

THE MOSQUITO FLEET.

The Mysterious Spanish Gunboats—Trial Trip of "No. 1" Yesterday—Decisive Position of the Administration—"Will They Sail?"

The Spanish mosquito boats again. They have been buzzing about the ears of Secretary Fish, stinging the tender skin of wily diplomats, touching the gentle susceptibilities of Mr. Sumner, and have been worse than the locusts of Egypt—a pest generally. Let all hands go down to the foot of Thirteenth street, North river, and they will there behold this troublesome swarm yclept the Mosquito Fleet. Within three months' time everything that can be seen at the Delamater Works has been accomplished toward pushing these singular specimens of marine architecture to successful completion. Over 500 men are now employed on the vessels, and the whole scene in their vicinity is one of activity and animation. It is something, it is true, to be proud of in the annals of American shipbuilding that a foreign government should seek our shores as a fitting quarter wherein to construct, arm and equip a flotilla of the magnitude of thirty craft. Yet the question occurs, did not Spain make this contract with an American constructor with that subtle diplomacy that has long distinguished her foreign relations? Did she not, believing that these gunboats were to be used in American waters, and that their building and even their departure from this port would not be impeded by the administration, take fresh confidence in ordering thirty insignificant, and, in a naval view, very ordinary vessels? It must seem so to every reflecting mind. In the first place take a survey of the gunboats, their dimensions, capacities for offence and defence and the probable service for which they are destined.

THE GUNBOATS.

Now lying at the foot of Thirteenth street, on the north side of the pier, are fifteen of these marine insects, with their bows turned towards all points of the compass. Painted a lavender color, with a full length fore and aft of 105 feet and of a tonnage less than 200 burden, which is the capacity of a small-sized canal boat, they present the appearance of a very petty squadron, when even compared with the hermaphrodite double-enders that made so conspicuous a failure in the late war. The very fact that they have been constructed in so short a time, independent of their peculiar model and their striking littleness furnishes enough assurance that they can never be other than mean guerillas in a general naval combat, and of course they are liable to be met in this manner. The boats are not named, but are numbered from one to fifteen consecutively.

An examination of any one of them reveals the characteristics of all, for they are sister vessels. With a moderate breadth of beam in proportion to the length, and a very shallow depth of hold, the lines of the hull are not of course marked by any degree of beauty, nor do they show that any particular style of model has been adopted. The bows have little inclination, the stern post being almost perpendicular. About the stern the lines resemble the hind quarters of a beef, and break abruptly at the propeller frame. On deck the area is very cramped, as may be imagined from the dimensions. Below is the fire room, just forward of amidships, furnished with a horizontal tubular gunboat boiler, built at the Delamater Works. Just abaft is the oscillating engine, a small concern of nominal horse power. Still further aft can be found the cabin. As this apartment is designed to accommodate several officers with state rooms, it is evident that Spanish economy has contemplated some reduction in the human frame. As a human habitation these quarters are ridiculously small. Above decks ascend two spars, the foremast and mainmast, with a rake that calls to mind the East India privateers. The smoke stack is an ordinary funnel, stayed to the same angle as the spars. The vessels, when complete, will carry only fore and main sails (fore and aft sails), with two gaff-topsails and a jib.

The armament is to consist of a 100-pounder Parrott rifle, mounted as a pivot gun forward. The white and live oak of which the craft are built will vibrate somewhat under the recoil of these monsters.

THE TRIAL TRIP OF NO. 1 YESTERDAY.

Gunboat No. 1 started yesterday afternoon on her trial trip up the North river. She ascended the Hudson as far as West Point, her engines working admirably and her success for the purposes for which she was designed being complete. The revenue cutter stationed opposite the Delamater Works was on the scent to detect any seaward tendency of the scow, and it is needless to say without success. She started out, making from ten to twelve knots an hour without a full pressure. This trip established the value of the initial boat, whatever that may be, though, for the designs aimed at, everything sought has been accomplished.

THE UNITED STATES MARSHAL'S POSITION.

Marshal Barlow is tranquil. "A change has come o'er the spirit of his dreams." He no longer looks pale and dejected over the relative interests of Spain and Cuba. Some three weeks ago a dark-eyed patriot of the land of Don made him a communication, in which, representing his agency with the Spanish Minister, he said that no attempt on the part of the owners would be made to clandestinely remove the vessels from the harbor. This gentleman then repaired to Washington, and, it is supposed, has since been in correspondence with Secretary Fish. There is certainly no evidence abroad that the Spanish government desires the gunboats to leave, in defiance of the Cabinet at Washington. The impression prevails that no power on the part of the authorities can detain the boats, and there is no reason for doubting its good sense when it is considered that our relations with Spain are friendly, that Cuba is not a belligerent, and no other friendly point is threatened with their attack. It is probable, then, that each of these funny craft will sail upon their completion, which will be inside of a month. No law can enjoin them.

For whatever service they are destined it can hardly be transatlantic; for a good breeze and a high sea would bury them in Davy Jones' locker. A more puerile fleet as a weapon of offence was never within the indignity of any nation to project, nor the lot of any builder to construct. But fifteen more are to be added to the swarm, and their construction is rapidly going forward at Mystic, Conn. Captain Harmony, United States Navy, represents the Navy Department, and is in charge of the flotilla at the Delamater Works.