

ADDRESSES

DELIVERED AT THE

CELEBRATION OF THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY

IN HONOR OF THE

MARTYRS FOR CUBAN FREEDOM

By GASPAR BETANCOURT, Esq.,

PRESIDENT OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY JUNTA,

AND

J. S. THRASHER, Esq.,

AT THE

MECHANICS' INSTITUTE HALL,

New Orleans, Sept. 1, 1854.

NEW ORLEANS:

PRINTED BY SHERMAN, WHARTON & CO.,
Corner Gravier and Camp street.

1854.

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ADDRESS OF J. S. THRASHER, Esq.

The circumstances under which we meet to-night, my hearers, are such as awaken the most profound sympathies of the human heart. Cuba mourns her glorious dead, and a land which she cannot yet call by her endearing name of brother, gathers the fast-falling tears in her bosom, while the sea-girt home of our brethren still groans beneath the oppression of European despotism. The heroes whom we to-day honor, shed their life-currents, and entered the sombre portals of death in their devotion to the cause of Cuban freedom, and the hearts of the sons and daughters of Cuba swell with gratitude to their memories, and every lip utters their names with praise.

Cuba mourns her glorious dead! Her children, who have preferred to drink the bitter cup of exile even to its very dregs, assemble here to-night to do honor to their names; but their brethren, bound by a thousand ties to their native home, can render a willing homage to their memories only in the deepest recesses of the soul. Their hopes wither, and their free impulses are hidden before the present power of the tyrant; but from every Cuban home, from every palace and from every cottage within the borders, there goes forth to-night a wail for the Hero-dead, and thousands upon thousands of heart-breathed prayers ascend to the throne of grace on their behalf. To-day every Cuban heart is draped in woe upon its every altar burns the bright sacrificial flame in secret homage to the Martyrs for Cuban Freedom.

But it is not the Cubans alone that do honor to their memories. The hearts of the American people lift a grateful incense to their names, and the spectacle presented here to-night in the gathering of the freemen of America, in sympathy with the sons and daughters of Cuba, is a living evidence of that great union-sympathy that exists between the aspirations of Free Cuba, and the glories and attainments of our patriot fathers.

The crimson currents that have poured down the hill-sides of Cascorra, Siguanea, of Candelaria and Atares, have flown from American and from Cuban bosoms, and, uniting in one glorious stream in the plains of Cuba, will continue to flow, bearing the germs of freedom onward, until it unites with that more potent torrent that waters the tree of Liberty in the history of this fair land. In the union of the freemen of America and Cuba, who meet to do honor to those hands that have unfurled the banners of liberty upon the hills of the Pairis, —to render a grateful homage to the heroes of a still struggling cause, —is but the type, the cheering type, of that great sympathy and union that common brotherhood, which shall yet exist, and gladden the hearts of nations who have a separate and different origin, but who are all animated by one common impulse, and who have all one common aim.

When this band of brothers united in life in their glorious and holy effort to elevate the people of Cuba to the plain of human freedom, and to open for it a career upon the pathway of Progress and Liberty, they bound Free Cuba, at the very moment of her birth, to the heartfelt sympathies of the American people; and, united in their death, their memories shall ever continue to strengthen the bonds that should exist between the freemen of either land.

What Cuban heart does not swell with pride as memory recurs to the past, and the scenes of Cascorra and Guinia de Miranda, of Las Pozas and Frias, leaping to life upon the living page of history, fill the contemplation with the remembrance of the heroic deeds of those whose names we are here to honor?

What Cuban heart does not swell with burning desire of vengeance upon the tyrannidons of Spain, as memory recurs to the slaughters of Puerto Principe and Trinidad, of Atares and the patriot scaffolds of Havana? And in these sentiments whether they be those of joy or hate, how many American hearts beat in unison with the patriot impulses of Cuba! How many are there, whether they contemplate the noble deeds of that gallant band that drove the serried hosts of the tyrant back, and were overcome only by the elements; or whether, they look with horror upon the inhuman butchery on the hill of Atares, who at once exclaim: I, too, would a friend and brother there!

It is this union for love or for hate, for glory or for vengeance, that constitutes the true union of the living before the tomb of the glorious dead; and the remembrance of their heroic deeds and united martyrdom shall ever live, green in our memories, and perpetuate and endear the bands of our common brotherhood. If their union in death that constitutes our union in life. When this band of others clasped hands to strike a common blow for liberty, and together entered the dark valley of the shadow of death," they left to us, and to each of us, an immortal legacy, to which it is impossible that either can prove recreant.

The advocates of European conservatism and the defenders of the divine right of kings may inculcate a division of the races; may teach that the descendants of the Saxon and of the Iberian can never entertain any other sentiment towards each other than that of hatred; that the races are intuitively antagonistic, and that they can never meet but in the strife for mutual extermination; but here is the proof, here in this common tomb, and in these common glories, we have the perfect demonstration that the Iberian and the Saxon can unite. Here we learn that, in their great love of liberty, they are animated by one common impulse, and have one common aim. If we imitate their example, and, doing as they did, lay aside the petty prejudices that would arm us against each other, and contemplate only our mutual love of freedom, there is no antagonism, there is no war of races; Northern and Southern America would stand united before the world upon the noblest sentiment that can animate the heart of man: liberty and the elevation of the masses.

This band of heroic martyrs has solved for us the great questions of American progress, and of the regeneration and perpetuity of the descendants of the Iberian upon this continent. It is the only solution consistent with our precepts and the honor, with our interests and their welfare, with our institutions and their aspirations.

A single glance at history is sufficient to demonstrate this great truth. Our fathers, fleeing from the tyranny of European king-craft, founded upon these new social institutions and political theories, based upon the sacred right of self-government. Their children went on subduing the wilderness and taming the savage plain, founding new states upon the most perfect political theories the world has ever known, and under their beneficent influences, the intellectual and moral development of man has surpassed anything the most civilized nations of Europe can show.

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Here man is prosperous, because his enterprise and his labour are untrammelled here man is happy because he is free. And is all this prosperity and happiness for mankind to be restricted and walled in by imaginary lines drawn upon paper maps? Are the sacred precepts of that great charter of liberty, the Declaration of our Independence, to remain for ever the exclusive right and privilege of this confederacy? Is their influence ended and our mission fulfilled, when there shall be no more wilderness or savage plain within our borders; "No!" shouts every American lip; and "No!" echoes back every American heart. Our example is before them, and our sympathies are with them, when ever a people strive to imitate the labors of our fathers.

They have striven to imitate them. From the Sabine to Cape Horn the Spanish colonists have hugged those glorious precepts to their hearts, and everywhere have driven the slaves of tyranny from the Continent. Inexperienced in the art of self-government, and unacquainted with its practical working, they have committed many errors, and have suffered and are suffering much. Giving undue heed to the teachings of the despot's minions, they have sedulously avoided the only true brotherhood that possesses any sympathy for them, the brotherhood of the freemen of North America.

For Cuba, the last remnant of the Spanish power in the New World, was reserved the glorious task of avoiding the errors of her elder sisters, and of initiating the true theory of their regeneration and welfare. She has perceived their errors, and wishing to avoid them, invites the brave and lion-hearted among ourselves to aid her in her glorious struggle for freedom. Let us have mutual sufferings and mutual glories, she exclaims. Let us unite in one common blow for liberty, the memory of our united deeds shall awaken a sentiment of national pride in the Cuban heart, while the contemplation of their glorious results shall bring a glow of joy to the American bosom. So shall our children unite in one common brotherhood, and a common pride and a common joy shall destroy the last refuge of the tyrant's precept of a war of the races.

Such was the aim and such the mission of our hero-dead. This is the precious legacy they have left to us. Brothers, shall we carry it out to its glorious end? Or shall we rather, in violation of every precept our fathers bled to establish, deny the right of the people of Cuba to strike for liberty, and recognize no right in the warm and brave hearts of these republics to aid them in their holy cause?

Yes! That mission will be carried out. The blood of the martyrs for Cuba and freedom has cemented the union of the races. Their bright example sheds a new light upon the freemen of this fair land, and in obedience to their desires and their destiny, they will gladly carry the blessings of their free institutions, and the guarantees of their practical experience, not only to the wilderness and the desert, but also to already organized communities that first contemplate, then admire, and finally thirst for the harmonious freedom that we enjoy. And when Cuba shall be free, and from her borders the messengers shall go forth, bearing the joyful tidings of union and peace, liberty and happiness, to the struggling children of her elder sisters, the glad peans of regenerated millions shall proclaim: The Union of the Martyrs was the Union of the Races!

ADDRESS OF GASPAR BETANCOURT, Esq.,

PRESIDENT OF THE CUBAN JUNTA.

GENTLEMEN—This morning we have congregated in the Catholic Church to fill a religious duty; to-night, we meet in this hall to fill our duty as patriots. This morning we implored the Divine clemency and mercy for the repose of the souls of our brethren. To-night, we come here to commemorate the anniversary of the death of the heroes and martyrs who have yielded up their lives to the cause of Cuban liberty and independence. Each in its proper place is best placed; to heaven that which belongs to heaven, and to the world that which belongs to the world.

These religious and patriotic acts; this ardor and enthusiasm with which the Cuban people hastens to render its homage of admiration and gratitude to the heroes who have sacrificed their lives for the freedom of our country; these acts, gentlemen, do honor to the Cuban people, for besides demonstrating the religious feeling, the patriotism and civilization of the Cubans, it revives and strengthens in the heart the hope, that the cause for which Lopez, Agüero, Armenteros, Crittenden and their companions suffered, is neither dead nor hopeless. A religious patriotic and enlightened people, may be confident that the cause to which it devotes its heart and soul must ever triumph.

Gentlemen, unhappily great men have died; but great ideas, the great causes that glitter in the brain and move the hearts of these men, can never die.

This truth, so simple that even the children who hear me may comprehend it, has, notwithstanding, been ever beyond the comprehension of the Spanish Government; for had it comprehended it, Cuba would not to-day be in the position in which she is placed. Though Spain has struggled for fifty years with the revolutionists of America, she does not yet comprehend, gentlemen, nor has she ever comprehended the causes of those revolutions, nor has she found a remedy for them. Headstrong in her self-conceived policy, and confident in the only measures she knows to secure her power, she has believed that in murdering men, she murders thought and the ideas that interest the nations.

All despotisms, are stupid and sanguinary; but Spanish despotism, besides being stupid and sanguinary, is incorrigible. Neither the fifty years of revolution in America, nor the experience of its own misfortunes and losses, nor the situation into which its errors have dragged it, nor anything whatever, has been sufficient to induce it to change its policy, to alter its measures for securing its dominion: and all that it has done before in America, upon the continent, it is now repeating in Cuba—nay, I err; I say but little, and I wish to say all—in Cuba she wishes to add to Spanish barbarity, African ferocity. It is well that the Cubans should know it, and so understand it.

It remains for me, gentlemen, to prove what I have affirmed; and for this purpose, let us throw a rapid glance upon the events of the Cuban revolution.

The sublime idea, the noble sentiment of liberty and independence for Cuba bursts forth in the Central department in the city of Puerto Príncipe; a handful of young men, with their noble chief Joaquin de Agüero, pronounce the Government forces, a hundred fold their number, pursue them, and the chief and three others are captured; upon the execution ground they are shot in order to warn and to terrify the people. What is the result? The sublime idea leaving those four dying heads, seeks refuge in those of forty thousand men in that jurisdiction, and these to-day think and feel as Agüero, Zayas, Benavides and Betancourt thought and felt.

Soon after, the same idea breaks out in the city of Trinidad. Armenteros and another handful of brave men pronounce. The Government with its numerous forces gets them into its power, and the chief and two others are shot upon a scaffold. What is the result? Through three men murdered by the Government, thirty thousand minds receive the idea, and thirty thousand hearts beat for the

same cause that was defended by Armenteros, Hernandez and Arcis.

Later still, Gen. Lopez lands 400 brave men at Playitas. Crittenden is separated from the main body, and with fifty of his companions falls into the power of the Spanish Government. It prepares the horrid spectacle—a butchery of men—a scene fit only for cannibals in the eyes of the civilized and christian world—and shooting fifty Americans whose hearts and minds glowed with the idea of the independence of Cuba, it believes it has assured its triumph. Well? Fifty thousand men around Atares are to-day animated by the same spirit, and disposed to defend the cause for which Crittenden and his companions died.

Finally, the Government takes prisoner the chief of chiefs, and, erecting an ignominious scaffold, it congratulates and felicitates itself; for now, in laying low the head that contained the entire programme of Cuban revolution, it believes that it will murder the cause of Cuban Independence. And what is the result? From Cape San Antonio to that of Maisi, there is not a Cuban heart that is not moved in the cause for which Narciso Lopez died; and in 1854 there are more men, more hearts, more sympathies, more resources and means ready to be sacrificed for the cause of Cuban independence than Narciso Lopez had in 1851; and never more clearly than to-day has the Government revealed its fears and its impotency to maintain its unjust dominion.

National independence, civil, religious and commercial liberty—these, gentlemen, are the four articles of the revolutionary programme of Cuba, the four corner stones upon which the magnificent structure of the Cuban Republic must be built.

I believe, gentlemen, that it will not be inconsistent with the object of our assemblage here, to emit a few ideas upon the articles of this programme. I believe that in serving the cause of Cuba and freedom, whether it be in person, or with the mind or with money, be it in whatever mode it may, it is a rendering of honor to the memory of Lopez, and of the martyrs who have died for Cuba and her freedom.

National independence for Cuba is the first article of our revolutionary programme. In this you will perceive how far from the thought of Narciso Lopez and the leaders of the revolution was the idea of annexing Cuba to the United States by measures that are unworthy, humiliating and derogatory to the dignity of the people of Cuba. In this you will comprehend how great must be the pain, and how just the indignation of every sensible and high-minded Cuban to see that it is the Government of the United States, that it is the government of the model republic, where we, the Cubans, have strengthened our souls with the solid principles of independence, of liberty, of the rights and dignity of man, that it is the American Government which endeavors to acquire possession of Cuba by means of a purchase, as if it were a grazing farm of vile cattle, that it may improve the breed. Spain, gentlemen, is an unjust mother; Spain is a cruel and unnatural mother; but still she is a mother, and the stripes, the insults, and the oppression of a mother have never brought infamy to her innocent children. The Spanish Government in Cuba is the thief that robs and despoils Cuba of all she possesses, but the Government of the United States is the ravisher that violates and dishonors her. I, in the name of Narciso Lopez, in the name of the people of Cuba, in the bosom of this assembly, and in the presence of Almighty God, make this solemn protest against the ravisher and violator of Cuba.

If the idea of the annexation of Cuba to the United States has ever had the slightest consideration in the revolutionary programme of the chiefs and apostles of the revolution, it has always been with the understanding that this attainment should be the result of the sovereign will of the Cuban people, without stain or dishonor to Cuba; that, as a beautiful and rich maiden emancipated from the paternal authority, she may select from her admirers the bridegroom that best pleases her, and thus fill the station of a lady, and not that of a sad, redeemed slave. If such were the destiny of Cuba, if such were the will of the Cuban people, in full possession of their territory, and in the use of their proper sovereignty, I surely, will not be he that shall censure or regret it. But Cuba bought, Cuba sold like a vile cattle farm, to be improved! Rather let it sink into the abysses

of the Caribbean sea and the Gulf of Mexico, than that the true and honor-loving sons of Cuba shall thus contemplate their own dishonor.

There is another point of our revolutionary programme upon which I would improve the present occasion to emit a few ideas, that I consider of the highest importance now, and of the greatest transcendancy in the not very distant future of our beloved country.

On other anniversaries of the 1st of September, as on the present, I have heard among the Cubans, I will not say censure, but certainly heartfelt complaints that the Catholic church has not permitted us to honor the martyrs for Cuban freedom with those funeral ceremonies that we are accustomed to see in Catholic countries, with the ostentation and pomp that we have desired. Upon this point I wish to be very explicit.

At the present time, when we are on the eve of our revolution, and of the establishment of a Democratic Republican Government, it is necessary that some Cuban should have the courage or the rashness to say in the midst of a Cuban assembly, that there can be no independence, that there can be no civil liberty, where there is not religious independence and freedom. Wherever and however the church is connected with the State, and that which is called the religion of the State is established, there and then no other end can be attained than a change in the form of slavery. Be the religion whatever it may, Christian Catholic, Christian Protestant, Christian Greek, Hebrew or Mahometan; and under whatever form of government, absolute, monarchy, constitutional aristocracy, democratic republican, it is the same thing, for wherever the state and the church are leagued together there must necessarily exist a double, a political and religious slavery; there shall we behold a people oppressed by tyrants and deceived by impostors.

This principle of the independence or separation of church and State, is the more necessary in a republic, from the fact that it is rigorously in accordance with the doctrine of him of Nazareth: "My kingdom," he says, "is not of this world;" and when he was asked if tribute should be paid to Cæsar, he said conclusively, "Render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's." In whatever manner the direction and doctrine of Christ be violated, and the church mixes itself in political affairs, uniting with the Government, then the church exists in a state of concubinage, in a state of adultery which is worse than concubinage, separated from her legitimate husband, and delivered up to the embraces of the temporal power, in order to serve its views, its caprices, its machinations, and worldly interests. Those whom Jesus Christ intended should be fishers of souls, Governments have converted into fishers of bodies, into bailiffs and catchpoles, informers, and inquisitors of men. Permit the church and state to league together, and you will then see the cathedra of the Holy Ghost transformed into a tribune from which to pronounce funeral orations and panegyrics with fulsome praise of kings and emperors, of great captains and conquerors, whom none of us perhaps would wish to imitate, for the greater number of them have been the scourge and terror of humanity. Then you will not be permitted to celebrate with panegyric and funeral ceremonies the defenders of the rights of the people, nor those who sacrifice their lives for the cause of liberty. Woe to Cuba, gentlemen, if she establishes the not less impolitic than impious creation of a State religion, and if she does not establish as her fundamental political law the absolute separation of the church from the Government of the Republic!

It is not only the material force of arms that is employed to perpetuate the dominion of Spain in Cuba, and to frustrate every project for a revolution. Other arms even more terrible are used against Cuba and the Cubans. Diplomacy and logic are set to work to maintain what is called order, or the *status quo* in Cuba. We have already seen the Government of the United States interfering on more than one occasion in favor of Spain, to make abortive the plans and projects for liberating Cuba. At this very moment, with the project of purchasing Cuba, we see it flattering and consulting the wishes of the Queens and Kings of Europe, without even deeming the wishes and interests of the people of Cuba—of the legitimate owners of the soil, and who are, according to the American theory or

decalogue, the true fountain of sovereignty—worthy of being consulted, even in an indirect manner. We have just seen France and England soliciting more allies in order to guarantee to Spain the possession of Cuba, to cut off all progress in her revolution, and to interfere with her social condition and economic interests, which the Cubans and only the Cubans have the right to regulate. To this same end the opposition press lends its assistance, employing its logic to discredit the Cuban revolution, to destroy the prestige of its leaders and apostles, using now sophistry, now diatribes, and even ridiculing the people of Cuba.

Among its sophisms, that which has been most often repeated against the Cuban revolution, is the following:

That the people of Cuba are not prepared for liberty, nor are they capable of directing their own interests.

If the people of Cuba are not prepared for liberty and are not capable of directing their own interests, what then has Spain taught us in the three hundred and sixty years that she has been schooling us? Whose is the fault—the master's or the pupils? And would it not be madness to continue to pay, and to pay so dearly, a master who does not know the art he professes to teach, not even enough to apply it in his own house? The truth is, the poor Spanish people have been struggling for fifty years for freedom and a popular representative Government, and even now has launched itself into a revolution to revalidate the few rights it had conquered at the cost of its blood and the most generous sacrifices. The argument which is made against the independence and self-government of the Cubans is the one that best proves the necessity of their discharging the master and learning to govern themselves, beginning by establishing the most complete civil religious and commercial freedom.

Another of the charges that is made against the people of Cuba is, that they are a vile and cowardly people, incapable of conquering their freedom.

This is another sophism, gentlemen, which I propose to confute by a single fact which the Spanish Government, and those who serve its policy have taken good care to hide. This fact is, that among so many Cubans as those who have died in defence of the cause of their country, be it on the field of battle, be it on the scaffold, neither the Spanish government, nor any of its creatures have been able to denounce one single coward. Those who died on the field of battle fell like brave men, fighting, one against ten; and those who died upon the scaffold, from Joaquin de Aguero to Narciso Lopez, died like "the man resolved and steady to his trust," sung in the sublime verse of Horace.

"Should the whole frame of nature round him break,
In ruin and confusion hurled,
He, unconcerned, would hear the mighty crack,
And stand secure amid a falling world."

Thus do not die the sons of a coward people. It is time I should conclude these funeral honors, these civic ceremonies, to manifest the love and gratitude of the people of Cuba, surely do them much honor. But this is not all our duty, nor is it what will appease the manes of the heroes and martyrs for the independence and freedom of Cuba. We have something else to do, that the spirit of Narciso Lopez shall not remind us from heaven of the words of the prophet Isaiah: "The people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." We have to fulfill in all its parts the programme written in the blood of the heroes and martyrs for Cuban freedom; we have to crowd the work begun by them. Yes, I expect it; the world expects it from the Cuban people. But to obtain this it is necessary that the Cuban people present to the world the sublime spectacle of a people of united brothers, with one only will, one only spirit, one only sentiment, and one firm purpose of liberating their native mother. It is necessary that the Cuban people make great sacrifices, and that they shall deem all as little, if they attain in return their independence and freedom. And, finally, it is necessary that every Cuban who would merit the great and noble name of patriot, should forget himself, take up the cross of Narciso Lopez, and carry it even unto Golgotha. Then shall we see realized the great revolutionary programme, the redemption of Cuba, and the most beautiful creation of the nineteenth century—the Republic of Cuba!