

Further Details of the Assassination of Prisoners—History of the Affair—A Shocking Page in Spanish History—Cause of the Murder.

SANTIAGO DE CUBA, August 13, 1869.

During the whole insurrection no such sensation has occurred here as that caused by the news spread on arrival of the steamer Villa Clara from Manzanillo, with regard to the prisoners sent from here as already reported in my last communication. The story is somewhat long, but the denouement is so atrocious that I will give it at full length in order that it may be clearly understood in the United States, that no one's life is safe here, and that neither justice nor humanity will be exercised so long as the government is controlled by a clique of robbers and assassins who respect nothing which stands in the way of the gratification of their ferocious instincts.

About two months ago several prominent citizens were arrested here and put in solitary confinement. The arrest took place at the direct instance of General Valmaseda, acting, it is said, on the information of a certain Casanova. Valmaseda every one has heard of. Casanova not being so generally famous I may mention that up to the beginning of the present troubles he was known as a professional robber and assassin. At the commencement of the insurrection he espoused the Cuban cause, but not finding himself comfortable with the insurgents he deserted them, and after a time succeeded in finding a congenial asylum in the ranks of the Contra-guerilla, a body put together by General Valmaseda, and of which Casanova might be considered a specimen type.

The prisoners above mentioned, after being about three weeks in prison, were released, nothing whatever having been proved against them. After being at liberty about a month they were rearrested on the same charge, and at the instance, as before, of General Valmaseda. After three days the prisoners were ordered to make ready to go to Manzanillo, from whence to proceed to Bayamo, where the witnesses would be produced, and here begins the shameful story, resulting in the most awful tragedy which the insurrection has produced. The prisoners had been already three weeks in prison and Valmaseda had been unable to produce any proofs against them; the crimes of which they were accused were alleged to have been committed here, for none of the prisoners had been to Bayamo, and yet they were on suspicion sent from here, the capital of the department, to an obscure town to be submitted to the greatest of all farces of military justice.

On receipt of this order the fear of death seemed to have fallen on the unhappy men, and they could read their doom as plainly as if it were printed; but, hoping that if extreme publicity were given to their case it might avert their impending fate by bringing into play the fear of public opinion at home and abroad, they addressed separate communications to Messrs. E. Arnaud, E. A. Phillips, C. Reiners and F. Ramsden, the French, Dominican, North German and British consuls, requesting them as friends to visit them in the prison. This request was naturally acceded to, the more so as no special permission was required to make the visit. The prisoners asked the consuls if they could do anything to save them from being sent to Bayamo, alleging fear of meeting insurgents on the road, when in any skirmish they would be the first to suffer. The consuls informed them that they could not interfere. The prisoners then begged them as friends of theirs, and at the same time of the Governor, to present to him, in their private capacity and as mutual friends, a memorial from them (the prisoners) praying to be tried here or in Manzanillo, or, if sent to Bayamo, to be escorted by an officer chosen by themselves. This was done, and the last request was readily complied with by the General, and Major Amado Salazar was ordered to take charge of the escort and deliver the prisoners safely to General Valmaseda.

The prisoners, eight in number, were embarked on Friday afternoon, 30th ult., per Villa Clara. They were Dr. Espin, Dr. Perez, Don José Antonio Collazo, Don Bruno Collazo, Don Joaquin Res, Don Ascencio de Acenzio, Don Salvador Benkez and Don Andres Villasana. Don Gonzalo Villar being very ill could not be removed. The prisoners were escorted by the officer they had chosen, Don Amado Salazar, and arrived safely at Bayamo under his guidance. From thence Major Salazar returned to Manzanillo, and came on here by last trip of the steamer, but none of the prisoners came, and though nothing official is known, it is reported and generally believed that from Bayamo they were sent to Jiguaní by Valmaseda, under escort of Colonel Palacios and a strong body of troops, and on the road the eight prisoners and some friends and servants who accompanied them, twenty-one persons in all, were deliberately assassinated by Colonel Palacios, although the prisoners had not been tried, and the friends and servants accompanying them were actually not even accused of any offence. There is almost no doubt about this atrocious crime having been committed, as letters from Bayamo and Jiguaní report it, and in Manzanillo it was generally believed. The butchery took place on the 7th, and on the 8th Colonel Palacios embarked from Manzanillo, with two cannons for Havana, which cannons had been found two days previously, and

with which, no doubt, he hoped to gloss over his crime.

"As the French magistrate used to say, "Where is the woman?"

Casanova, the bandit, it is said, had personal spite against all the prisoners. Villar had prosecuted him once for an assassination. Collago had upset a little game which he was playing at the commencement of this insurrection, stealing oxen and selling them in Cuba, and the others had offended him one way or another. Casanova had also a pretty daughter, and scandal asserts her to be the morganatic Mrs. Palacios, if not the morganatic Mrs. Valmaseda, and thus Casanova, by working on his son-in-law, was able to accomplish his revenge, and cause the greatest crime which the insurrection has brought forth. At the same time it is fair to remark that he has also likely been worked upon by part of the "*círculo español*" here, which body is said to be in correspondence with Valmaseda, and this idea is the more probable from the known and well proved bloodthirstiness of a clique of its members, which includes such notorious ruffians as the Priest Lecanda, the Sub-Collector of Customs, Major Ormachea, the Governor of the convict establishment and others, all of whom expressed great joy and satisfaction on hearing of the murder, which is condemned and reprobated by every decent Spaniard in the place. All the murdered men leave families who depended on them for their daily bread, and who are thus reduced to misery by this great crime. Last night a report was spread that the news was false and that the prisoners were safe and well and would soon be in Cuba. An immense crowd gathered at the entrance to receive them, but after some waiting dispersed quietly.

The rebels under Marmol attacked a party of eighty troops and volunteers at Mayarjamba, causing them a loss of eleven men. The government despatch, of course, claims that they killed a great many insurgents, and, as usual, trots out the one wounded man who figures in all the despatches. The Governor of Guantanamo had left, with 430 men, to attack Marmol, but as yet there is no news of the result.