

**THE BOOK OF BLOOD. AN AUTHENTIC
RECORD OF THE POLICY ADOPTED BY
MODERN SPAIN TO PUT
AN END TO THE WAR FOR THE
INDEPENDENCE OF CUBA (OCTOBER,
1868, TO NOVEMBER 10, 1873)**

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The book of blood. An authentic record of the policy adopted by modern Spain to put an end to the war for the independence of Cuba (October, 1868, to November 10, 1873) by Néstor Ponce de León

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TO PUT AN END TO THE WAR FOR THE

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(OCTOBER 1868 TO NOVEMBER 10, 1878.)

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In consideration of the recent butcheries of Cubans, American citizens and English subjects, committed by the irresponsible Spanish Government of Cuba and the insult to the American flag in the seizure of the American steamship *Virginus* and subsequent shooting of her officers, crew and passengers, we deem it advantageous to place before the people of the United States and of England a rough sketch *almost exclusively compiled from Spanish sources*, of the carnival of blood that has taken place in Cuba during the governments of Generals Lersundi, Dalce, Caballero de Rodas, Ceballos, Pieltain and last but not least, Jovellar, those three last being representatives of the Spanish Republic.

We will exhibit first a catalogue of the persons murdered in cold blood by order of the Spanish Government of Cuba ; leaving out of consideration the killed on the battle field. We give with the name of each victim the source, in the most part spanish, from which we have taken the data.

We will also give a list of the names of those captured by the Spanish troops with arms in their hands since the 1st of March, 1869, taking them *alive* from Spanish sources. We have selected the date because on the 12th of February a decree was issued and published in all the papers in Cuba, to shoot all the insurgents captured with arms in their hands. In this list we only include the names of those whose execution has not been noticed in the newspapers, and of whom no mention has ever been made ; but knowing as we do the law and the savage character of the rulers in Cuba, it is easy to understand what their fate has been.

The third list comprehends those condemned to death in the *garrote* by a military commission sitting in Havana but not executed on account of being out of the reach of the Spanish hangman.

It will be well to bear in mind also that we always read in the Spanish reports that "Such a column has scoured such and such a territory and killed so many insurgents." Habitually the killed are poor, harmless and defenceless peasants forced out of their houses and brutally murdered.

We adjoin also a note of those delivered by the Captain General to the military courts as guilty of treason. We do not know the exact fate of those unfortunates. It is known, however, that many of them have mysteriously disappeared, and their families are sure that they have found an obscure grave in the burial grounds of the Cabaña or el Principe.

We do not pretend to give a table of the crimes committed in Havana and elsewhere, such for example as those at the theatre of Villanueva, the coffee house of the Louvre, the butchery of Cobner, Greenwald and many like cases : or the transcendently treacherous killing of Augusto Arango under a flag of truce. Neither shall we attempt to catalogue the murders committed by the brutal soldiery in the country, the indiscriminate slaughter of defenceless men, women and children, the rapes, the obscene mutilations and the cruelties of every kind perpetrated in our unhappy country by the scourges of America : those are personal crimes which we do not deem just to charge upon a whole people.

In another list shall be found the names of those condemned to hard labour in the chain gang of the penal colonies of Africa or Cuba, many of them men of high standing who, often old and infirm, have been unable to endure the hardships and brutalities of their overseers and have been brought to an untimely death.

In another we publish the names of the unfortunate men sent to Fernando Poo, a barren and unhealthy island in the coast of Africa, a large number of whom perished on account of the bad treatment received on their voyage thither : all those lists are very incomplete as the Spanish censor permits the publication in the papers of only some of the crimes perpetrated in Cuba by *Modern Spain*.

We have not considered necessary to present the catalogue of persons whose property has been confiscated. We may only say that it reaches already the number of *eleven thousand*, a thousand of whom are ladies whose only crime is to be natives of Cuba and possessed of large properties there.

It is sought by some persons in this country to show that the Cubans have exhibited the same ferocity as the Spaniards in their conduct of the

war, and that they have been uniformly as sanguinary and merciless as their adversary, uniformly as regardless of humanity as even Valmaseda. The allegation is utterly unfounded and grossly unjust to the Cubans, as those who make or credit it might easily satisfy themselves. In the very outset of the Revolution a considerable number of officers and men fell into the hands of the patriots, in Bayamo and elsewhere in the Oriente. All were spared without exception, and every effort was made by the Cuban chiefs to carry on the war in accord with the Christian spirit of the age. Many of these captive officers having taken their parole not to escape, have broken that parole, and became the most ruthless and unsparring of all the Spanish officers in the war. Some also pretending to sympathize with the Revolution, took service under it and were trusted. Those for the most part betrayed their trust, deserted on the first opportunity, and like those who had broken their paroles, became conspicuous for their ferocity.

Meanwhile in all parts of the island no Cuban taken prisoner of war was spared; to a man they were shot on the spot as so many dogs. Nevertheless up to August, 1869, many Spanish prisoners of war were captured and not executed by the Cubans. It was then that General Quesada endeavoured to bring the enemy to an agreement on the subject and addressed General Lesca a note to that effect. This note was published in the New York papers.

The reply was a verbal brutal and characteristic assertion of the Spanish adherence to the policy of shooting all prisoners of war; leaving the Cubans no other alternative than the stern measure of retaliation, which for a time, with many exceptions, was adopted on the Cuban side.

In October, 1869, General Quesada after having brought the matter to the notice of the Cuban Congress ordered that certain prisoners of war who had voluntarily taken service in the Cuban army, in number of 67 should be executed, they having been detected in a conspiracy to revolt under circumstances of peculiar treachery, these men were accordingly executed; in a report of the affair made by General Quesada in 1870, by some error, the number was swollen to 670 or 603 more than were actually executed. The act excited a good deal of hard criticism in this country from the Press, in Congress and even by the President of the United States and the execution of so many men is cited as conclusive evidence of a blood-thirsty spirit in the Cubans quite equal to that of the enemy. Those who have taken that view surely overlook that the men in question were shot not as prisoners of war for *that they have long ceased to be, as they had taken service under the Republic and were detected in a*

conspiracy to desert to the enemy ; therefore even had the number of those men been 670, their execution would have been a justifiable act of war. *

As to the cause of this execution we prefer to give Spanish evidence, namely, on account of the transaction from the *Diario de la Mariana* of the 24th March of 1870, which we translate: " All the officers, sergeants and corporals who were in the hands of the enemy have been shot. In connection with many Cubans they had planned a counter-revolution and had conceited the delivery of all the rebel chieftains to General Puello. Two days before the one appointed by this gallant general to commence his march, he sent a messenger to captain Troyano with the news of his advance. The bearer of the news was arrested however and searched, the letter was found, and on the following day the messenger, our officers and the Cubans compromised in the counter-revolution were shot, thus sealing with their lives their devotion to their beloved mother country."

Thus it is plain what those men designed to do. What the laws of war adjudge as the punishment of officers convicted of such crimes, will be found in any writer of international law whatever his nationality may be.

We deem proper to append some documents and extracts of documents, and papers, almost all from Spanish origin, which explain very forcibly the kind of war made by the Spaniards in Cuba.

COUNT VALMASEDA'S PROCLAMATION.

Inhabitants of the country ! The re-enforcements of troops that I have been waiting for have arrived ; with them I shall give protection to the good, and punish promptly those that still remain in rebellion against the government of the metropolis.

You know that I have pardoned those that have fought us with arms ; that your wives, mothers, and sisters have found me in the unexpected protection that you have refused them. You know, also, that many of those I have pardoned have turned against us again.

Before such ingratitude, such villany, it is not possible for me to be the man that I have been ; there is no longer a place for a falsified neutrality ; he that is not for me is against me, and that my soldiers may know how to distinguish, you hear the order they carry :

1st. Every man, from the age of fifteen years, upward, found away from

* Americans must not forget the execution in Mexico, in 1848, of the Battalion of San Patrick, &c., &c.

his habitation, (finca,) and does not prove a justified motive therefor, will be shot.

2d. Every habitation unoccupied will be burned by the troops.

3d. Every habitation from which does not float a white flag, as a signal that its occupants desire peace, will be reduced to ashes.

Women that are not living at their own homes, or at the house of their relatives, will collect in the town of Jiguani, or Bayamo, where maintenance will be provided. Those who do not present themselves will be conducted forcibly.

The foregoing determinations will commence to take effect on the 14th of the present month.

EL CONDE DE VALMASEDA.

BAYAMO, April 4, 1869.

In the interest of Christian civilization and common humanity, I hope that this document is a forgery. If it be indeed genuine, the President instructs me in the most forcible manner, TO PROTEST AGAINST SUCH MODE OF WARFARE.

MR. FISH to
MR. LOPEZ ROBERTS.

MAY 10, 1869.

"... protesting against THE INFAMOUS PROCLAMATION of General Count of Valmaseda."

MR. FISH to MR. HALE.

MAY 11, 1869.

"Measures of war are undoubtedly those adopted by General Count of Valmaseda; but they are not of such a nature as to revolt the feelings of humanity. Let the proclamation issued by General Count of Valmaseda be studied without passion, let the antecedents be recorded, and it will be seen that said proclamation does not even reach what is required by the necessities of war in the most civilized nations."

Leading article of the *Diario de la Mariana*, Havana.

MAY 9, 1869.

Captain Generalship of the Island of Cuba, Staff. The drumhead court-martial, sitting at this place on this day, with the object of examining and judging into the process instituted against the civilian José Valdez Nodarse, for having uttered seditious words, has condemned him to six years hard labor in the chain gang; and his Excellency in conformity with the opinion of the Auditor has been pleased to approve said sentence, but recognising, as the Auditor does too great lenity in the sentence, because it is not in accord with the regulations, codes and existing laws; he has ordered that the President and members of the Military Court may be sent to a castle to suffer the penalty of two months' imprisonment in the same.

Published by order of his Ex.

"With cheeks reddened with shame and hearts dripping blood, we confess, in view of what is now happening that foreigners are right. Africa commences in the Pyrenees, not the Africa of the Marochians, but the Africa of the Kaffirs."

Estado Catalan, Barcelona, August 9, 1869.

More than three hundred spies and conspirators are shot monthly in this jurisdiction. Myself alone, with my hand, have already disposed of nine, and I will never be weary of killing.

*Letter of Domingo Graiño, Captain of Volunteers,
September 23, 1869.*

We captured seventeen, thirteen of whom were shot outright ; on dying they shouted hurrah for Free Cuba, hurrah for Independence. A mulatto said hurrah for Céspedes. On the following day we killed a Cuban officer and another man. Among the thirteen that we shot the first day were found three sons and their father ; the father witnessed the execution of his sons without even changing color, and when his turn came he said he died for the independence of his country. On coming back we brought along with us three carts filled with women and children, the families of those we had shot ; and they asked us to shoot them, because they would rather die than live among Spaniards.

*Letter of Jesus Rivacoba, officer of Volunteers, Encrucijada,
September 4th, 1869.*

Not a single Cuban will remain in this Island, because we shoot all those we find on the fields, on the farms and in every hovel.

*Letter from Pedro Fardon, officer of Volunteers to Rosendo Rivas,
September 22d, 1869,*

We do not leave a creature alive where we pass, be it man or animal. If we find cows we kill them ; if horses, ditto ; if hogs, ditto ; men, women or children, ditto ; as to the houses, we burn them ; so every one receives his due—the men in balls, the animals in bayonet-thrusts. The Island will remain a desert.

Letter from the same Pedro Fardon to his father, Sept. 22, 1869.