MELVILLE'S BENITO CERENO AND CAPTAIN DELANO'S VOYAGES

IN Putnam's Monthly Magazine for October, 1855, appeared the first installment of a sea story entitled Benito Cereno, which was continued and concluded in the November and December numbers. Following the established custom of that periodical, the story was printed without signature: and it remained unacknowledged until the following year, when it was included in The Piazza Tales, a volume of short stories by Herman Melville. Lost for half a century in the oblivion which engulfed all that Melville wrote, it did not again appear in type until its inclusion in the Standard Edition of Constable and Company in 1924. This year it has been republished separately in a limited edition by the Nonesuch Press.

In discussing The Piazza Tales Professor Raymond Weaver says:

Of these, The Bell Tower, Don Benito Cereno, The Encantadas, show the last glow of Melville's literary glamour, the final momentary brightening of the embers before they sink into blackness and ash.¹

John Freeman² is even more enthusiastic. He pronounces Benito Cereno and The Encantadas "superb," declares Benito Cereno to be Melville's "short masterpiece," and devotes four pages to this story alone. He finds the tale strikingly Conradian:

Anticipating Conrad's abundant short stories by fifty years, Melville has anticipated their excellence and given us a measure to measure them by.

Melville gives his reader no reason to suspect that the story is anything but a narrative of his own invention, but coming by chance upon an old volume of the voyages of Capt. Amasa Delano, an American mariner of Duxbury, Mass., I discovered the interesting fact that in Chapter xviii of Captain Delano's book Melville found his story ready made. He merely rewrote this Chapter including a portion of one of the legal documents there appended, suppressing a few items, and making some small additions.

¹ Raymond M. Weaver, Herman Melville, Mariner and Mystic, New York, 1921.
² John Freeman, Herman Melville, New York, 1926.
³ Amasa Delano, A Narrative of Voyages and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, etc., Boston, 1817.
A NARRATIVE OF VOYAGES AND TRAVELS, IN THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN HEMISPHERES; COMPRISING THREE VOYAGES ROUND THE WORLD; TOGETHER WITH A VOYAGE OF SURVEY AND DISCOVERY, IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN AND ORIENTAL ISLANDS.

BY ANASA DELANO.

BOSTON: PRINTED BY E. G. GREELEY, FOR THE AUTHOR. 1847.
Capt. Amasa Delano.
The following is the narrative as it was written by Captain Delano, together with the documents and correspondence which he appends.

CHAPTER XVIII

Particulars of the Capture of the Spanish Ship Tryal, at the Island of St. Maria, with the Documents Relating to That Affair

In introducing the account of the capture of the Spanish ship Tryal, I shall first give an extract from the journal of the ship Perseverance, taken on board that ship at the time, by the officer who had the care of the log book.

"Wednesday, February 20th, commenced with light airs from the north east, and thick foggy weather. At six A.M. observed a sail opening round the south head of St. Maria, coming into the bay. It proved to be a ship. The captain took the whale boat and crew and went on board her. As the wind was very light, so that a vessel would not have much more than steerage way at the time; observed that the ship acted very awkwardly. At ten A.M. the boat returned. Mr. Luther informed that Captain Delano had remained on board her, and that she was a Spaniard from Buenos Ayres, four months and twenty-six days out of port, with slaves on board; and that the ship was in great want of water; had buried many white men and slaves on her passage, and that captain Delano had sent for a large boat load of water, some fresh fish, sugar, bread, pumpkins, and bottled cider, all of which articles were immediately sent. At twelve o'clock (Meridian) calm. At two P.M. the large boat returned from the Spaniards, had left our water casks on board her. At four P.M. a breeze sprung up from the souther quarter, which brought the Spanish ship into the roads. She anchored about two cables length to the south east of our ship. Immediately after she anchored, our captain with his boat was shoving off from along side the Spanish ship; when to his great surprise the Spanish captain leaped into the boat, and called out in Spanish that the slaves on board had risen and murdered many of the people; and that he did not then command her; on which manoeuvre, several of the Spaniards who remained on board jumped overboard, and swam for our boat, and were picked up by our people. The Spaniards, who remained on board, hurried up the rigging, as high aloft as they could possibly get, and called out repeatedly for help—that they should be murdered by the slaves. Our captain came immediately on board, and brought the Spanish captain and the men who were picked up in the water; but before the boat arrived, we observed that the slaves had cut the Spanish ship adrift. On learning this, our captain hailed, and ordered the ports to be got up, and the guns cleared; but unfortunately, we could not bring but one of our guns to bear on the ship. We fired five or six shot with it, but could not bring her to. We soon observed her making sail, and standing directly
out of the bay. We dispatched two boats well manned, and well armed after her, who, after much trouble, boarded the ship and retook her. But unfortunately in the business, Mr. Rufus Low, our chief officer, who commanded the party, was desperately wounded in the breast, by being stabbed with a pike, by one of the slaves. We likewise had one man badly wounded and two or three slightly. To continue the misfortune, the chief officer of the Spanish ship, who was compelled by the slaves to steer her out of the bay, received two very bad wounds, one in the side, and one through the thigh, both from musket balls. One Spaniard, a gentleman passenger on board, was likewise killed by a musket ball. We have not rightly ascertained what number of slaves were killed; but we believe seven, and a great number wounded. Our people brought the ship in, and came to nearly where she first anchored, at about two o'clock in the morning of the 21st. At six A.M. the two captains went on board the Spanish ship; took with them irons from our ship, and doubled ironed all the remaining men of the slaves who were living. Left Mr. Brown, our second officer, in charge of the ship, the gunner with him as mate, and eight other hands; together with the survivors of the Spanish crew. The captain and chief officer, were removed to our ship, the latter for the benefit of having his wounds better attended to with us, than he could have had them on board his own ship. At nine A.M. the two captains returned, having put everything aright, as they supposed, on board the Spanish ship.

"The Spanish captain then informed us that he was compelled by the slaves to say, that he was from Buenos Ayres, bound to Lima; that he was not from Buenos Ayres, but sailed on the 20th of December last from Valparaiso for Lima, with upwards of seventy slaves on board; that on the 26th of December, the slaves rose upon the ship, and took possession of her, and put to death eighteen white men, and threw overboard at different periods after, seven more; that the slaves had commanded him to go to Senegal; that he had kept to sea until his water was expended, and had made this port to get it; and also with a view to save his own and the remainder of his people's lives if possible, by running away from his ship with his boat."

I shall here add some remarks of my own, to what is stated above from the ship's journal, with a view of giving the reader a correct understanding of the peculiar situation under which we were placed at the time this affair happened. We were in a worse situation to effect any important enterprize than I had been in during the voyage. We had been from home a year and a half, and had not made enough to amount to twenty dollars for each of my people, who were all on shares, and our future prospects were not very flattering. To make our situation worse, I had found after leaving New Holland, on mustering my people, that I had seventeen men, most of whom had been convicts at Botany Bay. They had secreted themselves on board without my knowledge. This was a larger number
than had been inveigled away from me at the same place, by people who had been convicts, and were then employed at places that we visited. The men whom we lost were all of them extraordinarily good men. This exchange materially altered the quality of the crew. Three of the Botany-bay-men were outlawed convicts; they had been shot at many times, and several times wounded. After making this bad exchange, my crew were refractory; the convicts were ever unfaithful, and took all the advantage that opportunity gave them. But sometimes exercising very strict discipline, and giving them good wholesome floggings; and at other times treating them with the best I had, or could get, according as their deeds deserved, I managed them without much difficulty during the passage across the South Pacific Ocean; and all the time I had been on the coast of Chili. I had lately been at the islands of St. Ambrose and St. Felix, and left there fifteen of my best men, with the view of procuring seals; and left that place in company with my consort the Pilgrim. We appointed Massa Fuero as our place of rendezvous, and, if we did not meet there, again to rendezvous at St. Maria. I proceeded to the first place appointed; the Pilgrim had not arrived. I then determined to take a look at Juan Fernandez, and see if we could find any seals, as some persons had informed me they were to be found on some part of the island. I accordingly visited that place, as has been stated; from thence I proceeded to St. Maria; and arrived the 13th of February at that place, where we commonly find visitors. We found the ship Mars of Nantucket, commanded by captain Jonathan Barney. The day we arrived, three of my Botany bay men run from the boat when on shore. The next day (the 14th), I was informed by Captain Barney, that some of my convict men had planned to run away with one of my boats, and go over to the main. This information he obtained through the medium of his people. I examined into the affair, and was satisfied as to the truth of it; set five more of the above description of men on shore, making eight in all I had gotten clear of in two days. Captain Barney sailed about the 17th, and left me quite alone. I continued in that unpleasant situation till the 20th, never at any time after my arrival at this place, daring to let my whale boat be in the water fifteen minutes unless I was in her myself, from a fear that some of my people would run away with her. I always hoisted her in on deck the moment I came alongside, by which means I had the advantage of them; for should they run away with any other boat belonging to the ship, I could overtake them with the whale boat, which they very well knew. They were also well satisfied of the reasons why that boat was always kept on board, except when in my immediate use. During this time, I had no fear from them, except of their running away. Under these disadvantages the Spanish ship Tryal made her appearance on the morning of the 20th, as has been stated; and I had in the course of the day the satisfaction of seeing the great utility of good discipline. In every part of the business of the Tryal, not one disaffected word was spoken by the men,
but all flew to obey the commands they received; and to their credit it should be recorded, that no men ever behaved better than they, under such circumstances. When it is considered that we had but two boats, one a whale boat, and the other built by ourselves, while on the coast of New Holland, which was very little larger than the whale boat; both of them were clinker built, one of cedar, and the other not much stouter; with only twenty men to board and carry a ship, containing so many slaves, made desperate by their situation; for they were certain, if taken, to suffer death; and when arriving alongside of the ship, they might have staved the bottom of the boats, by heaving into them a ballast stone or log of wood of twenty pounds: when all these things are taken into view, the reader may conceive of the hazardous nature of the enterprise, and the skill and the intrepidity which were requisite to carry it into execution.

On the afternoon of the 19th, before night, I sent the boatswain with the large boat and seine to try if he could catch some fish; he returned at night with but few, observing that the morning would be better if he went early. I then wished him to go as early as he thought proper, and he accordingly went at four o'clock. At sunrise, or about that time, the officer who commanded the deck, came down to me while I was in my cot, with information that a sail was just opening round the south point, or head of the island. I immediately rose, went on deck, and observed that she was too near the land, on account of a reef that lay off the head; and at the same time remarked to my people, that she must be a stranger, and I did not well understand what she was about. Some of them observed that they did not know who she was, or what she was doing; but that they were accustomed to see vessels shew their colours, when coming into a port. I ordered the whale boat to be hoisted out and manned, which was accordingly done. Presuming the vessel was from sea, and had been many days out, without perhaps fresh provisions, we put the fish which had been caught the night before into the boat, to be presented if necessary. Every thing being soon ready, as I thought the strange ship was in danger, we made all the haste in our power to get on board, that we might prevent her getting on the reefs; but before we came near her, the wind headed her off, and she was doing well. I went along side, and saw the decks were filled with slaves. As soon as I got on deck, the captain, mate, people and slaves crowded around me to relate their stories, and to make known their grievances; which could not but impress me with feelings of pity for their sufferings. They told me they had no water, as is related in their different accounts and depositions. After promising to relieve all the wants they had mentioned, I ordered the fish to be put on board, and sent the whale boat to our ship, with orders that the large boat, as soon as she returned from fishing, should take a set of gang casks to the watering place, fill them, and bring it for their relief as soon as possible. I also ordered the small boat to take what fish the large one had caught and what soft bread they had baked, some pumpkins, some sugar, and bottled cider, and
return to me without delay. The boat left me on board the Spanish ship, went to our own, and executed the orders; and returned to me again about eleven o'clock. At noon the large boat came with the water, which I was obliged to serve out to them myself, to keep them from drinking so much as to do themselves injury. I gave them at first one gill each, an hour after, half a pint, and the third hour a pint. Afterward, I permitted them to drink as they pleased. They all looked up to me as a benefactor; and as I was deceived in them, I did them every possible kindness. Had it been otherwise there is no doubt I should have fallen a victim to their power. It was to my great advantage, that, on this occasion, the temperament of my mind was unusually pleasant. The apparent sufferings of those about me had softened my feelings into sympathy; or, doubtless my interference with some of their transactions would have cost me my life. The Spanish captain had evidently lost much of his authority over the slaves, whom he appeared to fear, and whom he was unwilling in any case to oppose. An instance of this occurred in the conduct of the four cabin boys, spoken of by the captain. They were eating with the slave boys on the main deck, when, (as I was afterwards informed) the Spanish boys, feeling some hopes of release, and not having prudence sufficient to keep silent, some words dropped respecting their expectations, which were understood by the slave boys. One of them gave a stroke with a knife on the head of one of the Spanish boys, which penetrated to the bone, in a cut four inches in length. I saw this and inquired what it meant. The captain replied that it was merely the sport of the boys, who had fallen out. I told him it appeared to me to be rather serious sport, as the wound had caused the boy to lose about a quart of blood. Several similar instances of unruly conduct, which, agreeably to my manner of thinking, demanded immediate resistance and punishment, were thus easily winked at, and passed over. I felt willing, however, to make some allowance even for conduct so gross, when I considered them to have been broken down with fatigue and long suffering.

The act of the negro, who kept constantly at the elbows of Don Bonito and myself, I should, at any other time, have immediately resented; and although it excited my wonder, that his commander should allow this extraordinary liberty, I did not remonstrate against it, until it became troublesome to myself. I wished to have some private conversation with the captain alone, and the negro as usual following us into the cabin, I requested the captain to send him on deck, as the business about which we were to talk could not be conveniently communicated in presence of a third person. I spoke in Spanish, and the negro understood me. The captain assured me, that his remaining with us would be of no disservice; that he had made him his confidant and companion since he had lost so many of his officers and men. He had introduced him to me before, as captain of the slaves, and told me he kept them in good order. I was alone with them, or rather on board by myself, for three or four hours, during
the absence of my boat, at which time the ship drifted out with the current three leagues from my own, when the breeze sprung up from the south east. It was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon. We ran the ship as near to the Perseverance as we could without either ship's swinging afoul the other. After the Spanish ship was anchored, I invited the captain to go on board my ship and take tea or coffee with me. His answer was short and seemingly reserved; and his air very different from that with which he had received my assistance. As I was at a loss to account for this change in his demeanor, and knew he had seen nothing in my conduct to justify it, and as I felt certain that he treated me with intentional neglect; in return I became less sociable, and said little to him. After I had ordered my boat to be hauled up and manned, and as I was going to the side of the vessel, in order to get into her, Don Bonito came to me, gave my hand a hearty squeeze, and, as I thought, seemed to feel the weight of the cool treatment with which I had retaliated. I had committed a mistake in attributing his apparent coldness to neglect; and as soon as the discovery was made, I was happy to rectify it, by a prompt renewal of friendly intercourse. He continued to hold my hand fast till I stepped off the gunwale down the side, when he let it go, and stood making me compliments. When I had seated myself in the boat, and ordered her to be shoved off, the people having their oars up on end, she fell off at a sufficient distance to leave room for the oars to drop. After they were down, the Spanish captain, to my great astonishment, leaped from the gunwale of the ship into the middle of our boat. As soon as he had recovered a little, he called out in so alarming a manner, that I could not understand him; and the Spanish sailors were then seen jumping overboard and making for our boat. These proceedings excited the wonder of us all. The officer whom I had with me anxiously inquired into their meaning. I smiled and told him, that I neither knew, nor cared; but it seemed the captain was trying to impress his people with a belief that we intended to run away with him. At this moment one of my Portuguese sailors in the boat spoke to me, and gave me to understand what Don Bonito said. I desired the captain to come aft and sit down by my side, and in a calm deliberate manner relate the whole affair. In the mean time the boat was employed in picking up the men who had jumped from the ship. They had picked up three, (leaving one in the water till after the boat had put the Spanish captain and myself on board my ship,) when my officer observed the cable was cut, and the ship was swinging. I hailed the Perseverance, ordering the ports got up, and the guns run out as soon as possible. We pulled as fast as we could on board; and then despatched the boat for the man who was left in the water, whom we succeeded to save alive.

We soon had our guns ready; but the Spanish ship had dropped so far astern of the Perseverance, that we could bring but one gun to bear on her, which was the after one. This was fired six times, without any other effect than cutting away the fore top-mast stay, and some other small ropes
which were no hindrance to her going away. She was soon out of reach of our shot, steering out of the bay. We then had some other calculations to make. Our ship was moored with two bower anchors, which were all the cables or anchors of that description we had. To slip and leave them would be to break our policy of insurance by a deviation, against which I would here caution the masters of all vessels. It should always be borne in mind, that to do any thing which will destroy the guaranty of their policies, how great soever may be the inducement, and how generous soever the motive, is not justifiable; for should any accident subsequently occur, whereby a loss might accrue to the underwriters, they will be found ready enough, and sometimes too ready, to avail themselves of the opportunity to be released from responsibility; and the damage must necessarily be sustained by the owners. This is perfectly right. The law has wisely restrained the powers of the insured, that the insurer should not be subject to imposition, or abuse. All bad consequences may be avoided by one who has a knowledge of his duty, and is disposed faithfully to obey its dictates.

At length, without much loss of time, I came to a determination to pursue, and take the ship with my two boats. On inquiring of the captain what fire arms they had on board the Tryal, he answered, they had none which they could use; that he had put the few they had out of order, so that they could make no defence with them; and furthermore, that they did not understand their use, if they were in order. He observed at the same time, that if I attempted to take her with boats we should all be killed; for the negroes were such braves and so desperate, that there would be no such thing as conquering them. I saw the man in the situation that I have seen others, frightened at his own shadow. This was probably owing to his having been effectively conquered and his spirits broken.

After the boats were armed, I ordered the men to get into them; and they obeyed with cheerfulness. I was going myself, but Don Bonito took hold of my hand and forbade me, saying, you have saved my life, and now you are going to throw away your own. Some of my confidential officers asked me if it would be prudent for me to go, and leave the Perseverance in such an unguarded state; and also, if any thing should happen to me, what would be the consequence to the voyage. Every man on board, they observed, would willingly go, if it were my pleasure. I gave their remonstrances a moment's consideration, and felt their weight. I then ordered into the boats my chief officer, Mr. Low, who commanded the party; and under him, Mr. Brown, my second officer; my brother William, Mr. George Russell, son to major Benjamin Russell of Boston, and Mr. Nathaniel Luther, midshipmen; William Clark, boatswain; Charles Spence, gunner; and thirteen seamen. By way of encouragement, I told them that Don Bonito considered the ship and what was in her as lost; that the value was more than one hundred thousand dollars; that if we would take her, it should be all our own; and that if we should afterwards be disposed to give him up one half, it would be considered
as a present. I likewise reminded them of the suffering condition of the poor Spaniards remaining on board; whom I then saw with my spy-glass as high aloft as they could get on the top-gallant-masts, and knowing that death must be their fate if they came down. I told them, never to see my face again, if they did not take her, and these were all of them pretty powerful stimulants. I wished God to prosper them in the discharge of their arduous duty, and they shoved off. They pulled after and came up with the Tryal, took their station upon each quarter, and commenced a brisk fire of musketry, directing it as much at the man at the helm as they could, as that was likewise a place of resort for the negroes. At length they drove the chief mate from it, who had been compelled to steer the ship. He ran up the mizen rigging as high as the cross jack yard, and called out in Spanish, "Don't board." This induced our people to believe that he favoured the cause of the negroes; they fired at him, and two balls took effect; one of them went through his side, but did not go deep enough to be mortal; and the other went through one of his thighs. This brought him down on deck again. They found the ship made such headway that the boats could hardly keep up with her, as the breeze was growing stronger. They then called to the Spaniards, who were still as high aloft as they could get, to come down on the yards, and cut away the robings and earings of the topsails, and let them fall from the yards, so that they might not hold any wind. They accordingly did so. About the same time, the Spaniard who was steering the ship, was killed; (he is sometimes called passenger, and sometimes clerk, in the different depositions,) so that both these circumstances combined rendered her unmanageable by such people as were left on board. She came round to the wind, and both boats boarded, one on each bow, when she was carried by hard fighting. The negroes defended themselves with desperate courage; and after our people had boarded them, they found they had barricaded the deck by making a breastwork of the water casks which we had left on board, and sacks of matta, abreast the mainmast, from one side of the ship to the other, to the height of six feet; behind which they defended themselves with all the means in their power to the last; and our people had to force their way over this breast work before they could compel them to surrender. The other parts of the transaction have some of them been, and the remainder will be hereafter stated.

On going on board the next morning with hand-cuffs, leg-irons, and shackled bolts, to secure the hands and feet of the negroes, the sight which presented itself to our view was truly horrid. They had got all the men who were living made fast, hands and feet, to the ring bolts in the deck; some of them had part of their bowels hanging out, and some with half their backs and thighs shaved off. This was done with our boarding lances, which were always kept exceedingly sharp and bright as a gentleman's sword. Whilst putting them in irons, I had to exercise as much authority over the Spanish captain and his crew, as I had to use over my own men.
on any other occasion, to prevent them from cutting to pieces and killing these poor unfortunate beings. I observed one of the Spanish sailors had found a razor in the pocket of an old jacket of his, which one of the slaves had on; he opened it, and made a cut upon the negro's head. He seemed to aim at his throat, and it bled shockingly. Seeing several more about to engage in the same kind of barbarity, I commanded them not to hurt another one of them, on pain of being brought to the gang-way and flogged. The captain, also, I noticed, had a dirk, which he had secreted at the time the negroes were massacring the Spaniards. I did not observe, however, that he intended to use it, until one of my people gave me a twitch by the elbow, to draw my attention to what was passing, when I saw him in the act of stabbing one of the slaves. I immediately caught hold of him, took away his dirk, and threatened him with the consequences of my displeasure, if he attempted to hurt one of them. Thus I was obliged to be continually vigilant, to prevent them from using violence towards these wretched creatures.

After we had put everything in order on board the Spanish ship, and swept for and obtained her anchors, which the negroes had cut her from, we sailed on the 23rd, both ships in company, for Conception, where we anchored on the 26th. After the common forms were passed, we delivered the ship, and all that was on board her, to the captain, whom we had befriended. We delivered him also a bag of doubloons, containing, I presume, nearly a thousand; several bags of dollars, containing a like number; and several baskets of watches, some gold, and some silver, all of which had been brought on board the Perseverance for safe keeping. We detained no part of this treasure to reward us for the services we had rendered. All that we received was faithfully returned.

After our arrival at Conception, I was mortified and very much hurt at the treatment which I received from Don Bonito Sereno; but had this been the only time that I ever was treated with ingratitude, injustice, or want of compassion, I would not complain. I will only name one act of his towards me at this place. He went to the prison and took the depositions of five of my Botany bay convicts, who had left us at St. Maria, and were now in prison there. This was done by him with a view to injure my character, so that he might not be obliged to make us any compensation for what we had done for him. I never made any demand of, nor claimed in any way whatever, more than that they should give me justice; and did not ask to be my own judge, but to refer it to government. Amongst those who swore against me were the three outlawed convicts, who have been before mentioned. I had been the means, undoubtedly, of saving every one of their lives, and had supplied them with clothes. They swore everything against me they could to effect my ruin. Amongst other atrocities, they swore I was a pirate, and made several statements that would operate equally to my disadvantage had they been believed; all of which were brought before the viceroy of Lima against me. When
we met at that place, the viceroy was too great and too good a man to be misled by these false representations. He told Don Bonito, that my conduct towards him proved the injustice of these depositions, taking his own official declaration at Conception for the proof of it; that he had been informed by Don Jose Calminaries, who was commandant of the marine, and was at that time, and after the affair of the Tryal, on the coast of Chili; that Calminaries had informed him how both Don Bonito and myself had conducted, and he was satisfied that no man had behaved better, under all circumstances, than the American captain had done to Don Bonito, and that he never had seen or heard of any man treating another with so much dishonesty and ingratitude as he had treated the American. The viceroy had previously issued an order, on his own authority, to Don Bonito, to deliver to me eight thousand dollars as part payment for service rendered him. This order was not given till his Excellency had consulted all the tribunals holding jurisdiction over similar cases, except the twelve royal judges. These judges exercise a supreme authority over all the courts in Peru, and reserve to themselves the right of giving a final decision in all questions of law. Whenever either party is dissatisfied with the decision of the inferior courts in this kingdom, they have a right of appeal to the twelve judges. Don Bonito had attempted an appeal from the viceroy's order to the royal judges. The viceroy sent for me, and acquainted me of Don Bonito's attempt; at the same time recommending to me to accede to it, as the royal judges well understood the nature of the business, and would do much better for me than his order would. He observed at the same time, that they were men of too great characters to be biassed or swayed from doing justice by any party; they holding their appointments immediately from his majesty. He said, if I requested it, Don Bonito should be holden to his order. I then represented, that I had been in Lima nearly two months, waiting for different tribunals, to satisfy his Excellency what was safe for him, and best to be done for me, short of a course of law, which I was neither able nor willing to enter into; that I had then nearly thirty men on different islands, and on board my tender, which was then somewhere amongst the islands on the coast of Chili; that they had no method that I knew of to help themselves, or receive succour, except from me; and that if I was to defer the time any longer it amounted to a certainty, that they must suffer. I therefore must pray that his Excellency's order might be put in force.

Don Bonito, who was owner of the ship and part of the cargo, had been quibbling and using all his endeavors to delay the time of payment, provided the appeal was not allowed, when his Excellency told him to get out of his sight, that he would pay the money himself, and put him (Don Bonito) into a dungeon, where he should not see sun, moon, or stars; and was about giving the order, when a very respectable company of merchants waited on him and pleaded for Don Bonito, praying that
his Excellency would favor him on account of his family, who were very rich and respectable. The viceroy remarked that Don Bonito's character had been such as to disgrace any family, that had any pretensions to respectability; but that he should grant their prayer, provided there was no more reason for complaint. The last transaction brought me the money in two hours; by which time I was extremely distressed, enough, I believe, to have punished me for a great many of my bad deeds.

When I take a retrospective view of my life, I cannot find in my soul, that I ever have done anything to deserve such misery and ingratitude as I have suffered at different periods, and in general, from the very persons to whom I have rendered the greatest services.

The following Documents were officially translated, and are inserted without alteration, from the original papers. This I thought to be the most correct course, as it would give the reader a better view of the subject than any other method that could be adopted. My deposition and that of Mr. Luther, were communicated through a bad linguist, who could not speak the English language so well as I could the Spanish, Mr. Luther not having any knowledge of the Spanish language. The Spanish captain's deposition, together with Mr. Luther's and my own, were translated into English again, as now inserted; having thus undergone two translations. These circumstances, will, we hope, be a sufficient apology for any thing which may appear to the reader not to be perfectly consistent, one declaration with another; and for any impropriety of expression.

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

A faithful translation of the depositions of Don Benito Cereno, of Don Amasa Delano, and of Don Nathaniel Luther, together with the Documents of the commencement of the process, under the King's Seal.

I Don Jose de Abos, and Padilla, his Majesty's Notary for the Royal Revenue, and Register of this Province, and Notary Public of the Holy Crusade of this Bishoprick, etc.

Do certify and declare, as much as requisite in law, that, in the criminal cause, which by an order of the Royal Justice, Doctor Don Juan Martinez de Rozas, deputy assessor general of this province, conducted against the Senegal Negroes, that the ship Tryal was carrying from the port of Valparaiso, to that of Callao of Lima, in the month of December last. There is at the beginning of the prosecution, a decree in continuance of the declaration of her captain, Don Benito Cereno, and on the back of the twenty-sixth leaf, that of the captain of the American ship, the Perseverance, Amasa Delano; and that of the supercargo of this ship, Nathaniel Luther, midshipman, of the United States, on the thirtieth leaf; as also the Sentence of the aforesaid cause, on the back of the 72nd

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leaf; and the confirmation of the Royal Audience, of this District, on the 78th and 79th leaves; and an official order of the Tribunal with which the cause and everything else therein continued, is remitted back; which proceedings with a representation made by the said American captain, Amasa Delano, to this Intendency, against the Spanish captain of the ship Tryal, Don Benito Cereno, and answers thereto—are in the following manner—

**Decree of the Commencement of the Process.**

In the port of Talcahuane, the twenty-fourth of the month of February, one thousand eight hundred and five, Doctor Don Juan Martinez de Rozas, Counsellor of the Royal Audience of this Kingdom, Deputy Assessor, and learned in the law, of this Intendency, having the deputation thereof on account of the absence of his Lordship, the Governor Intendent—Said, that whereas the ship Tryal, has just cast anchor in the road of this port, and her captain, Don Benito Cereno, has made the declaration of the twentieth of December, he sailed from the port of Valparaiso, bound to that of Callao; having his ship loaded with produce and merchandize of the country, with sixty-three negroes of all sexes and ages, and besides nine sucking infants; that the twenty-sixth, in the night, revolted, killed eighteen of his men, and made themselves master of the ship—that afterwards they killed seven men more, and obliged him to carry them to the coast of Africa, at Senegal, of which they were natives; that Tuesday the nineteenth, he put into the island of Santa Maria, for the purpose of taking in water, and he found in its harbour the American ship, the Perseverance, commanded by captain Amasa Delano, who being informed of the revolt of the negroes on board the ship Tryal, killed five or six of them in the engagement, and finally overcame them; that the ship being recovered, he supplied him with hands, and brought him to this port.—Wherefore, for examining the truth of these facts, and inflict on the guilty of such heinous crimes, the penalties provided by law. He therefore orders that this decree commencing the process, should be extended, that agreeably to its tenor, the witnesses, that should be able to give an account of them, be examined—thus ordered by his honour, which I attest.—Doctor ROZAS.

Before me, Jose de Abos, and Padilla, his Majesty's Notary of Royal Revenue and Registers.

**Declaration of first Witness**

**DON BENITO CERENO**

The same day and month and year, his Honour ordered the captain of the ship Tryal, Don Benito Cereno, to appear, of whom he received before me, the oath, which he took by God, our Lord, and a Sign of the Cross, under which he promised to tell the truth of whatever he should know and should be asked—and being interrogated agreeably to the
tenor of the act, commencing the process, he said, that the twentieth of December last, he set sail with his ship from the port of Valparaiso, bound to that of Callao; loaded with the produce of the country, and seventy-two negroes of both sexes, and of all ages, belonging to Don Alexandro Aranda, inhabitant of the city of Mendoza; that the crew of the ship consisted of thirty-six men, besides the persons who went passengers; that the negroes were of the following ages,—twenty from twelve to sixteen years, one from about eighteen to nineteen years, names Jose, and this was the man that waited upon his master Don Alexandro, who speaks well the Spanish, having had him four or five years; a mulatto, named Francisco, native of the province of Buenos Ayres, aged about thirty-five years; a smart negro, named Joaquin, who had been for many years among the Spaniards, aged twenty-six years, and a caulker by trade; twelve full grown negroes, aged from twenty-five to fifty years, all raw and born on the coast of Senegal—whose names are as follow,—the first was named Babo, and he was killed,—the second who is his son, is named Muri,—the third, Matiluqui,—the fourth, Yola,—the fifth, Yau,—the sixth Atufal, who was killed,—the seventh, Diamelo, also killed,—the eighth, Leebe, likewise killed,—the ninth, Natu, in the same manner killed, and that he does not recollect the names of the others; but that he will take due account of them all, and remit to the court; and twenty-eight women of all ages,—that all the negroes slept upon deck, as is customary in this navigation; and none wore fetters, because the owner, Aranda told him that they were all tractable; that the twenty-seventh of December, at three o'clock in the morning, all the Spaniards being asleep except the two officers on the watch, who were the boatswain Juan Robles, and the carpenter Juan Baitista Gayete, and the helmsman and his boy; the negroes revolted suddenly, wounded dangerously the boatswain and the carpenter, and successively killed eighteen men of those who were sleeping upon deck,—some with sticks and daggers, and others by throwing them alive over-board, after tying them; that of the Spaniards who were upon deck, they left about seven, as he thinks, alive and tied, to manoeuver the ship; and three or four more who hid themselves, remained also alive, although in the act of revolt, they made themselves masters of the hatch-way, six or seven wounded, went through it to the cock-pit without any hindrance on their part; that in the act of revolt, the mate and another person, whose name he does not recollect, attempted to come up through the hatchway, but having been wounded at the onset, they were obliged to return to the cabin; that the deponent resolved at break of day to come up the companion-way, where the negro Babo was, being the ring leader, and another who assisted him, and having spoken to them, exhorted them to cease committing such atrocities—asking them at the same time what they wanted and intended to do—offering himself to obey their commands; that notwithstanding this, they threw, in his presence, three men, alive and tied, overboard; that they told the deponent to come up, and that
they would not kill him—which having done, they asked him whether there were in these seas any negro countries, where they might be carried, and he answered them, no; that they afterwards told him to carry them to Senegal, or to the neighboring islands of St. Nicolas—and he answered them, that this was impossible, on account of the great distance, the bad condition of the vessel, the want of provisions, sails and water; that they replied to him, he must carry them in any way; that they would do and conform themselves to every thing the deponent should require as to eating and drinking, that after a long conference, being absolutely compelled to please them, for they threatened him to kill them all, if they were not at all events carried to Senegal. He told them that what was most wanting for the voyage was water; that they would go near the coast to take it, and thence they would proceed on their course—that the negroes agreed to it; and the deponent steered towards the intermediate ports, hoping to meet some Spanish or foreign vessel that would save them; that within ten or eleven days they saw the land, and continued their course by it in the vicinity of Nasca; that the deponent observed that the negroes were now restless, and mutinous, because he did not effect the taking in of water, they having required with threats that it should be done, without fail the following day; he told them that they saw plainly that the coast was steep, and the rivers designated in the maps were not to be found, with other reasons suitable to the circumstances; that the best way would be to go to the island of Santa Maria, where they might water and victual easily, it being a desert island, as the foreigners did; that the deponent did not go to Pisco, that was near, not make any other port of the coast, because the negroes had intimated to him several times, that they would kill them all the very moment they should perceive any city, town, or settlement, on the shores to which they should be carried; that having determined to go to the island of Santa Maria, as the deponent had planned, for the purpose of trying whether in the passage or in the island itself, they could find any vessel that should favor them, or whether he could escape from it in a boat to the neighboring coast of Arruco. To adopt the necessary means he immediately changed his course, steering for the island; that the negroes held daily conferences, in which they discussed what was necessary for their design of returning to Senegal, whether they were to kill all the Spaniards, and particularly the deponent; that eight days after parting from the coast of Nasca, the deponent being on the watch a little after day-break, and soon after the negroes had their meeting, the negro Mure came to the place where the deponent was, and told him, that his comrades had determined to kill his master, Don Alexandro Aranda, because they said they could not otherwise obtain their liberty, and that he should call the mate, who was sleeping, before they executed it, for fear, as he understood, that he should not be killed with the rest; that the deponent prayed and told him all that was necessary in such a circumstance to dissuade him from his design, but all was useless, for the negro Mure answered him,
that the thing could not be prevented, and that they should all run the
risk of being killed if they should attempt to dissuade or obstruct them
in the act; that in this conflict the deponent called the mate, and im-
mmediately the negro Mure ordered the negro Matinqui, and another named
Lecbe, who died in the island of Santa Maria, to go and commit this
murder; that the two negroes went down to the birth of Don Alexandre,
and stabbed him in his bed; that yet half alive and agonizing, they dragged
him on deck and threw him overboard; that the clerk, Don Lorenzo
Bargas, was sleeping in the opposite birth, and awaking at the cries of
Aranda, surprised by them, and at the sight of the negroes, who had bloody
daggers in their hands, he threw himself into the sea through a window
which was near him, and was miserably drowned, without being in the
power of the deponent to assist, or take him up, though he immediately
put out his boat; that a short time after killing Aranda, they got upon
deck his german-cousin, Don Francisco Masa, and his other clerk, called
Don Hermenegildo, a native of Spain, and a relation of the said Aranda,
besides the boatswain, Juan Robles, the boatswain's mate, Manuel
Viseaya, and two or three others of the sailors, all of whom were wounded,
and having stabbed them again, they threw them alive into the sea, al-
though they made no resistance, nor begged for any thing else but mercy;
that the boatswain, Juan Robles, who knew how to swim, kept himself
the longest above water, making acts of contrition, and in the last words
he uttered, charged this deponent to cause mass to be said for his soul,
to our Lady of Succour; that having finished this slaughter, the negro
Mure told him that they had now done all, and that he might pursue his
destination, warning him that they would kill all the Spaniards, if they
saw them speak, or plot any thing against them—a threat which they
repeated almost every day; that before this occurrence last mentioned,
they had tied the cook to throw him overboard for I know not what thing
they heard him speak, and finally they spared his life at the request of the
deponent; that a few days after, the deponent endeavored not to omit
any means to preserve their lives—spoke to them peace and tranquillity,
and agreed to draw up a paper, signed by the deponent, and the sailors
who could write, as also by the negroes, Babo and Atufal, who could do
it in their language, though they were new, in which he obliged himself
to carry them to Senegal, and they not to kill any more, and to return to
them the ship with the cargo, with which they were for that satisfied and
quieted; that omitting other events which daily happened, and which
can only serve to recall their past misfortunes and conflicts, after forty-two
days navigation, reckoned from the time they sailed from Nasca, during
which they navigated under a scanty allowance of water, they at last
arrived at the island of Santa Maria, on Tuesday the nineteenth instant,
at about five o'clock in the afternoon, at which hour they cast anchor
very near the American ship Perseverance, which lay in the same port,
commanded by the generous captain Amasa Delano, but at seven o'clock
in the morning they had already descried the port, and the negroes became uneasy as soon as they saw the ship, and the deponent, to appease and quiet them, proposed to them to say and do all that he will declare to have said to the American captain, with which they were tranquillized, warning him that if he varied in the least, or uttered any word that should give the least intimation of the past occurrences, they would instantly kill him and all his companions; that about eight o'clock in the morning, captain Amasa Delano came in his boat, on board the Tryal, and all gladly received him; that the deponent, acting then the part of an owner and a free captain of the ship told them that he came from Buenos Ayres, bound to Lima, with that parcel of negroes; that at the cape many had died, that also, all the sea officers and the greatest part of the crew had died, there remained to him no other sailors than these few who were in sight, and that for want of them the sails had been torn to pieces; that the heavy storms off the cape had obliged them to throw overboard the greatest part of the cargo, and the water pipes; that consequently he had no more water; that he had thought of putting into the port of Conception, but that the north wind had prevented him, as also the want of water, for he had only enough for that day, concluded by asking of him supplies; that the generous captain Amasa Delano immediately offered them sails, pipes, and whatever he wanted, to pursue his voyage to Lima, without entering any other port, leaving it to his pleasure to refund him for these supplies at Callao, or pay him for them if he thought best; that he immediately ordered his boat for the purpose of bringing him water, sugar, and bread, as they did; that Amasa Delano remained on board the Tryal all the day, till he left the ship anchored at five o'clock in the afternoon, deponent speaking to him always of his pretended misfortunes, under the forementioned principles, without having had it in his power to tell a single word, nor giving him the least hint, that he might know the truth, and state of things; because the negro Mure, who is a man of capacity and talents, performing the office of an officious servant, with all the appearance of submission of the humble slave, did not leave the deponent one moment, in order to observe his actions and words; for he understands well the Spanish, and besides there were thereabout some others who were constantly on the watch and understood it also; that a moment in which Amasa Delano left the deponent, Mure asked him, how do we come on? and the deponent answered them, well; he gives us all the supplies we want; but he asked him afterwards how many men he had, and the deponent told him that he had thirty men; but that twenty of them were on the island, and there were in the vessel only those whom he saw there in the two boats; and then the negro told him, well, you will be the captain of this ship to night and his also, for three negroes are sufficient to take it; that as soon as they had cast anchor, at five of the clock, as has been stated, the American captain took leave, to return to his vessel, and the deponent accompanied him as far as the gunwale, where he staid under
pretence of taking leave, until he should have got into his boat; but on
shoving off, the deponent jumped from the gunwale into the boat and fell
into it, without knowing how, and without sustaining, fortunately, any
harm; but he immediately hallooed to the Spaniards on the ship, “Over-
board, those that can swim, the rest to the rigging.” That he instantly
told the captain, by means of the Portuguese interpreter, that they were
revolted negroes, who had killed all his people; that the said captain soon
understood the affair, and recovered from his surprise, which the leap of
the deponent occasioned, and told him, “Be not afraid, be not afraid,
set down and be easy,” and ordered his sailors to row towards his ship,
and before coming up to her, he hailed, to get a cannon ready and run
it out of the port hole, which they did very quick, and fired with it a few
shots at the negroes; that in the mean while the boat was sent to pick up
two men who had thrown themselves overboard, which they effected;
that the negroes cut the cables, and endeavoured to sail away; that
Amasa Delano seeing them sailing away, and the cannon could not subdue
them, ordered his people to get muskets, pikes and sabres ready, and all
his men offered themselves willingly to board them with the boats; that
captain Amasa Delano wanted to go in person, and was going to embark
the first, but the deponent prevented him, and after many entreaties he
finally remained, saying, though that circumstance would procure him
much honour, he would stay to please him, and keep him company in his
affliction, and would send a brother of his, on whom he said he placed as
much reliance as on himself; his brother, the mates, and eighteen men,
whom he had in his vessel, embarked in the two boats, and made their
way towards the Tryal, which was already under sail; that they rowed
considerably in pursuing the ship, and kept up a musketry fire; but that
they could not overtake them, until they hallooed to the sailors on the
rigging, to unbend or take away the sails, which they accordingly did,
letting them fall on the deck; that they were then able to lay themselves
alongside, keeping up constantly a musketry fire, whilst some got up the
sides on deck, with pikes and sabres, and the others remained in the
stern of the boat, keeping up also a fire, until they got up finally by the
same side, and engaged the negroes, who defended themselves to the last
with their weapons, rushing upon the points of the pikes with an extra-
ordinary fury; that the Americans killed five or six negroes, and these were
Babo, Atufal, Dick, Natu, Qiamolo, and does not recollect any other;
that they wounded several others, and at last conquered and made them
prisoners, that at ten o’clock at night, the first mate with three men, came
to inform the captain that the ship had been taken, and came also for the
purpose of being cured of a dangerous wound, made by a point of a dagger,
which he had received in his breast; that two other Americans had been
slightly wounded; the captain left nine men to take care of the ship as
far as this port; he accompanied her with his own until both ships, the
Tryal and Perseverance, cast anchor between nine and eleven o’clock
in the forenoon of this day; that the deponent has not seen the twenty negroes, from twelve to sixteen years of age, have any share in the execution of the murders; nor does he believe they have had, on account of their age, although all were knowing to the insurrection; that the negro Jose, eighteen years old, and in the service of Don Alexandro, was the one who communicated the information to the negro Mure and his comrades, of the state of things before the revolt; and this is known, because in the preceding nights he used to come to sleep from below, where they were, and had secret conversations with Mure, in which he was seen several times by the mate; and one night he drove him away twice; that this same negro Jose, was the one who advised the other negroes to kill his master, Don Alexandro; and that this is known, because the negroes have said it; that on the first revolt, the negro Jose was upon deck with the other revolted negroes, but it is not known whether he materially participated in the murders; that the mulatto Francisco was of the band of revolters, and one of their number; that the negro Joaquin was also one of the worst of them, for that on the day the ship was taken, he assisted in the defence of her with a hatchet in one hand and a dagger in the other, as the sailors told him; that in sight of the deponent, he stabbed Don Francisco Masa, when he was carrying him to throw him overboard alive, he being the one who held him fast; that the twelve or thirteen negroes, from twenty-five to fifty years of age, were with the former, the principal revolters, and committed the murders and atrocities before related; that five or six of them were killed, as has been said, in the attack on the ship, and the following remained alive and are prisoners—to wit—Mure, who acted as captain and commander of them, and on all the insurrections and posterior events, Matinqui, Alathano, Yau, Luis, Mapenda, Yola, Yambaio, being eight in number, and with Jose, Joaquin, and Francisco, who are also alive, making the number of eleven of the remaining insurgents; that the negresses of age, were knowing to the revolt, and influenced the death of their master; who also used their influence to kill the deponent; that in the act of murder, and before that of the engagement of the ship, they began to sing, and were singing a very melancholy song during the action, to excite the courage of the negroes; that the statement he has just given of the negroes who are alive, has been made by the officers of the ship; that of the thirty-six men of the crew and passengers, which the deponent had knowledge of, twelve only including the mate remained alive, besides four cabin boys, who were not included in that number; that they broke an arm of one of those cabin boys, named Francisco Raneds, and gave him three or four stabs, which are already healed; that in the engagement of the ship, the second clerk, Don Josi Morairi, was killed by a musket ball fired at him through accident, for having incautiously presented himself on the gunwale; that at the time of the attack of the ship, Don Joaquin Arambaolaza was on one of the yards flying from the negroes, and at the approach of the boats, he
halloowed by order of the negroes, not to board, on which account the Americans thought he was also one of the revolters, and fired two balls at him, one passed through one of his thighs, and the other in the chest of his body, of which he is now confined, though the American captain, who has him on board, says he will recover; that in order to be able to proceed from the coast of Nasca, to the island of Santa Maria, he saw himself obliged to lighten the ship, by throwing more than one third of the cargo overboard, for he could not have made that voyage otherwise; that what he has said is the most substantial of what occurs to him on this unfortunate event, and the truth, under the oath that he has taken;—which declaration he affirmed and ratified, after hearing it read to him. He said that he was twenty-nine years of age;—and signed with his honour—which I certify.

BENITO CERENO.

DOCTOR ROZAS.

Before me.—PADILLA.

RATIFICATION

In the port of Talcahuano, the first day of the month of March, in the year one thousand eight hundred and five,—the same Honourable Judge of this cause caused to appear in this presence the captain of the ship Tryal, Don Benito Cerenó, of whom he received an oath, before me, which he took conformably to law, under which he promised to tell the truth of what he should know, and of what he should be asked, and having read to him the fore-going declaration, and being asked if it is the same he has given and whether he has to add or to take off any thing,—he said, that it is the same he has given, that he affirms and ratifies it; and has only to add, that the new negroes were thirteen, and the females comprehended twenty-seven, without including the infants, and that one of them died from hunger or thirst, and two young negroes of those from twelve to sixteen, together with an infant. And he signed it with his honour—which I certify.

BENITO CERENO.

DOCTOR ROZAS.

Before me.—PADILLA.

Declaration of Don Amasa Delano

The same day, month and year, his Honour, ordered the captain of the American ship Perseverance to appear, whose oath his Honour received, which he took by placing his right hand on the Evangelists, under which he promised to tell the truth of what he should know and be asked—and being interrogated according to the decree, beginning this process, through the medium of the interpreter Carlos Elli, who likewise swore to exercise well and lawfully his office, that the nineteenth or twentieth of the month, as he believes, agreeably to the calculation he
keeps from the eastward, being at the island of Santa Maria, at anchor, he descried at seven o'clock in the morning, a ship coming round the point; that he asked his crew what ship that was; they replied that they did not know her; that taking his spy-glass he perceived she bore no colours; that he took his barge, and his net for fishing, and went on board of her, that when he got on deck he embraced the Spanish captain, who told him that he had been four months and twenty-six days from Buenos Ayres; that many of his people had died of the scurvy, and that he was in great want of supplies—particularly pipes for water, duck for sails, and refreshment for his crew; that the deponent offered to give and supply him with everything he asked and wanted; that the Spanish captain did nothing else, because the ringleader of the negroes was constantly at their elbows, observing what was said. That immediately he sent his barge to his own ship to bring; (as they accordingly did) water, peas, bread, sugar, and fish. That he also sent for his long boat to bring a load of water, and having brought it, he returned to his own ship; that in parting he asked the Spanish captain to come on board his ship to take coffee, tea, and other refreshments; but he answered him with coldness and indifference; that he could not go then, but that he would in two or three days. That at the same time he visited him, the ship Tryal cast anchor in the port, about four o'clock in the afternoon,—that he told his people belonging to his boat to embark in order to return to his ship, that the deponent also left the deck to get into his barge,—that on getting into the barge, the Spanish captain took him by the hand and immediately gave a jump on board his boat,—that he then told him that the negroes of the Tryal had taken her, and had murdered twenty-five men, which the deponent was informed of through the medium of an interpreter, who was with him, and a Portuguese; that two or three other Spaniards threw themselves into the water, who were picked up by his boats; that he immediately went to his ship, and before reaching her, called to the mate to prepare and load the guns; that having got on board, he fired at them with his cannon, and this same deponent pointed six shots at the time the negroes of the Tryal were cutting away the cables and setting sail; that the Spanish captain told him that the ship was already going away, and that she could not be taken; that the deponent replied that he would take her; then the Spanish captain told him that if he took her, one half of her value would be his, and the other half would remain to the real owners; that thereupon he ordered the people belonging to his crew, to embark in the two boats, armed with knives, pistols, sabres, and pikes, to pursue her, and board her; that the two boats were firing at her near an hour with musketry, and at the end boarded and captured her; and that before sending his boats, he told his crew, in order to encourage them, that the Spanish captain offered to give them the half of the value of the Tryal if they took her. That having taken the ship, they came to anchor at about two o'clock in the morning very near the deponent's, leaving in her about
twenty of his men; that his first mate received a very dangerous wound
in his breast made with a pike, of which he lies very ill; that three other
sailors were also wounded with clubs, though not dangerously; that five
or six of the negroes were killed in boarding; that at six o'clock in the
morning, he went with the Spanish captain on board the Tryal, to carry
manacles and fetters from his ship, ordering them to be put on the negroes
who remained alive, he dressed the wounded, and accompanied the Tryal
to the anchoring ground; and in it he delivered her up manned from his
crew; for until that moment he remained in possession of her; that what
he has said is what he knows, and the truth, under the oath he has taken,
which he affirmed and ratified after the said declaration had been read to
him—saying he was forty-two years of age—the interpreter did not sign
it because he said he did not know how—the captain signed it with his
honour—which I certify.

AMASA DELANO.

DOCTOR ROZAS

Before me.—PADILLA

RATIFICATION

The said day, month and year, his Honour ordered the captain of the
American ship, Don Amasa Delano to appear, of whom his Honour
received an oath, which he took by placing his hand on the Evangelists,
under which he promised to tell the truth of what he should know, and
be asked, and having read to him the foregoing declaration, through the
medium of the interpreter, Ambrosio Fernandez, who likewise took an
oath to exercise well and faithfully his office—he said that he affirms and
ratifies the same; that he has nothing to add or diminish, and he signed
it, with his Honour, and likewise the Interpreter.

AMASA DELANO

AMBROSIO FERNANDEZ.

DOCTOR ROZAS.

Before me.—PADILLA

Declaration of Don Nathaniel Luther, Midshipman

The same day, month and year, his Honour ordered Don Nathaniel
Luther, first midshipman of the American ship Perseverance, and acting
as clerk to the captain, to appear, of whom he received an oath, and
which he took by placing his right hand on the Evangelists, under which
he promised to tell the truth of what he should know, and be asked, and
being interrogated agreeably to the decree commencing this process,
through the medium of the Interpreter, Carlos Elli, he said that the
deponent himself was one that boarded, and helped to take the ship
Tryal in the boats; that he knows that his captain, Amasa Delano, has
deposed on every thing that happened in this affair; that in order to avoid
delay he requests that his declaration should be read to him, and he will
tell whether it is conformable to the happening of the events; that if any thing should be omitted he will observe it, and add to it, doing the same if he erred in any part thereof; and his Honour having acquiesced in this proposal, the Declaration made this day by captain Amasa Delano, was read to him through the medium of the Interpreter, and said, that the deponent went with his captain, Amasa Delano, to the ship Tryal, as soon as she appeared at the point of the island, which was about seven o'clock in the morning, and remained with him on board of her, until she cast anchor; that the deponent was one of those who boarded the ship Tryal in the boats, and by this he knows that the narration which the captain has made in the deposition which has been read to him, is certain and exact in all its parts; and he has only three things to add; the first, that whilst his captain remained on board the Tryal, a negro stood constantly at his elbow, and by the side of the deponent, the second, that the deponent was in the boat, when the Spanish captain jumped into it, and when the Portuguese declared that the negroes had revolted; the third, that the number of killed was six, five negroes and a Spanish sailor; that what he has said is the truth, under the oath which he has taken; which he affirmed and ratified, after his Declaration had been read to him; he said he was twenty-one years of age, and signed it with his Honour, but the Interpreter did not sign it, because he said he did not know how—which I certify.

NATHANIEL LUTHER.

DOCTOR ROZAS.

Before me.—PADILLA

RATIFICATION

The aforesaid day, month and year, his Honour, ordered Don Nathaniel Luther, first midshipman of the American ship Perseverance, and acting as clerk to the captain, to whom he administered an oath, which he took by placing his hand on the Evangelists, under the sanctity of which he promised to tell the truth of what he should know and be asked; and the foregoing Declaration having been read to him, which he thoroughly understood, through the medium of the Interpreter, Ambrosio Fernandez, to whom an oath was likewise administered, to exercise well and faithfully his office, he says that he affirms and ratifies the same, that he has nothing to add or diminish, and he signed it with his Honour, and the Interpreter, which I certify.

NATHANIEL LUTHER

AMBROSIO FERNANDEZ.

DOCTOR ROZAS.

Before me.—PADILLA

SENTENCE

In this city of Conception, the second day of the month of March, of one thousand eight hundred and five, his Honour Doctor Don Juan
Martinez de Rozas, Deputy Assessor and learned in the law, of this intendency, having the execution thereof on account of the absence of his Honour, the principal having seen the proceedings, which he has conducted officially against the negroes of the ship Tryal, in consequence of the insurrection and atrocities which they have committed on board of her.—He declared, that the insurrection and revolt of said negroes, being sufficiently substantiated, with premeditated intent, the twenty-seventh of December last, at three o'clock in the morning; that taking by surprise the sleeping crew, they killed eighteen men, some with sticks, and daggers, and others by throwing them alive overboard; that a few days afterward with the same deliberate intent, they stabbed their master Don Alexandro Aranda, and threw Don Francisco Masa, his german cousin, Hermenegildo, his relation, and the other wounded persons who were confined in the births, overboard alive; that in the island of Santa Maria, they defended themselves with arms, against the Americans, who attempted to subdue them, causing the death of Don Jose Moraira the second clerk, as they had done that of the first, Don Lorenzo Bargas; the whole being considered, and the consequent guilts resulting from those heinous and atrocious actions as an example to others, he ought and did condemn the negroes, Mure, Matiniqui, Alazase, Yola, Joaquin, Luis, Yau, Mapenda, and Yambaio, to the common penalty of death, which shall be executed, by taking them out and dragging them from the prison, at the tail of a beast of burden, as far as the gibbet, where they shall be hung until they are dead, and to the forfeiture of all their property, if they should have any, to be applied to the Royal Treasury; that the heads of the five first be cut off after they are dead, and be fixed on a pole, in the square of the port of Talcahuano, and the corpses of all be burnt to ashes. The negresses and young negroes of the same gang shall be present at the execution, if they should be in that city at the time thereof; that he ought and did condemn likewise, the negro Jose, servant to said Don Alexandro, and Yambaio, Francisco, Rodriguez, to ten years confinement in the place of Valdivia, to work chained, on allowance and without pay, in the work of the King, and also to attend the execution of the other criminals; and judging definitively by this sentence thus pronounced and ordered by his Honour, and that the same should be executed notwithstanding the appeal, for which he declared there was no cause, but that an account of it should be previously sent to the Royal Audience of this district, for the execution thereof with the costs.

Doctor ROZAS.

Before me.—Jose DE ABOS PADILLA
His Majesty's Notary of the Royal Revenue and Registers

CONFIRMATION OF THE SENTENCE
SANTIAGO, March the twenty-first, of one thousand eight hundred and five
Having duly considered the whole, we suppose the sentence pronounced by the Deputy Assessor of the City of Conception, to whom we remit the same for its execution and fulfilment, with the official resolution, taking first an authenticated copy of the proceedings, to give an account thereof to his Majesty; and in regard to the request of the acting Notary, to the process upon the pay of his charges, he will exercise his right when and where he shall judge best.—

There are four flourishes

Their Honours, the President, Regent, and Auditors of his Royal Audience passed the foregoing decree, and those on the Margin set their flourishes, the day of this date, the twenty first of March, one thousand eight hundred and five;—which I certify,

ROMAN.

NOTIFICATION

The twenty-third of said month, I acquainted his Honour, the King's Attorney of the foregoing decree,—which I certify,

ROMAN.

OFFICIAL RESOLUTION

The Tribunal has resolved to manifest by this official resolve and pleasure for the exactitude, zeal and promptness which you have discovered in the cause against the revolted negroes of the ship Tryal, which process it remits to you, with the approbation of the sentence for the execution thereof, forewarning you that before its completion, you may agree with the most Illustrious Bishop, on the subject of furnishing the spiritual aids to these miserable beings, affording the same to them with all possible dispatch.—At the same time this Royal Audience has thought fit in case you should have an opportunity of speaking with the Bostonian captain, Amasa Delano, to charge you to inform him, that they will give an account to his Majesty, of the generous and benevolent conduct which he displayed in the punctual assistance that he afforded the Spanish captain of the aforesaid ship, for the suitable manifestation, publication and noticety of such a memorable event.

God preserve you many years.

SANTIAGO, March the twenty-second, of one thousand eight hundred and five.

JOSÉ DE SANTIAGO CONCHA.

DOCTOR DON JUAN MARTINEZ DE ROZAS,

Deputy assessor, and learned in the law, of the Intendency of Conception.

I, the undersigned, sworn Interpreter of languages, do certify that the foregoing translation from the Spanish original, is true.

FRANCIS SALES.

Boston, April 15, 1808.
N.B. It is proper here to state, that the difference of two days, in the dates of the process at Talquahauno, that of the Spaniards being the 24th of February and ours the 26th, was because they dated theirs the day we anchored in the lower harbor, which was one day before we got up abreast of the port, at which time we dated ours; and our coming by the way of the Cape of Good Hope, made our reckoning of time one day different from theirs.

It is also necessary to remark that the statement in page 332, respecting Mr. Luther being supercargo, and United States midshipman, is a mistake of the linguist. He was with me, the same as Mr. George Russell, and my brother William, midshipmen of the ship Perseverance.

On my return to America in 1807, I was gratified in receiving a polite letter from the Marquis De Case Yruso, through the medium of Juan Stoughton, Esq., expressing the satisfaction of his majesty, the king of Spain, on account of our conduct in capturing the Spanish ship Tryal on the island St. Maria, accompanied with a gold medal, having his majesty's likeness on one side, and on the other the inscription, Reward of Merit. The correspondence relating to that subject, I shall insert for the satisfaction of the reader. I had been assured by the president of Chili, when I was in that country, and likewise by the viceroy of Lima, that all my conduct, and the treatment I had received, should be faithfully represented to his majesty Charles IV, who most probably would do something more for me. I had reason to expect, through the medium of so many powerful friends as I had procured at different times and places, and on different occasions, that I should most likely have received something essentially to my advantage. This probably would have been the case had it not been for the unhappy catastrophe which soon after took place in Spain, by the dethronement of Charles IV, and the distracted state of the Spanish government, which followed that event.

Philadelphia, 8th September, 1806.

Sir,

His Catholic Majesty, the king of Spain, my master, having been informed by the audience of Chili of your noble and generous conduct in rescuing, off the island St. Maria, the Spanish merchant ship Tryal, captain Don Benito Ceren, with the cargo of slaves, who had mutinized, and cruelly massacred the greater part of the Spaniards on board; and by humanely supplying them afterwards with water and provisions, which they were in need of, has desired me to express to you, sir, the high sense he entertains of the spirited, humane, and successful effort of yourself and the brave crew of the Perseverance, under your command, in saving the lives of his subjects thus exposed, and in token whereof, his majesty has directed me to present to you the golden medal, with his likeness, which will be handed to you by his consul in Boston. At the same time permit me, sir, to assure you I feel particular satisfaction in being the
organ of the grateful sentiments of my sovereign, on an occurrence which
reflects so much honour on your character.

I have the honour to be, sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) MARQUIS DE CASE YRUSO.

Captain AMASA DELANO, of the American
Ship Perseverance, Boston.

Boston, August, 1807.

SIR,

WITH sentiments of gratitude I acknowledge receipt of your Excellency's
much esteemed favour of September 8th, conveying to me the pleasing
information of his Catholic Majesty having been informed of the conduct
of myself and the crew of the Perseverance under my command. It is
peculiarly gratifying to me, to receive such honours from your Excellency's
sovereign, as entertaining a sense of my spirit and honour, and successful
efforts of myself and crew in saving the lives of his subjects; and still
more so by receiving the token of his royal favour in the present of the
golden medal bearing his likeness. The services rendered off the island
St. Maria were from pure motives of humanity. They shall ever be
rendered his Catholic Majesty's subjects when wanted, and it is in my
power to grant. Permit me, sir, to thank your Excellency for the satis-
faction that you feel in being the organ of the grateful sentiments of your
sovereign on this occasion, and believe me, it shall ever be my duty
publicly to acknowledge the receipt of such high considerations from
such a source.

I have the honour to be

Your Excellency's most obedient
And devoted humble servant,

(Signed) AMASA DELANO.

His Excellency the Marquis DE CASE YRUSO

Consular Office, 30th July, 1807.

SIR,

UNDER date of September last, was forwarded me the enclosed letter
from his Excellency the Marquis DE CASE YRUSO, his Catholic Majesty's
minister plenipotentiary to the United States of America, which explains
to you the purport of the commission with which I was then charged,
and until now have anxiously waited for the pleasing opportunity of
carrying into effect his Excellency's orders, to present to you at the same
time the gold medal therein mentioned.

It will be a pleasing circumstance to that gentleman, to be informed
of your safe arrival, and my punctuality in the discharge of that duty so
justly owed to the best of sovereigns, under whose benignity and patronage
I have the honour to subscribe myself, with great consideration, and
much respect, sir,
Your obedient humble servant,

JUAN STOUGHTON,

Consul of his Catholic Majesty,
Residing at Boston.

AMASA DELANO, Esq.

Boston, August 8th, 1807.

SIR,

I feel particular satisfaction in acknowledging the receipt of your esteemed favour, bearing date the 30th ult. covering a letter from the Marquis DE CASE YRUSO, his Catholic Majesty's minister plenipotentiary to the United States of America, together with the gold medal bearing his Catholic Majesty's likeness.

Permit me, sir, to return my most sincere thanks for the honours I have received through your medium, as well as for the generous, friendly treatment you have shown on the occasion. I shall ever consider it one of the first honours publicly to acknowledge them as long as I live.

These services rendered his Catholic Majesty's subjects off the island St. Maria, with the men under my command, were from pure motives of humanity. The like services we will ever render, if wanted, should it be in our power.

With due respect, permit me, sir, to subscribe myself,

Your most obedient, and

Very humble servant,

(Signed) AMASA DELANO.

To Don JUAN STOUGHTON, Esq., his Catholic Majesty's Consul, residing in Boston.

I do not wish, however, to accuse Melville of plagiarism. Captain Delano in this chapter sets down the actual facts of his thrilling and unforgettable experience in the deserted bay at the island of Santa Maria, February 20, 1805; Melville has transformed them into a Gothic masterpiece. At first sight Melville's story seems to differ from that of Captain Delano only in minor details, but on closer examination one perceives that these apparently trifling differences very materially alter the tone of the narrative. Captain Delano relates a stirring adventure, a tale of surprising discovery followed by a vigorous sea fight brought to a triumphant conclusion. Melville tells a typical tale of terror, of an American captain awed and depressed by nameless fears, and of a Spanish captain broken in body and in spirit by a horrible experience. It becomes, then, a matter of some interest to observe in what particulars Melville, in his version, departed from the historical facts.
The first item is that of the date. Melville states that the events took place in the year 1799. This discrepancy is perhaps accidental rather than intentional. Delano’s narrative is of a voyage made from Boston around Cape Horn and up the coast of Chili. He left Boston Nov. 10, 1799, and early in 1800 arrived in the neighborhood of Santa Maria, an island a few leagues from the mainland in the vicinity of the port of Talcahuano, and the city of Concepcion. At this point he introduces a digression, and devotes Chapter xvIII to his capture of the Spanish ship, Tryal, when he was again in these waters on quite another voyage in 1805. The date of the capture was Feb. 20, 1805. Perhaps Melville failed to note this silent transition. Melville places the adventure on the second day of the stay at Santa Maria, whereas Delano had been there since February 13.

The first important alteration is in the description of the Spanish ship. Delano has nothing to say as to the appearance of the vessel. Melville on the other hand, at some length, paints a picture of shabby grandeur with sinister details, typical examples of which are the carved figures of the stern with the dark satyr in a mask holding his foot on the prostrate neck of a writhing figure likewise masked, and the concealment of the prow in canvas wrappings with the subsequent discovery that the figurehead is a human skeleton.

The next departure from fact is in the names of the vessels. The Spaniard in Delano’s story is the Tryal and his own vessel, the Perseverance. For one Melville substitutes San Dominick, and for the other Batchelor's Delight, both chosen as suggestive and significant names. Once aboard the strange craft, the American captain in Benito Cereno is astonished at four symmetrically placed old oakum pickers, and a dark row of Ashantee hatchet polishers. These figures are Melville’s invention, and their steady labor through the hours that follow forms a subdued but constant chorus and accompaniment, terrifying in its suggestion of impending calamity.

Melville’s most material change consists in keeping the captain on board the Spanish ship, alone. At one point, indeed, in his own story, Delano says that he was alone, but Luther, the midshipman, a man of 21, and an experienced seaman, declares in his deposition that he remained with his captain constantly all of the time that Delano was aboard.
During this wait Melville makes use of one or two of the incidents supplied by Delano, but adds several others. Of these latter, the most striking are the shaving of Benito Cereno by Babo, the appearance of Atufal in chains, and the luncheon on the San Dominick. It will also be noted that Babo and not Muri is made the confidential servant, Melville feeling, perhaps, a sinister suggestiveness in the former name which the latter lacked. The attack of the two blacks upon the Spanish seaman, the fleeting glimpse of the rich jewel, the incident of the sailor who makes the strange knot, are all introductions of Melville's which heighten the effect.

After the leap of the Spanish captain into Delano's boat, Melville adds Babo's leap, the attempt of Babo to stab Cereno, and the chance revelation of the skeleton figurehead.

The final liberties with the raw material are taken when, after the first few paragraphs, Melville rewrites the deposition of Don Benito to account for the additions he has made to Delano's story, and at the close when he consigns the unfortunate Spaniard to the monastery and to an early death.

Mr. Freeman declares that the chief impression of horror is conveyed in the brief, final dialogue of the story. This conversation is all Melville's invention, and yet the suggestion for it derives from his source. Mr. Freeman misses, I think, the autobiographical intent of this concluding meeting between the two captains. This dialogue which darkens the whole tale is the voice of Melville himself crying out against the injustice which has been done him, charging his critics with a misrepresentation which had brought his work to a premature close, and ruined his life. Melville with his ready apprehension of the allegorical or symbolical saw at once in Delano's story of the ill fated Spanish commander, a parallel with his own fate. His very first book had had to suffer expurgation, and he himself had been declared untruthful and immoral. The Living Age proclaimed him a "wretched profligate." The complete misconception of Melville which began with Typee persisted through all he wrote, and became ineradicable after Pierre. He came to realize that he was not only to be denied appreciation, but that he was even doomed never to be understood.

Melville himself is Benito Cereno, and Babo is the personification of malicious criticism. The dialogue quoted by Mr. Freeman gains added significance when the preceding speech of Cereno's
is included. During the long voyage from Santa Maria to Lima the two captains discuss their dramatic encounter and Delano explains how completely the apparent facts misled him:

"Only at the end [he declares] did my suspicions get the better of me, and you know how wide of the mark they then proved."

"Wide, indeed," said Don Benito, sadly; "you were with me all day; stood with me, sat with me, talked with me, looked at me, ate with me, drank with me; and yet, your last act was to clutch for a villain, not only an innocent man, but the most pitiable of all men. To such degree may malign machinations and deceptions impose. So far may even the best men err, in judging the conduct of one with the recesses of whose condition he is not acquainted. But you were forced to it; and you were in time undeceived. Would that, in both respects, it was so ever, and with all men."

"I think I understand you; you generalize, Don Benito; and mournfully enough. But the past is passed; why moralize upon it? Forget it. See, yon bright sun has forgotten it all, and the blue sea, and the blue sky; these have turned over new leaves."

"Because they have no memory," he dejectedly replied, "because they are not human."

"But these mild trades that now fan your cheek, Don Benito, do they not come with a human-like healing to you? Warm friends, steadfast friends are the trades."

"With their steadfastness they but waft me to my tomb, senor," was the foreboding response.

"You are saved, Don Benito," cried Captain Delano, more and more astonished and pained; "You are saved; what has cast such a shadow upon you?"

"The negro."

There was silence, while the moody man sat, slowly and unconsciously gathering his mantle about him, as if it were a pall.

There was no more conversation that day.  

_Harold H. Scudder_  

*University of New Hampshire*