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Cuban Liberty.

Comonucement July 13th 1855.

J. D. Wade - Virginia.

Cuban Liberty.

Cuba stands without a rival the loveliest and richest island of the sea. She embraces an area of 32000 sqr miles; and although her present population is a little more than a million and a half, she is capable of sustaining that number indefinitely increased. In giving her the form of the crescent, Nature herself seems to have also proclaimed ^{"Crescens"} for her motto:

But alas! instead of progress, degeneracy seems to have been substituted; and although the brightest and purest sun smiles upon her by day, and at night - (such nights as the inhabitants of Eden might have envied) the constellation - "Southern Cross" - keeps watch, still her condition politically and morally is ^{that of} the most abject deformity and poverty.

Behold some of ^{the} evils which she suffers! See how impure and unhealthy are the streams ^{of influence} which permeate her entire system! The press is silenced unless it echoes every note of the government however diabolical it may be. Foreign newspapers are prohibited unless they are such as can pass tyrannic inspection. Many of our best American

Newspapers are prohibited by name; and the public mails are ransacked and pillaged by insolent officials. Suspicion of crime, particularly political crime, is crime; and the innocent are thrown into prison without trial. Capital punishment is inflicted for trivial political offences. A despicable system of surveillance and espionage worthy only of timid and cruel tyrants, is every where established. Decent Christian burial is denied to deceased Protestants. Protestant worship is forbidden. Outrageous extortions under the guise of office fees, is practised, without scruple, especially upon foreigners, whenever a shadow of pretence can be raised.

Can anything be done to rescue the Crescent-Isle from the Hydra-headed Monster that is thus preying upon its vitals? Can she by any means be delivered from this Gluttonous, Prometheusian Eagle? If anything can raise her from the dark and bloody confines of superstition, to the light and liberty of truth - if anything can free her from the galling fetters of civil, religious & political tyranny, that means is, - by annexation; And then May

we not safely say that freedom such as ours shall be hers?

Very much has been said of late about Cuban liberty, and Cuban annexation. And truly more important subjects could not engage our attention; subjects full of importance to the world, (that is now regarding us) ^{by whom we are now regarded} with vigilant and sleepless eye, to see, whether we will still preserve the dignity and honor of our cause, or prove unworthy our republican name: - subjects of intense interest to us - lovers of liberty - who desire the cause of civilization, freedom and truth to spread and prevail until all nations shall be brought under their saving influence.

And is the annexation of Cuba desirable? So far as she is concerned we have seen that it is. And without doubt her situation, (making her at once the key to ^{the} Gulf of Mexico) the peculiar quality and fertility of her soil, and her climate render her to us, especially attractive. Of this "Eden of the Gulf" it may be said as of the "Mt. Zion of the Jews. beautiful art-thou for situation" (*Cuba, Florida*); or in the words of a distinguished Professor "lovely Cuba - passing lovely though in tears." But not only would she be to us a

delight, an ornament, ^{but} her proximity would ren-
der her a strong-hold of defence against invading
foes; while without her, our southern possessions
are exposed, and the delightful valley of the
Mississippi with all her treasure is defenceless.

Passing by the consideration of desirableness on
account of her abundant productiveness of cotton
and sugar, and her delicious fruits and spices
which no one can regard of small moment; let
us look for a moment at her climate. Here
in our own fair Columbia, alone of all the Earth
the genius of Liberty having found climate and spirits
congenial, has deigned to rest from her weary-
wanderings; - yet this heaven-favoured land is
unfriendly to many of her sons and daughters:
Failing health forces them to seek the soft and
balmy air of the isle where perpetual summer
reigns. But this they cannot do under its
existing ecclesiastical and political government
with any degree of pleasure, or even of safety.
In proof of this, a case is at hand, which shall
remain forever a monument of Cuban
avarice and tyrannical cruelty. - A.

merchant of one of our cities, an highly re-
spectable Gentleman with the hope of restoring
his lovely wife whose health was declining
reached the island in December, but just as
the spring was beginning to dawn, and Nature
to assume her most beautiful garb - this fair
flower too delicate for earth was transplanted
to the celestial garden to bloom in eternal
youth. The sorrow-stricken husband mourns
his insuperable loss, prays the dear remains
to his bosom and asks for a place to bury
his dead. Is it granted? He is told that
by paying 17 dollars, ^{with} (and) 3 dollars extra
for the privilege of a coffin, and ^{placing} ~~placing~~
ropes in the middle, and at both ends, he
may bury that sacred form in the common
grounds, the receptacle ^{of} ~~of~~ all blackguards, and
pirates and assassins! He is further more
informed that if he buries anywhere else, he
will be fined 2000 dollars, ^{And 5000 and} ~~And 5000 and~~
5 years imprisonment ^{will be imposed} ~~if~~ he removes ~~without~~
authority the body from the island.

Could there be a deeper wound to the
feelings of a sensitive American Gentleman?
And he is our brother and he liable to

like treatment. Could there be a greater
insult to (the God of) humanity? Could
there be a greater indignity offered our flag?
Surely we are interested in this matter.
How long shall we remain silent? The Black
Warrior case is yet fresh in our memory -
How long shall we suffer, calmly suffer,
the honor of our flag to be insulted?
Something should be done, - something must
be done. Justice, humanity and
truth call loudly that by ^{some} and by all
means, we should come to the rescue.

J. Douglas Wade.

July 1st 1855.



1855

Commencement Oration of J. Douglas Wade, Class of 1855
Transcribed by Chris Altieri, May 2008,
Edited by Tristan Deveney, June 2008

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Cuba stands without a rival the loveliest and richest island of the sea. She embraces an area of 32000 sqr miles; and although her present population is a little more than a million and a half, she is capable of sustaining that number indefinitely increased. In giving her the form of the crescent Nature herself seems to have also proclaimed “crescendo” for her motto: But alas! Instead of progress, degeneracy seems to have been substituted; And although the brightest and purest sun smiles upon her by day, and at night—(such nights as the inhabitants of Eden might have envied) the constellation “Southern Cross” keeps watch, still her condition politically and morally is that of the most abject deformity and poverty.

Behold some of the evils which she suffers! See how impure and unhealthy are the streams of influence which permeate her entire system! “The press is silenced unless it echoes every note of the government however diabolical it may be.” Foreign newspapers are prohibited unless they are such as can pass tyrannic inspection. Many of our best American

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Can anything be done to rescue the Crescent Isle from the hydra-headed monster that is thus preying upon its vitals? Can she by any means be delivered from this gluttonous Promethean Eagle? If anything can raise her from the dark and bloody confines of superstition, to the light and liberty of truth—if anything can free her from the galling fetters of civil, religious & political tyranny, that means is, by annexation; And then may

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Mexico) the peculiar quality and fertility of her soil, and her climate render her, to us, especially attractive. Of this “Eden of the Gulf” it may be said as of the Mt. Zion of the Jews “beautiful art thou for situation” [obscured or erased parenthetical statement – O Hispaniola?] or in the words of a distinguished Professor “lovely Cuba—passing lovely though in tears” But—not only would she be to us a

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July 1st 1855

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