

## Seizure of the Spanish Gunboats—General Grant Comes Out with a Vigorous American Policy.

Thirty gunboats, the property of the Spanish government, were seized yesterday by the United States authorities. Fifteen of these vessels were at Mystic, Conn., and fifteen here. They were in different stages of construction, but some were nearly complete, and at least one was to sail from this port on a bellicose errand on Thursday. It is evident, therefore, that if our government holds neutrality to be more than a name, and does not concede to Spain the right to use our territory as a base of operations against her enemies, its action in regard to these vessels could not have been longer delayed with safety. For it would have been impossible in the future to plead ignorance in regard to these craft, since from the laying their keels to the present time it has been notorious that they were war vessels, and it has been repeatedly published that they were for Spain, though exactly what use she intended to make of them was not so clear. Nations, indeed, seldom explain themselves on such subjects, the more especially when popular fancy is conveniently ready to cover up a real purpose by assigning one more obvious to the general thought. It is noteworthy that this seizure was made by the direct order of the President to the United States District Attorney here, and we understand that the government is so sure of the ground upon which it moves that there is no probability whatever that the ships will be bonded, or that by any means or contrivances they will slip through the meshes of the law and get away at last. Thus, thanks to the positive attitude of the President, we shall not stand before the world as lending our great naval capabilities to crush our neighbors in the interest of a contemptible tyranny beyond the Atlantic. Here certainly we see the President looming up as the representative of a prime and grand American idea; for sympathy with the peoples near us in their struggles is declared in all our platforms, and even our metropolitan democrats are clamorous on this theme.

But on what ground is the seizure made? Will it not complicate our relations with Spain, and is it not practically a concession of belligerent rights to Cuba? Such are the queries that naturally follow the fact. Practically this action may lead to good results with regard to Cuba; but in its origin and in its legal aspect this step has no relation to the contest waged by the Cuban people. It may be remembered that her war with the Cubans is not the only one that Spain has on her hands in this hemisphere. Her war with Chile and Peru will long be remembered for that barbarous fact in its progress—the bombardment of Valparaiso—in which Spain sent her naval forces on a wanton errand of destruction that could accomplish no legitimate purpose of war. She has obstinately persisted in keeping that quarrel open. Although she could not send armies thither, though she could secure over those South American republics no honorable triumph, though she could in no

event do more than repeat the barbarity of the former bombardment, she has refused to make peace, and no other reason can be conceived than the treasured purpose to avenge herself for her very impotency by other acts of Spanish brutality on that coast. Such is the attitude between the several allied South American States of the Pacific on the one hand, and Spain on the other, and now these allied States observe that Spain is building a fleet of war ships in the yards of this country. They hear, of course, the conclusion to which the people jump—that these are for use in Cuba; but their regard for their own safety requires them to scan things more narrowly and in view of their own experience of the treacherous indirectness with which the Spaniard always moves toward his object. In this position of affairs the Peruvian Minister has laid before our government what reason he has to fear that the Spanish fleet constructing here is for use against his government and its allies; and thus moved by a nation with which we are at peace the government, in the observance of a true neutrality, has no option but to take efficient action to prevent the sailing of the ships.

We cannot regret that the first effect of this action is to establish a sort of moral equality between Spain and Cuba in our tribunals. Our law has restrained the Cubans, and now it restrains Spain. Nor do we regret that a good reason thus appears for detaining ships that, if the Peruvian Minister should happen to be mistaken, might be used with terrible effect against that fight for freedom in Cuba with which every man, woman and child in the United States sympathizes; for, while in obedience to our duty as neutrals, we have embarrassed the Cubans in their efforts to use the United States as an arsenal and a recruiting ground, we should have seen with pain that their enemy was free to use all our resources against them. If, indeed, it should finally appear that our government has even stretched the point of good will toward Peru, why that is an offence that the nation will forgive with a rousing three times three for the man who committed it. Such a step once taken commits the government to a policy of progress in all its relations with these our neighbors. It will put us before the world, whether we will or no, as the defenders of these feeble ones, and when it is once felt with what hearty readiness the people accept that character, the government must find in that fact the warm support of popular will it may deem necessary for such a step as the recognition of Cuban belligerency. The President, by the act we chronicle to-day, shows to Spain that she cannot wage war in this hemisphere without our consent, and this points directly towards the end the people would force, the cessation of the butcheries in Cuba.