpedoes, all followed in quick succession. The crew of the Blanco Encalada were taken by surprise, but fought their ship like brave men. Capt. Goni, worn out by the fatigue of the day's work at Copiapo, did all that any man could have done. As his vessel heeled over and sank, he was among the last to spring into the water. Boats from the Congressional transport Biobí picked up most of the survivors. A single boat of the Blanco Encalada floated. This boat picked up Goni.

When daylight appeared an hour later all that could be seen of the proud Blanco Encalada were tops of the bridges. Near the scene of the wreck was the transport Biobí. The Condell and Lynch were nowhere in sight.

Immediately after discharging her broadside torpedo, the active Lynch swept around under the stern of the iron-clad. Her bow tube had been charged with a second torpedo, and this missile Fuentes sent flying over in the direction of the Biobí. It missed its mark. It was set too low, and passed underneath the hull. On board the Condell and Lynch little damage was done. The Lynch was struck four times by rapid-fire projectiles, and one of the shells cut the electric wires of a torpedo carriage just as the weapon had been discharged. Sev-