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## THE PALMETTO HERALD

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### BERGANTE, THE BLOODHOUND.

The cazadors of Cuba were a very peculiar and interesting type of men, employed many years ago by the Spanish governors of the colony as a sort of rural police. Pirates infested the coast in those days, making their fastnesses in the mountains, where they used to store their booty in secret caverns, and hold their wild orgies for weeks together. Thither, also, negro fugitives from justice—and sometimes from injustice—would frequently resort, and there are many strange traditions yet to be heard among the inhabitants of the island with regard to the doings of these outlaws in past times.

To pounce upon them in their fastnesses, when the perpetration of some great crime demanded prompt measures, was a service attended with much difficulty and danger, and one to be successfully performed only with the aid of dogs. From this originated the organization of the cazadors—a band of hardy and courageous men under the immediate control of the alcade provinciale, or chief magistrate of the colony. The costume of the cazador was simple, but picturesque. It consisted of a shirt made of striped cotton stuff, and loose trousers of the same material. His wide-brimmed hat, with gound top, was plaited of a kind of coarse, reedy grass, used also by the natives for thatching their houses, and he always carried a small cross suspended from his neck. The boots generally worn by him were of peculiar make. They were formed by skinning the hind legs of a wild hog, and thrusting the feet into these recking socks, so as to give them the proper shape while they were yet pliant and warm. The superfluous corners were then pared off and sewed up, and the cazador had his boots, which were complete when they had undergone a slight curing process with wood ashes and salt. He wore a waist-belt with a large silver buckle, and to this was appended a broad cutlass, which he kept exceedingly sharp. These men were wonderfully abstemious in their habits. With no provisions, except a little salt, they would roam the forests for weeks together, subsisting upon the fruits and farinaceous productions that abound there, sometimes varying their diet with the flesh of a wild hog, when they had the chance of killing one.

Each of these cazadors was obliged to maintain three bloodhounds, two of which only he took with him to the woods, the third being left at home as a reserve. These dogs were of a peculiar breed, with taper heads, and their ears sharply cropped to prevent laceration by the prickly thickets through which they had to pass. In addition to his hounds, the cazador was provided with a couple of small dogs having remarkably keen noses, which were found useful in hitting off the scent when the hounds had overrun a trail. These were called halladors, or finders.

A hound was not considered fit to be put upon the trail of a fugitive until thoroughly trained to refrain from seizing his prey, unless in self-defence—his business being to keep it at bay until joined by his master. They were uncommonly thick-skinned dogs, these bloodhounds, and it is well for them that they were so,

for the amount of thrashing they had to undergo to bring them to this state of self-denial was such that no ordinary dog could have survived. This discipline was administered to them either with a knotted whip, made of the hide of the wild hog, or with the flat of the heavy sword.

The savage tenacity of these dogs, when provoked, caused them to be regarded with great terror. When taken out by their masters, they were kept closely muzzled, to prevent accidents, and people were generally warned against touching or speaking to them. One day, a cazador had unmuzzled one of his dogs, to allow him to drink. While his attention was drawn away for a moment, the animal, attracted by the smell of meat, ran to where an old woman was cooking at a fire in the open air. She threatened him with a stick, to drive him away, whereupon he seized her by the throat, and killed her before assistance came. So tenacious was his grip that it was found necessary to sever his head from his body; nor even then did the rigid muscles relax their hold, and the ghastly head remained for some time affixed to the neck of the unfortunate victim.

One of these cazadors possessed a bloodhound of so headstrong and sanguinary a disposition, that neither the whip nor anything else had any effect upon him. He was a dog of unusual size and beauty, on which account his owner was unwilling to destroy him; and yet, unmindful of the proverb, "Give a dog a bad name and hang him," he bestowed upon the delinquent the appellation of Bergante, which is the Spanish for "scoundrel." The principal objection to Bergante was, that he would always kill whatever he had a chance to hunt, from a wild pig to a wild pirate, it having proved impossible to correct his taste for blood. The only person who had any control over him was a negro slave, belonging to a neighboring ecclesiastic, and who was noted for exercising a sort of magnetic power over animals. One day this negro, having been cruelly beaten by an overseer for some trivial misdemeanor, ran away and hid himself in the woods. Days elapsed, and the negro had not returned; and by and by a rumor came that he had joined a gang of Spanish mutineers, who, after killing the captain and mate of a British brig, on which they were employed as sailors, had run the vessel ashore, and taken to the woods. Dogs were ordered out to hunt these criminals, and, as hot work was expected by the cazadors, Bergante the bloodhound was one of the animals selected to perform the duty.

Deep in the jungle the hounds came upon a trail. Their owners called them all off, however, except Bergante, who was let out of the slips, and went off upon the track with great fury. His loud-mouthed baying was heard for some time, until it gradually died away into the distance, and all was still. The hunters followed, and other hounds were slipped from time to time; but, after a hunt of three days, nothing came of it. The hounds came straggling in to their masters, all except Bergante, who was supposed to have met more than his match, and to have fallen by the weapons of some of the forest outlaws.

Several weeks had elapsed; when, as a cazador lay concealed one day among some rocks in the heart of the forest, with his hounds crouching by him, he heard far away the well-known baying of Bergante the bloodhound: From the high ground where he lay in ambush, the cazador commanded a view of a deep glade in the woods, toward which the cry of the dog appeared to be tending. The glade was but sparsely dotted with shrubs, and on to it there presently emerged a wild hog, who was making for a pond at the other end of the glade, but was pulled down and throttled by the pursuing dog before he could reach it. Here was something like a revelation at

hand, and the cazador lay very still and waited for its development. There was likely to be a hunter where a hunt was going on, he thought; nor was he mistaken; for, in a few minutes, a dusky figure, all in tattered array, appeared upon the plain, and, having called off the dog, who came crouching to him, proceeded to cut up the wild boar. Distant as this scene was, the sharp eye of the cazador detected the fugitive slave in the dusky form of the hunter, and, as there was a large reward offered for the capture of that runaway, he slipped quietly from his ambuscade, and, motioning to his dogs to follow him silently, took a circuitous route through the bush, and presently came upon the glade, within fifty paces of the negro, to whom he called out, ordering him to surrender at once, or stand his chance of being killed by the dogs.

"What can your dogs do?" asked the negro, with a derisive laugh. "You have beaten all the spirit out of them, and they have not a bite left. But if I only point my finger at you, my dog here will be at your throat before you can raise your cutlass."

The cazador, who knew that the redoubtable Bergante was no respecter of persons, saw that there was some reason in this. Therefore, instead of taking forcible measures, he brought the negro to a parley, and elicited from him the fact that he had not joined a band of pirates, as reported, but had been living for many weeks upon the proceeds of the chase, assisted by the dog Bergante, who, instead of attacking him when let out upon his trail, had been his faithful friend and companion ever since. The negro also stated that the pirates, six in number, had quarrelled among themselves, and that two of them—men of the most desperate character—were now concealed in a ravine not far off. They had no firearms, and might be easily captured, the negro thought, by the cazador and himself, with the assistance of the terrible bloodhound, whose appearance now, covered as he was with dust and brambles, and his head clotted with the blood of the wild boar, was enough to strike terror to the heart of the most reckless desperado. The matter was soon arranged. It was stipulated by the cazador that he would procure pardon and a reward for the negro, if enabled by the guidance and assistance of the latter to capture any of the pirates, dead or alive.

Taking a boar-path indicated by the negro, they soon came up a small water-course, on the margin of which they presently found the mark of a naked foot, which the cazador knew to be that of a white man. Then the hounds were let out of their leashes, excepting Bergante, who was kept tightly in hand by the negro. They went off on the trail, and it was not long before their loud yells proclaimed that they had brought some quarry to bay. The hunters plunged on after them through the ravine. They passed a large rock, under the shelter of which a fire was burning, and some blankets and cooking utensils lay scattered about. Following the baying of the dogs, which now became fainter, they came upon one of them, dead, with a long sheath-knife sticking in his heart. There was a similar knife in a tree close by, into which it had been driven with great force. It had just missed the other dog, probably, and the pirates were evidently great knife throwers, but they had lost two of their weapons at any rate. The baying of the other hound was very furious now, and close at hand, and, on coming up with him, the hunters found him crouching at a safe distance from two awful desperadoes, who stood with their backs against a huge fallen tree, one of them armed with a short boarding-pike, and the other with a sailor's knife. At this sight Bergante made one furious bound, and, tearing himself away from the grip of the negro, was fastened in an

instant upon the throat of the ruffian with the boarding-pike, and rolled with him to the ground in a tangle of unequal strife. The man was dead in a moment, and the huge dog lay panting upon his corpse, crunching the broken neck-bones with smothered growls. Terrified at the sight, the other pirate threw away his weapon and fell upon his knees. He would do anything if they would save him from that terrible hound: first he would show them treasure, and then he would betray the other pirates into their hands. With difficulty the negro again got the bloodhound into the leash, and then, led by the pirate, they retraced their steps to the camp lately passed by them. There, buried under a jutting ledge of the rock, they found a large amount of treasure in gold, which had been taken by the mutineers from the English brig. The pirate was then securely handcuffed, and ordered to lead them at once to the haunt of other desperadoes, on pain of being at once given over to Bergante for execution. Indeed the latter had to be restrained with a double leash, and held by both the cazador and the negro, to prevent him from springing upon the prisoner, and throttling him as he had done his comrade. Ere long they came upon four pirates, ensconced among some loose boulders, and armed with their long knives, prepared to make a desperate resistance. The cazador first bound his prisoner securely to a tree, and then the dogs were loosed, and the fight was a terrible one—for the sight of blood had excited the fury of the other hound, and he had his man down in a moment. Two of the others were throttled by Bergante, but not until he had received some fearful gashes from their knives. The other was captured alive; and, ere night had fallen, the captors had returned to the town, with their prisoners, and a great quantity of valuable treasure which the latter gave up to them when they found that there was no longer any object in concealing it.

The pirates, dead as well as alive, were all identified by a sailor who had escaped from the vessel seized by them, and the captured ones were tried, found guilty, and executed. Six tall poles were planted firmly upon the beach, near where the vessel had been run ashore, and the remains of the murderers were placed in large iron cages slung at the heads of these, as a warning to such desperadoes. Years afterwards the grinning skeletons yet swung there to and fro. The carrion crows could pass between the bars of the cages, in which they held their horrible revels day after day, while the vultures, prevented by their size from entering, clung, and hovered, and squabbled outside. The whole scene was one of weird and terrible impressiveness, and the place was known to mariners as Skeleton Beach, for many a year after.

The negro was not only pardoned, but was presented with his liberty and a large sum of money, for the part taken by him in this important capture. Further than this, he received an appointment as a paid assistant to the cazadors; and there are traditions of many a daring act in which he was subsequently concerned, in conjunction with Bergante, the Bloodhound.—*New York Ledger.*

LADY CHANDOS, who was still a coquette in her advanced maturity, came to a party after eleven o'clock.

"How late you are, my charmer?" said the mistress of the house, provokingly.

"I am quite ashamed," answered her ladyship, "but my maid is so very slow: she takes more than an hour and a half to do my hair."

"Fortunately," observed one of her friends, "you are not obliged to stay at home while she is doing it."

If a fop should cut his own throat, it would be monkey-ride.