

As the United States is the freest of all nations, so, too, the people sympathize with all peoples struggling for liberty and self-government. But while so sympathizing it is due to our honor that we should so abstain from enforcing our views upon unwilling nations and from taking an interested part *without invitation*. In the quarrels between different nations or between governments and their subjects our course should always be in conformity with strict justice and law, international and local. Such has been the policy of the administration in dealing with these questions. For more than a year a valuable province of Spain and a near neighbor of ours, in whom all our people cannot but feel a deep interest, has been struggling for independence and freedom. The people and government of the United States entertain the same warm feelings and sympathies for the people of Cuba in their pending struggle that they manifested throughout the previous struggles between Spain and her former colonies in behalf of the latter. But the contest has at no time assumed the conditions which amount to a war in the sense of international law, or which would show the existence of a *de facto* political organization of the insurgents sufficient to justify a recognition of belligerency. The principle is maintained, however, that this nation is its own judge when to accord the rights of belligerency, either to a people struggling to free themselves from a government they believe to be oppressive, or to independent nations at war with each other. The United States have no disposition to interfere with the existing relations of Spain to her colonial possessions on this Continent. They believe that in due time Spain and other European Powers will find it to their interest to terminate these relations and establish their present dependencies as independent Powers—members of the family of nations. The dependencies are no longer regarded as subject to transfer from one European Power to another. When the present relation of colonies ceases they are to become independent Powers, exercising the right of choice and of self-control. In the determination of their future condition and relations with other Powers the United States, in order to put a stop to bloodshed in Cuba, and in the interest of a neighboring people, proposed their good offices to bring the existing contest to a termination. The offer not being accepted by Spain on a basis which we believed could be received by Cuba, was withdrawn. It is hoped that the good offices of the United States may yet prove advantageous for the settlement of this unhappy strife. Meanwhile a number of illegal expeditions against Cuba have been broken up. It has been the endeavor of the administration to execute the neutrality laws in good faith, no matter how unpleasant the task, made so by the suffering we have endured from lack of like good faith towards us by other nations.

On the 26th of March last the United States schooner *Lizzie Major* was arrested on the high seas by a Spanish frigate and two passengers were taken from it and carried as prisoners to Cuba. Representations of these facts were made to the Spanish government as soon as sufficient information of them reached Washington. The two passengers were set at liberty, and the Spanish government assured the United States that the captain of the frigate, in making the capture, had acted without law; that he had been reprimanded for the irregularity of his conduct, and that the Spanish authorities in Cuba would not sanction any act that could violate the rights or treat with disrespect the sovereignty of this nation. The question of the seizure of the brig *Mary Lowell* at one of the Bahama Islands by Spanish authorities is now the subject of correspondence between this government and those of Spain and Great Britain. The Captain General of Cuba, about May last, issued a proclamation authorizing search to be made of vessels on the high seas. Immediate remonstrance was made against this, whereupon the Captain General issued a new proclamation limiting the right of search to vessels of the United States, so far as authorized under the treaty of 1795. This proclamation, however, was immediately withdrawn.