

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

LXVIth YEAR.]

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 30, 1809.

[No. 3268.]

Miscellany.

From the Monthly Magazine.

Account of the Sufferings of the Crews of two Schooners, part of the Squadron of General Miranda, which were taken by two Spanish Guano-Costas, in June, 1806. Written by one of the Sufferers who made his escape.

The world knows little of the extraordinary expedition of General Miranda to the Spanish Main, in 1806; but it will be remembered, that he arrived in the Gulf of Mexico with an armed ship and two schooners, and that in a rencontre with two Guano-Costas, the Schooners were captured. We are now enabled to lay before our readers the particulars of the treatment their crews met with from the Spaniards.—The trials will also throw some light on the Expedition itself.

TOWARDS the end of June, the lieutenant-governor of Caraccas, accompanied by four assistant officers or judges, together with an interpreter for each officer, arrived at Porto-Cavello, for the purpose of examining the prisoners. They were assembled in the guard-house, within the walls of Castle St. Philip, in a large room adapted for that purpose. In this room were placed five separate benches with desks; at each of which was seated the lieutenant-governor, with an interpreter; at the other four, each of the other judges, with an interpreter

The ordinary appearance of the place, together with the undignified looks of the judges, could scarcely induce the prisoners to believe that this was the tribunal before which they were to be tried for their lives. Nor were they a little surpris'd, when they ascertained, from the course of the proceedings, that they were to be compelled to give evidence, under oath, against themselves, and against each other; and upon this testimony alone they were to be convicted.

The judges being ready to proceed, caused the prisoners to be brought up in the middle of the place. They were informed of the charges exhibited against them, viz. piracy, rebellion, and murdering one of his Catholic Majesty's subjects. They were then asked to describe the manner in which oaths are administered in their own country; which having done, they were requested to lay their hands upon the Bible and administer the oaths themselves, agreeable to the manner in which they had been accustomed to swear. The five prisoners were thus distributed, one to each judge, seated at his respective desk, all being in one room, and some little distance from each other.

In the middle of the floor, lay a number of arms and instruments of war, such as guns, bayonets, axes, pistols, pikes, swords and shovels; also Miranda's colours, uniform cloaths, and a number of his proclamations; all which were taken from on board of the schooners.

The judges commenced their examination of their interpreters, who put the questions in English, and gave the answers to the judges. They continued to examine them for the space of four or five hours, when they were returned to the prison, and five others brought up in their places. In this manner the examination proceeded for the space of two weeks before it ended.

The following were the general questions and answers, put to one of the prisoners, who since regained his liberty.

Q. How old are you?
A. About twenty-two years.

Q. Where was you born, and where do your parents reside?
A. I was born in the state of Massachusetts; my parents reside in New-York.

Q. Why did you leave New-York?
A. To seek my fortune.

Q. Who engaged you to go on board the Leander?
A. Colonel Armstrong.

Q. Where was you engaged to go?
A. To Jacmel, and from there to other places, not disclosed to me at the time of the engagement.

Q. Did you know that you were coming here?
A. No. Porto-Cavello was not mentioned.

Q. Did Miranda also engage you to go on board the Leander?
A. I did not know there was such a person until the Leander had left the port of New-York.

Q. In what capacity did you enter on board of the Leander?
A. As a printer.

Q. How came you to change that capacity and accept of a military commission under Miranda?
A. From motives of personal convenience.

Q. Was you not a lieutenant in a rifle regiment, under Miranda, as mentioned in this paper? [showing him a list of officers commissioned by Miranda, and which was found in the possession of one of the officers.]
A. Yes; but did not know then that I was coming to this place.

Q. At what place did you stop on your voyage?
A. At St. Domingo and the island of Aruba.

Q. Did you not go on shore at Aruba in uniform, in company with other officers, and did you not manœuvre there for the purpose of making an attack upon the Main?

A. We manœuvred there, for the purpose of making an attack upon some place which Miranda had in view; but what place many of his men did not know.

Q. Did you not come to the Main for the purpose of assisting Miranda in fighting against this government, and in revolutionizing the country?
A. It was represented by Miranda, that no fighting would be necessary to effect the object, whatever it was, he had in view.

Q. What was the real object of Miranda in coming to the Main?
A. I do not know; but understood it was to better the condition of the Spanish people.

Q. Do you know the names of any persons here, who were expected would join Miranda?
A. I do not.

Q. Were there any private signals made to you from the shore, by any persons residing here?
A. I saw none.

Q. Was the Leander boarded on her voyage by any English vessel?
A. Yes; the Cleopatra.

Q. Was there any private conversation between the commander and Miranda?
A. Yes; but what the purport of it was I do not know.

Q. Did Miranda go on board of her and stay several hours?
A. He did; he stopped one night on board.

Q. Was the Leander armed, and loaded with arms and warlike stores?
A. Yes.

Q. How many stand of arms had she on board?
A. About twelve hundred.

Q. Did you not erect a printing press at Jacmel, and print a number of proclamations, and is not this one of them? [showing him one of the proclamations, in the Spanish language.]
A. Yes; and this may be one of them; but I did not know the purport of it, as I am ignorant of the Spanish language.

Q. Do you know what that word means? [pointing to the word, Madrid.]
A. It means, I presume, the capital of Old Spain.

Q. Is that all you know of it here?
A. Yes.

Q. Do you know those articles? [pointing to the warlike instruments laying upon the floor.]
A. I have seen the like before; perhaps the same.

Q. Did not those persons who went on shore, go there for the purpose of distributing these proclamations?
A. No. They went for amusement.

Q. Is not that your regimental coat?
A. I do not know. It may be the coat I was obliged to wear.

Q. Did you understand that Miranda fitted out his expedition by the consent of your government?
A. No. He kept his object and operations concealed from the public. It was a private undertaking of his own.

Q. Were not the principal persons who embarked in Miranda's expedition, bankrupts and broken merchants?
A. I was not acquainted with their circumstances; there might be some of this description.

A number of other questions were put, and answered; but being of a trifling nature, comparatively speaking, are not here inserted.

After they had finished examining the prisoner, he was then told by his judge, that if he would relate every thing he knew relating to the expedition, the names of those who were concerned in it, and those that were expected would join Miranda, his chains should be taken off, and he set at liberty, and sent home to America. To which he answered, that he had disclosed all he knew of confession, or particularly recollected.

The following were questions put to another prisoner, who has also effected his return home.

Q. What religion are you of?
A. The presbyterian persuasion.

Q. Where was you born and brought up?
A. In New-York.

Q. Who engaged you to embark in Miranda's expedition?
A. One John Fink, of New-York, butcher.

Q. Did you know Miranda, in New-York?
A. No. I did not know him until I was six days at sea.

Q. Where was you engaged to go?
A. I was engaged to go, in the first place, to Alexandria, where I was to land. From thence I was to march to Washington, where I was to be equipped with a horse, saddle and bridle, and in company with other persons, I was to march to New-Orleans to guard the mail.

Q. Was Miranda's expedition sanctioned by your government?
A. I do not know. I did not know there was such an expedition as it afterwards proved to be.

Q. Do you know the names of any Spaniards here, whom Miranda relied upon joining him?
A. I do not.

Q. Was you not occupied in Jacmel, in putting handles to pikes?
A. Yes; I was obliged to do it.

Q. Did you not bring those axes [pointing to some on the floor] for the purpose of cutting off our heads, and those shovels to bury us?
A. I never knew what use was to be made of them.

Q. Do not you think you deserve hanging?
A. No. What I did I was obliged to do, contrary to my will.

Q. Do not you think you ought rather to die than be compelled to commit a crime?
A. No. I have always understood that self-preservation was the first law of nature.

Q. Why did you not all rise and take command of the schooner after you discovered her intention?
A. We did attempt it once, but failed. We had agreed to attempt it a second time, on the evening of that day we were taken.

After the examination of all the prisoners was gone through, they were again brought up the second time, when similar questions were put to them as before, and similar answers made.

The examinations were then taken by the lieutenant-governor and judges to Caraccas, where, as was understood, they were laid before a military court, assembled for the purpose of pronouncing judgment. They remained under their consideration for several days, before any thing was determined upon.

During that time the prisoners remained in confinement, suffering almost every deprivation, and reflecting upon what would be their doom. Some were entirely indifferent, and were willing to meet death, rather than endure their situation. Emaciated, sick, and obliged to endure filth, bad air, and unwholesome food, many were tired of life.

On the 20th of July, about eleven o'clock in the morning, the prison doors were thrown open, which presented to our view a large body of armed soldiers, drawn up round the prison door with muskets aimed toward us, loaded, cocked, and bayonets fixed. All expected instant death. However, we were ordered out, and placed in a line for marching; the soldiers on each side with their muskets pointed towards us. There was little danger of the prisoners escaping, being in irons, and so weak and emaciated as to just be able to walk.

They were then ordered to march forward, which they did, though slowly, as their ankles were still in irons. In this situation they were marched into a yard, walled round, and ordered upon their knees; fronted by the soldiers at a little distance with their muskets still aimed at them and ready to fire. Every moment the word fire was expected.

Shortly appeared the interpreter, accompanied by one or two officers, and two or three Roman Catholic priests. The following persons being called:

Francis Farquarson,	Daniel Kemper,
Charles Johnson,	John Ferris,
Moses L. Hall,	James Gardner,
Thomas Billopp,	Thomas Donohue,
Gustavus A. Bergud,	Paul T. George.

The interpreter then read to them from a paper which he held in his hand the following sentence:

"In the morning of to-morrow, at six o'clock, you and each of you are sentenced to be hung by the neck until dead; after which your heads are to be severed from your bodies and placed upon poles, and distributed in public parts of the country."

The following persons were then called and sentenced to ten years imprisonment, at hard labour in the castle of Omoa, near the Bay of Honduras, and after that time to await the king's pleasure:

John T. O'Sullivan,	Henry Ingerfoll,
Jeremiah Powell,	Thomas Gill,
John H. Sherman,	John Edfall,
David Heckle, & Son,	John Hays,
John Moore,	Daniel McKay,
John M. Elliott,	Bennett B. Vegas,
Robert Saunders,	Peter Naulty.

The following persons were sentenced to the same punishment, for the same length of time, at the castle of Porto Rico.

Wm. W. Lippincott,	Stephen Burtis,
Moses Smith,	John Burk,
Matthew Buchanan,	Phineas Raymond,
Alex. Buchanan,	Joseph Bennett,
John Parfells,	Eaton Burlingham,
David Winton,	James Grant,
John Scott,	Frederick Riggas.

And the following persons were sentenced to the same punishment, at the castle of Bocca Chica, in Carthage, except their terms of servitude were eight years instead of ten:

William Long,	William Cartwright,
Benjamin Davis,	Samuel Touzier,
Joseph L. Heckle,	William Burnside,
Henry Sperry,	Abraham Head,
Robert Steavison,	James Hyatt,
Benj. Nicholson,	William Pride,
Samuel Price,	Pompey Grant,
Elery King,	George Ferguson,
Hugh Smith,	Robert Rains.
Daniel Newbury,	

Those persons who were sentenced to Omoa were principally officers and noncommissioned officers under Miranda. Those sentenced to Porto Rico were generally privates and mechanics, and those sentenced to Bocca Chica were generally seamen.

On the morning of the 21st of July, about 6 o'clock, the prisoners were alarmed by the noise of an assemblage of Spanish soldiers at the door of the prison; when presently the door was thrown open, and discovered to their view about three hundred soldiers, with muskets loaded, bayonets fixed, and arrayed in two lines on the right and left of the prison door, facing inwards, and in a position of charged bayonets.

The prisoners, after being ordered to put on what cloaths they had, (which were nothing more than a piece of shirt and a pair of ragged pantaloons, some had not even those articles,) were lashed two together by the bows, and placed in a line, between the soldiers, for marching. The ten prisoners who were executed were then brought out, and with their hands lashed fast before, and with white robes on, that extended from the lower part of their necks to their heels, and white caps upon their heads, were placed in front of them were placed the three Catholic prisoners, attended by three priests, carrying in their hands the holy cross, and accompanied with attendants carrying the sacramental wax candles, and other implements of the church. In this situation the prisoners, with their irons upon their feet, marched slowly along between the lines of soldiers, out of the walls of the castle, to the gallows.

Castle St. Philip is situated upon a large level space of ground, in the harbour of Porto Cavello, and separated from the town by a narrow arm of water. The walls are nearly a quarter of a mile in circumference, about 14 feet high, and about 13 feet thick, forming also the outward walls of the prison mounted with about 50 pieces of large metal. Outside of the walls, and fronting the town is a large area, for the purpose of exercising the soldiers, &c. Upon this spot the gallows was erected, being about 40 rods from the prison.

The gallows was about 20 feet long and 15 feet high, and separated in the middle by a post, making two pairs of steps, one for the Roman Catholic prisoners, as directed by the priests, and the other for the Presbyterians, or heretics, as they were called. Where it appeared that they could separate their bodies, if they could not the souls afterwards. About half way up the middle post were placed Miranda's colours. Underneath them lay the instruments of war taken from the schooners, together with the military coats, hats and feathers, of the officers.

After the procession reached the gallows those to be executed were taken to the front. The other prisoners were drawn up in the rear, so as to be in front of each other as they ascended the steps—Immediately round the prisoners were drawn up two or three companies of uniform soldiers, principally Old Spaniards—In the rear of those were several companies of militia, the greater part of whom were natives of the country—At a little distance, in the rear of these, were drawn up several companies of artillery, and along the shore of the town of Porto-Cavello were stationed a number of companies of cavalry. From this extensive military force, brought to attend the execution, some concluded that an opposition was feared from persons friendly disposed to Miranda—but nothing of that kind was manifested.

Being ready to proceed to the execution, the prisoners waited their fate with a composure of mind that seemed to evince a reconciled conscience. Not the least intimidated they discovered a firmness and resolution indicative of soldiers.

Mr. Farquarson being first selected to meet his fate, was led to the steps of the gallows by a negro slave, who acted as the jay, ketch of the day, and for which he was promised his liberty. His irons were then knocked off, and he led up to the top of the scaffold, where he was seated, fronting his fellow prisoners. The ropes being placed round his neck, he rose upon his feet and took a final farewell of his companions, wishing them a better fate. The negro then gave him a push from the top of the scaffold and launched him into eternity. Immediately the negro let himself down upon the ropes, and seating himself upon the shoulders with his feet hanging upon the breast, beat the breath out of the body with his heels, then jumping down, caught the body by the feet, and pulled it towards one end of the gallows to make room for another.

In the same manner they proceeded to execute Mr. Billopp, Kemper, Bergud, Hall, Johnson and Ferris; after which they proceeded in a like manner to execute the three Roman Catholic prisoners, Gardner, Donohue, and George, who were constantly attended by their priests. They were taken to the other part of the gallows, where they again received the sacrament; each one was accompanied to the top of the steps by his priest.

All of them, except one, had a few words to address to their companions, by the way of taking leave of them. Bergud, a native of Poland, and a brave fellow, evinced a great contempt of death. After the ropes were round his neck he observed: "Fellow prisoners, we have all suffered much, but my sufferings will soon end. I die innocent, and relief will come from that source [pointing to heaven]."

The Spaniards use two ropes in their manner of hanging: one something smaller than the other, and a few inches shorter, which serves to break the neck, while the other sustains the weight of the body.