

Cuba Dec 6th 1856

Dear Dr

This is my third day at this place. I had turned in but could get no sleep - so I concluded to write myself asleep if possible by giving you my first impressions of the Cuba. I left Cuba early on the morning of the 4th crossed the bay in a boat got on the box (apology for cart) of the mule ferro-carrit and arrived here somewhere about 9 or 10 o'clock and put up at the Spanish posada at a dollar and quarter a day - got my breakfast and set out botanizing - made no very great collection the first day - was rather disappointed in the state of the flora - most of the plants in flower have the aspect of weeds - got a goodly number of crypts. Most of the shrubby & arborescent vegetation seems to be out of flower or not yet in flower. I have passed by the weeds for the present. I intended to stay here about a month but from present appearances two weeks will be sufficient to secure nearly every thing within a moderate distance. I have not yet made any arrangements for traveling inland. I believe I have a much more correct notion of the rough and tumble life of a collector than you have. My trunk I must leave behind and every thing but the most necessary apparatus. I shall not be able to carry with me more than half of my drying paper. I take my Lindley Grammar & Dictionary and a little handful of clothing &

span knife and magnific scissors knivel & Dressed and a
few other such little articles - and these form my traveling
luggage I intend to buy me a ^{for self} horse and a mule for my
luggage and boy and "andar a cavallo" when I get
through here if I can accomplish it with the assistance
of friends who promise to aid me in the matter.

Nights before last I got but little sleep. The rats
scampered over the roof - the dogs barked as if they thought
them wolves - the musketoes found their nocturnal meals
from each part of me as were mosquitoes - The Spaniards
keep up an incessant gabble till midnight and
renewed it before daylight in the morning. I live in a
canvassed inclosed room sleep on a cot with a sheet
over me (it is a plenty while you shiver under a pile of
blankets) have to call for my wash-water in the morn-
ing (no wash-stand in the room) The floor of the apartment is
plentifully strewn with rejected portions of the plants
which I have put in press and the room is likely to
become a barn if it is not soon swept. I get two
meals a day besides coffee or chocolate in the morning
am served in a separate room from the common crowd
being mistaken (I suppose) for a rich caballero. I don't
imagine however that the privileged room belongs exelus-
ively to me. Many other caballeros that arrive from
Cuba (the name given here for Santiago de Cuba) are served
in the same room and at the same meekety table.
One of the proprietors of the establishment is afflicted
with the pickers as manifested in an incessant
whistling continued without interruption from morn-

ing till night and far into the latter. The worst of
it is he whistles no tune (Mere he is as it now ^{11 P.M.} after
the go-to-sleep horn has sounded in the plaza) - or if he
does it is such a succession of notes as none but a
Spaniard would mistake for a tune. There are but
few chairs about the establishment and if one happens
to stray to the front of the house at night when ~~we~~ we
want to enjoy the cool air it is sure to be full of
a nigger wench & I have to go to the plaza and
seek out the softest spot on a stone bench. But the
moonlight nights are glorious - for all that I mean
to leave this posada the first fair chance I have
if I jump out of the frying-pan into the fire.

11th The haymow in my room increased - instead of
being removed as I vainly supposed it is swept into a
pile behind the door - the accumulation of a week. I
woud have had it removed if I had but long ago
given up the notion of trying to play the gentleman
while engaged in active botanical labors. When I
spread out my papers to dry in a back street I have
all sorts of questions in French & Spanish addressed
to me as to the object of them by the crowd which is
attracted to witness the display of "papeles". I have
collected two formidable piles - a party which I shall
take out of press tomorrow and pack away as dry. Many
of them cure quickly. Yesterday we had light showers which
prevented me from drying - besides which it was quite
sultry as it was also this evening when cloudy & misty.
A friend lent me a paper of Nov 21 this evening con-

trailing the account of the loss of the Steamer *Zouma*
Mr Brooks to whom I had an introductory letter lost
a daughter by this casualty and some other persons
from Kuala likewise perished in her so that on our
arrival it was a subject much spoken of. Day after
tomorrow I expect to go to a coffee estate some ten
or more miles away in the mountains belonging to a
Mr Bradford a Connecticut man who kindly furnishes
me a horse to ride I can be away more than a couple
of days because of the necessity of changing my plants.
It is not very likely that I shall find any very great
number of plants different from those which grow
here. Dec 18th *Filantopia* (the name of Mr Bradford's estate)
pleased me so well on my arrival that I sent the next day
to Coltr for all my luggage and have been ever since
busy as a bee till today which is somewhat lowering
and rainy - so I will finish my letter. Pterogammon
vegetation is here rather meagre and if I meet with
no localities where it is more abundant than Coltr then
the principal part of my collection will be crypt. Ferns
are quite numerous, mosses and hepaticae so so and fungi
quite abundant. This is a coffee estate right among the
mountains about a dozen miles from Coltr I don't know
how long I shall remain - probably not more than a week
or ten days longer.

Yours truly

Charles Wright



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