



Mis doce primeros años (Spanish Edition)

Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo (Condesa de Merlin)

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María de las Mercedes de Santa Cruz y Montalvo, condesa de Merlin (1789-1852). Cuba.

Nació en una familia de la aristocracia habanera el 5 de febrero de 1789. Hija de Joaquín de Santa Cruz y Cárdenas y María Teresa Montalvo y O'Farril, condes de Jaruco y Mompox. La condesa de Merlin ingresó en el Convento de Santa Clara en La Habana a los ocho años y harta de la vida religiosa intentó fugarse, ayudada por la madre Santa Inés, inspiradora de su libro, *Historia de Sor Inés* (1832).

Tras su intento de huida la familia se fue a Madrid. Allí murió su padre y, tras la invasión francesa, la familia se refugió en la casa del general Gonzalo O'Farril, quien mantenía muy buenas relaciones con José Bonaparte. En ese ambiente conoció a Goya, Quintana y Meléndez Valdés y al conde de Merlin, con quien se casó a los veinte años.

Con la derrota de los franceses el matrimonio marchó a París. Figuras políticas y artistas frecuentaron su salón; entre ellos, la princesa de Caraman, Lord Palmerson, el general Lafayette, el conde de Orsay, Victor Hugo, Honoré de Balzac, Alfred de Musset, Alphonse de Lamartine, Franz Liszt, Gioachino Rossini, George Sand, José de la Luz y Caballero, José Antonio Saco y Domingo del Monte.

La condesa de Merlin viajó por Alemania, Suiza, Inglaterra e Italia. Enviudó en 1839 y en 1840 regresó a Cuba, y escribió *Viaje a La Habana* (1844). Por entonces fue acusada de plagiar a Cirilo Villaverde, José Antonio Saco, y Ramón de Palma. Félix Tanco y Bosmeniel fue unos de sus principales detractores; con su *Refutación al folleto intitulado Viage a la Habana*, publicado en 1844. En el bando opuesto, estuvieron Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda y Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés, quien le dedicó una oda sentimental a su partida de La Habana en 1840.

Tras *Mis primeros doce años*, publicó *Historia de Sor Inés* (1832), *Souvenirs et Mémoires* (1836), *Los pasatiempos de las mujeres del mundo* (1838), *Madame Malinbran*, *Los esclavos en las colonias españolas* (1841), *Viaje a La Habana* (1844), *Lola y María* y *Las leonas de París* (1845) y *Le Duc d'Athènes* (1852). La condesa de Merlín, murió el 31 de marzo de 1852, en el Castillo de Dissay, a las afueras de Poitiers, en Francia.

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