

ing industry, and consequently the report of the seizure created great consternation there. To show the extent of the industry, it may be stated that twenty-four schooners cleared from Victoria this year to engage in sealing in the northern waters.

The news of the seizure of the Victoria ship was soon published all over the country, and it has again awakened keen interest in this Behring sea question. It is felt that the matter should now be firmly pressed to a final settlement at all hazards. The Canadian authorities, of course, are powerless to move in the matter, and the action of the British Government will have to be awaited. What the action of the latter government will be, time will tell. It is, however, no doubt largely due to the dilatory policy of the British Government in this matter, that has led to this latest seizure. Had the question been taken hold of firmly at the time of the former seizures, some two years ago, it is not likely that the present aspect of the case would have been reached. The seizure of vessels claiming to be engaged in a lawful occupation upon the high seas, is a very serious matter indeed, and the policy of inaction followed by the British Government in this Behring sea question, is in striking contrast with the usual course of that government in such matters.

The point at issue in the Behring sea question is well understood. Briefly, it is the claim of the United States to jurisdiction over the waters of Behring sea, a vast body of water lying between Alaska and the northern possessions of Russia in Asia. The sea is shut off from the Pacific ocean and enclosed on the south by a long chain of islands, reaching out into the ocean a distance of nearly 1,000 miles. The United States has granted a monopoly to a stock company to take seal in these waters, and the attempt to close the sea to others is made in the interest of this monopoly. It certainly seems preposterous that any government should arrogate to itself exclusive jurisdiction over a sea lying between two continents, and which to all appearances should be as free as the Atlantic ocean. That this absurd claim has not been exploded long ago, is due to the policy of inaction followed by the British government, which has allowed the seizure of British (Canadian) vessels to go on for years, with apparently but very weak, if any remonstrances against those outrages.

The United States either has, or it has not a legal claim to jurisdiction over the waters lying between the northern portions of the continents of Asia and North America. It should be a very easy matter to establish the legality or illegality of these claims by a conference of the maritime powers of the world to deal with the question. If the claims of the United States are good, then they should be defined and established. If they are not good, then the United States is committing acts of piracy upon the high seas, for which it should speedily be called to account.

That there is any probability of the final establishment of the claims of the United States to exclusive jurisdiction in Behring sea, is not at all likely. On the contrary, the whole question seems almost too absurd to be worthy of serious consideration. In the year 1821, Russia put forth a claim to exercise special privileges in Behring sea, and issued a ukase forbidding foreign vessels from approaching within 100 miles of the islands and territory belonging to that country. At that time, Alaska and the Aleutian islands belonged to Russia. These claims the United States opposed with such vigor, that Russia was compelled to abandon her pretensions. Now we have the United States making even more preposterous claims than were put forth by Russia, though the latter country at that time owned the territory on each side of Behring sea, while the United States has jurisdiction on one side only. The claim is so preposterous that a number of the leading journals in the United States have unhesitatingly condemned the action of their own government in the matter. The *New York Times* characterises the claims as "utterly untenable." The *Commercial Advertiser* of the same city intimates that it is "a preposterous violation of international law, in the interest of a monopoly." The *New York Herald* thinks the claims "irreconcilable with international law." Following in the same line, the *Boston Herald* says: "It is altogether beyond belief that it will be possible for us to sustain the pretensions of Secretary Blaine that Behring sea is American (United States) water." Yet in the face of all this, the British Government has coolly allowed the piratical confiscation of British property, and the imprisonment of British seamen.

It is hard to believe that the United States is taking such risks merely for the protection in a monopoly, of a few

favorites of the administration. Neither can it be believed that the intention is to force a rupture with the British Government. The only conclusion which can be arrived at is, that the policy of inaction on the part of Great Britain, has led the United States authorities to believe that they can continue such action with impunity. It does seem strange, however, that a country laying such claims to advancement in civilization, should so flagrantly violate the established laws of international comity as the United States has done in this matter. If serious trouble ensues, it will be easy to locate the blame where it justly belongs.

### SPRING WHEAT.

The great improvement which took place in the crop of the hard spring wheat region during the month of July, has made it apparent that the crop will not be a short one after all. Authorities to the south of the boundary seem now generally convinced of the belief, that taking the spring wheat states as a whole, a large crop is assured. The bulk of this crop is now safely harvested, and new wheat is coming into the markets in Iowa and southern Minnesota and Dakota. The millers, who were somewhat alarmed during the short crop scare of a few weeks ago, have now drawn a long sigh of relief. There can be no doubt but that a short crop in the great spring wheat region would have rendered the outlook blue for the millers. Last fall and winter, throughout the northern spring wheat region, wheat prices averaged very considerably higher than in the fall wheat markets farther south. The spring wheat millers were therefore placed at a great disadvantage in competing with the southern millers in such centres as St. Louis, where wheat was ruling at 10 cents per bushel lower than Minneapolis. The speculative boom in wheat prices last year, which affected prices particularly in the north, proved anything but satisfactory to millers, and also legitimate grain dealers as well, or at least many of them. The fact is now clear that the northern millers paid too high for their wheat last fall and winter, and the course of events has demonstrated to them that consumers can get along without any large quantity of spring wheat flour, and that when this flour is held at fancy prices, above market values for the product, the people will not have it. As northern millers were partly accountable themselves for the abnormal situation, particularly in spring wheat, last year, they will no doubt profit by their dearly-bought experience. With a large crop of spring wheat of extra fine quality in site, millers will therefore be a little careful this season as to how they buy wheat. At any rate, they are not likely to again assist Chicago speculators to cut their own throats, as some of them did last fall.