

## Spanish Outrages on the American Flag.

We can find but one explanation for the notoriously unwarranted proceedings of the Spanish cruisers in the neighboring waters of the Island of Cuba. The seizure of the American brig Mary Lowell, while lying at Ragged Island in charge of the English customs officers; the landing of an armed force on the British territory of Stirrup Key in pursuit of the crew of the steamer Comandantario; the capture of the British schooner Jeff Davis while at sea, and the shooting of two of her passengers; the seizing of two passengers on board the American schooner Lizzie Major, while many leagues from shore, and taking them as prisoners to Calbarien, perhaps to be executed without trial; and the final decision of the Spanish Admiralty Court in Havana, reported to-day in our telegraphic columns, that the brig Mary Lowell is a legal prize, are all such flagrant violations of the law of nations that they can have but one interpretation, and that is that they are parts of a meditated design, the object of which has not been made apparent.

The Spanish naval officers are, in general, well educated men, and are far from being so ignorant of military and naval law as the commission of these acts would seem to indicate. But even if those holding subordinate grades are not versed in international law, their superior officers are not only well read and apt in the use of its dusty tomes, but in the organization of the military and naval bureaus in Cuba ample provision is made for the constant intervention of competent legal skill in their proceedings. The plea of ignorance is therefore inadmissible, and some other reason for these flagrant outrages must be found. To our mind this exists in the conviction on the part of the Spanish authorities that they are incompetent to put down the existing revolution in Cuba, and that the best solution for their difficulties is to so complicate the matter with neighboring Powers as to bring forcible intervention and thus save the honor of Spain. It would be dishonor to be whipped by Cuba unaided; but to give up Cuba under a complicated pressure from the United States and England would not incur that stigma and would leave open the claim for remuneration, as intimated recently by our Madrid correspondent.

But whatever may be the motive of the Spanish officers in committing these outrages, the safety and integrity of the American flag upon the high seas and in the ports of a friendly nation must be secured. Mr. Fish may entertain grave fears that a course of proper self-respect on our part will involve us in unpleasant relations with England, France and Spain; but the American people entertain no such tremors. They, on the other hand, have a pretty thorough conviction that it is time our government did something effective towards making the Stars and Stripes a safe flag upon the ocean, as it was in the days of yore. No principles of maritime law are more clear or more universally admitted than that of the national jurisdiction extending to the distance of one marine league from the shore, and that when a ship is at sea beyond the marine league from shore she forms a part of the territory of the nation whose flag she bears. These undoubted principles of maritime law cover all the cases we have cited above, and leave no doubt as to the course that should be pursued.

Action, and not discussion, is the only safe course for President Grant and his administration. Admiral Porter will give him much better advice than Mr. Hamilton Fish, with his admitted fears; and as the facts of the case of the Mary Lowell have been already placed before the government we look for no delay. She is an American vessel, was seized in British waters, had not been near Cuba, and there can be no possible claim that she is subject to Spanish jurisdiction. Events are crowding on the administration of General Grant, and he must meet them with vigor or be overwhelmed. By all means let these questions be submitted for negotiation to the Navy Department, and let Admiral Porter be directed to give the reasons if they are wanted.