

How is Cuba to be Made Free?

There are conflicting opinions, it appears, as to the truth of the news from Cuba relative to the disastrous defeat of the Spaniards under General Puello by the Cubans under General Jordan; that is to say, the Spanish agents or officials here pretend to doubt it. There has been no evidence presented, however, to show that the despatch sent to us was not true, and considering that it came through Havana, where there is a censorship over the telegraph, that the details are particularly circumstantial, and that there had been an apprehension for some time past of a disaster to Puello, there is no reason to doubt its reliability. Still we know by experience during our late war, and, in fact, by experience relative to most wars, that accounts of successes from both sides are sometimes manufactured or frequently exaggerated for the purpose of producing an effect upon the public mind. The Spaniards in Cuba have shown themselves adepts at this all through the struggle in Cuba. The war there will probably drag along, unless prevented by the United States, in the same way, and we shall be furnished with similar conflicting accounts.

One thing is significant and worthy of remark, if the news of Puello's defeat proves true, as we believe it is, and that is that the Cubans were commanded by an American, General Jordan, who understands his business. There were other Americans, probably, in his army—men who, like himself, have had experience in war, and had both the coolness and courage for the occasion. Jordan is a thoroughly educated military man and had won the reputation of a good general in our late war. He is just the officer the Cubans needed, and if Cespedes has made him Commander-in-Chief, as reported, it shows the good sense of the Cuban President. There are plenty of good officers and fighters, both in the South and North, who would be glad to take a hand in the war for republican freedom in Cuba if they could get there. It is a pity they have been prevented from going by the overstrained vigilance and hostility of the government at Washington and through the stupid blunders of those who assume to be Cuban leaders in this country. A force of two or three thousand at most, or, perhaps, a less force, of such Americans, would soon make short work of the Spaniards. The war would not drag along for a long period; the island would be saved from devastation, and Cuban independence would be secured beyond all doubt.

But what is our government going to do? Will it permit this slaughter to go on indefinitely, Cuba to be ruined and our large trade with the island destroyed? If the Secretary of State and administration think they are a match for the astute Spanish chiefs and diplomats in a pretended negotiation for the sale of Cuba they are likely to find themselves deceived. The Spaniards may amuse the administration and continue to hold it as an ally for the suppression of the insurrection under the pretext that they are waiting for a favorable opportunity to sell Cuba; but will the freedom of the Cubans ever be attained in that way? May not the administration be cheated in the end? If there be between the Spanish government and our own a movement, as reported, for the cession of Cuba to the United States, the only way to accomplish the object is to give Spain notice in a decisive manner that the bargain must be closed—that there can be no delay. The other alternative, and, perhaps, the shortest, best and cheapest one, is to accord belligerent rights to the Cubans, and to let our brave and experienced warriors go to the rescue if they choose. If the government do not follow one or the other course it will be responsible for all the blood that must be shed, will do violence to the sympathy and wishes of the American people, will lose the finest opportunity for extending republican liberty in America and enlarging our commerce and power, and will sink into disgrace in the eyes of the country and history.