THE QUEEN OF ISLANDS, AND THE KING OF RIVERS
CORA MONTGOMERY

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THE

QUEEN OF ISLANDS.

CUBA AND HER DESTINY.

An oppressed nation stands in the gates of our confederation and pleads with God and man for liberty. Borne down by foreign soldiers, for whose support she is taxed, until almost the necessaries of life are doubled in price; deprived of freedom of speech, of press, and of conscience; forbid to discuss or even petition for relief, and overwhelmed by importations of slaves from Africa, whose presence she does not desire, but who are held upon her disarmed citizens in perpetual threat, Cuba has reached that point of suffering in which it becomes suicide and crime to remain passive. Cuba belongs to the Cubans, and they have a right higher than human conventions—a right directly from the throne of Divine Justice—to govern themselves on the soil they give to civilization by their intelligence, and to utility by their toil. Not to admit this axiom is heresy to our republican creed, and we are false to the faith of our revolutionary sires if we deny to others the truths which they bled to leave us in sure heritage. If Washington acted right and Jefferson reasoned well, Cuba cannot be wrong in following their example.

Most of the Creoles of the Island are republicans at heart, and the press and institutions of the Union are the object
and theme of many secret meetings and midnight prayers. Exile, imprisonment, ruin and death, await the hardy apostles of freedom; but still they offer themselves freely to the work, and their number, courage, influence and combination disturbs the rest of the governors of Cuba, who in vain seek to stifle them with new oppressions. On one occasion a party of these determined revolutionists conveyed to the woods a small printing press, such as Franklin used and "Common Sense" was printed on, and there in silence of night they worked off their revolutionary appeals. This and every other effort was pressed too close by the military and police, and some friends of Cuba, connected with the New-York press, encouraged the idea of establishing an Anglo-Spanish paper at a convenient point beyond the reach of the Governor-General, from whence the truth and light could be cast into Cuba, and her popular thought moulded into some form of general organization. *La Verdad (The Truth)* was thus called into existence, and its plan may be useful to other revolutionists who cannot print the truth at home. The paper is—and has been two years—issued at New-York, and circulated gratuitously in the Island of Cuba and Porto Rico, and all along the margin of the Mexican Gulf, from whence the aroma of its sentiments penetrates to its destined mark. The talent and money of the Cubans support it so ably and liberally that the leading personages of the Spanish government are bounteously supplied with valuable information concerning their own conduct and affairs through this medium, and not less have the American journals found in its columns their most copious and reliable accounts of the situation of Cuba. The Island press is not allowed to speak of public affairs except in such terms as the royal censors direct; and the world at large mainly learns through it and by fragments from private letters—also written under dread of a strict post-office
inquisition—what Cuba thinks and suffers. Under the counsels of "Verdad" committee of exiles, and in union with her phalanx of resolute sons at home, Cuba is organizing for revolt; and perhaps even as I write the sword is flashing from the scabbard: but whether the effort of to-day is successful, or temporarily quenched in blood, the seed is sown and the harvest near. Spain may not be richer for the fruits of Cuban industry in 1850; and what American would put forth his hand to aid in riveting the fetters of a people who bravely strike at kingly oppressions, and risk all for the enfranchisement of their country and children?

"Cuba has the power, as well as the will and wisdom, to be free. She cannot be kept forever in bonds, endowed as she is with a population of 1,200,000; with a revenue of twenty millions; with the intercourse and light attending sixty millions of outward and inward trade; with a territory equal to some of our noblest States; with a soil teeming with the choicest productions; with her forests of the most precious woods; with her magnificent and commanding harbors; with her unmatch'd position as the warder of the Mexican Gulf, and the guardian of the communication with the Pacific. Cuba the peerless—Cuba the desired—Cuba the Queen of the American Islands—will not consent to remain always a manacled slave at our threshold; and when her chains do break, the echo will vibrate, whether we choose or not, strongly on our interests. The United States can no more say, "Cuba is nought to us," than Cuba can detach herself from her anchorage in the portals of our American sea, or her sentinels over against the entrance of the thousand armed Mississippi."

When the inevitable day arrives in which the key of the Gulf falls from the hand of its European master, it must take one of these three positions; and either of them will involve grave considerations for this republic:—
1. Cuba, by itself or with Porto Rico, may sustain an independent attitude.

2. United to St. Domingo and other islands under the protection of England, she may form a "Republic of Antilles," subject to a preponderating negro population, and obedient to the British policy of creating a colored empire in the lap of the twin continent of America.

3. Cuba annexed to this Confederation may make another pillar in our temple of Union, and another balance-wheel to the Confederation.

The fate of Cuba, with her million souls and boundless heretofore, may be submitted to the verdict of our people before 1850 has run its last sands, and a just, wise and magnanimous nation would not willingly meet unprepared this momentous question.

Calmly, soberly, and dispassionately, like true and loving children of the Union, reverencing and guarding in filial love our mighty nursing mother; like republicans and like Christians, ready to admit and perform our whole duty to man, let us candidly examine our future relations with Cuba.

It is more than idle to build upon the conservation of the status quo, for even those who affect to preach it must see that it cannot be maintained amid the roiling powers and crushing thrones of Europe with which it is entangled, and whenever or however the change comes, it must result in Cuba annexed, or Cuba independent.

The comparative value to the Union, of Cuba as a part of ourselves, or Cuba subject to foreign, if not hostile influences, has a threefold bearing on our interests. It affects us as citizens of individual States—as a nation in the face of other nations—and as a race in relation with the other races of the earth. In weighing, as we ought, each separate consideration by its own merits, it is desirable to avoid per-
plexing theories, and bring each phase in succession to the test of solid facts and indisputable arithmetic.

WILL THE ANNEXATION OF CUBA BENEFIT THE DOMESTIC INTERESTS OF THE UNION?

Cuba seems placed, by the finger of a kindly Providence, between the Atlantic and the Mexican seas, at the crossing point of all the great lines of our immense coasting trade, to serve as the centre of exchange for a domestic commerce as extensive as our territory, and as free as our institutions. It is only after a careful study of the incredible extent and variety of the products of our thirty States, with all their grades of climate, and in the whole circumference of their natural and manufactured wealth, and then only with the map of North America distinctly before the eye, that the importance of Cuba, as a point of reception and distribution, can be fairly understood. If her matchless harbors were not locked up by foreign jealousies, and our ships could but find themselves always at home for shelter, water, and refreshment, at this commodious halting place, it would be worth a round purchase sum to our traders, independent of the safe keeping of the Gulf, and the command of her precious staples.

From her central throne she sees our long line of coast break away in numerous links of diverse interests and productions, which must yet intercommunicate past her doors to come to market and value. To the northward she glances along the two thousand miles of seaboard and deep harbors of the "Old Thirteen," all turned toward her to receive her sugar and coffee, and supply her with bread and clothing, even though under the limits and disadvantages of the restrictions of her Spanish masters.