



ELVA

A Story of the Dark Ages

BY

VISCOUNT DE FIGAVERE



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ELVA.

A Story of the Dark Ages.

BY

VISCOUNT DE FIGANIÈRE, G. C. ST. ANNE,

LATE ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY AND MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY
OF HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF PORTUGAL AT THE
IMPERIAL COURT OF RUSSIA,
FROM 1870 TO 1876:

Author of "Palmitos," a Novel.



Ph 41.206

LONDON:
TRÜBNER & CO., LUDGATE HILL.

1878.

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TO
LADY AUGUSTUS LOFTUS

The following Cantos

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

AS A TRIBUTE OF

THE AUTHOR'S DEEP REGARD.

St. PETERSBURG, April 1876.

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P R E F A C E.

ENCOURAGED by the advice of a few literary friends, and not less by the favourable reception which some of the chief organs of the London press kindly gave to our novel "Palmitos" in the beginning of 1874, we submit the present attempt with less hesitation than we should otherwise have done. The story of "Elva" is founded upon a tradition which attributes the first establishment of an hereditary lordship in Biscay to a certain Prince Fron, related to the Saxon Kings of England; and we have also made use of a legend connected with Prince Fron's descendants. An English version of the original text, both of the tradition and the legend, will be found in the Notes at the end of this volume.

The action of the first three Cantos takes place in the year A.D. 908; the last two, which occupy the space of about twenty-four hours, refer to a period ten years later.

The different localities connected with the scenes of the story will be familiar to the reader who may have closely followed the newspaper reports of the late Carlist war; and where occasion required, especially in Cantos Second and Third, we have kept in view the customs and conditions of the time and country we are dealing with, of which further particulars may be seen in the Notes at the end of the volume.

LONDON, *February 1878.*

E L V A.



Canto First.

CASTLE ROCIAS.

I.

IN days when Zimimar was King
Of all the demons north ;
When Gorson's sultry voice could bring
The southern dragons forth ;
When Goap on wicked errands sent
His imps throughout the west ;
And the dark fiends of Orient
Obeyed Amaimon's hest ;
When elves and fairies trod the green,
In shimm'ring moonbeams' silver sheen ;
When dwarfs and devils, goblins too,
And others of the phantom-crew,
Might roam and romp about the earth,
For Heaven's care, and Satan's mirth,

Long ere Man's tutored mind had hurled
 Grim spectre-shapes from nether world—
 Far in the northern mounts of Spain,
 Goth's refuge from the Moor's domain,
 A magnate dwelt of warlike fame,
 Count of Laredo was his name.

II.

He was no feudatory lord,
 Whose lands were tenure by the sword;
 For feudal code was thing unknown,
 In Spain, to vassal and to throne.
 The Count he ruled o'er hill and lea
 'Twixt Cares' stream and Biscay free;
 Between the ocean's boist'rons tide,
 Which bathes the rock-bound northern side,
 And Brismantara's steepy chain
 To Liébana's, both which constrain,
 On south, Laredo's wild domain.¹

III.

Some way beneath where eagles rest
 On high Rocias' rocky crest,²
 A castle stood on beetling clough,
 With scanty signs of flow'r or bough,

Just o'er Masayo's pass ;
While down below, Rnesga's dale,
Which wooded hills around impale,
Showed brightly 'neath its verdant veil,
Its orchards, crops, and grass.

IV.

'Twas in Rocias' high-perched castle
The Count made his abode,
With many a fellow-royal vassal,
Who round his banner rode.
A widower was he forlorn,
Long dead his Countess fair ;
But him a daughter first had born,
Lovely and fresh as early morn,
And of his hearth the chief adorn,
Elva, his only heir.
The Count was brave, and strong of arm,
His war-ery always spread alarm,
Whene'er it reached the paynin's ear,
For he a stranger was to fear ;
Yea, seemed to bear a charinèd life :
Full often in unequal strife,
Encompassed by a score or so
Of turbaned Moors, his sword would mow

Them down, as farmer's scythe the grass,
 And through the gap unscathed he'd pass.
 But if the Count was famed in war,
 No less in Nimrod's art ;
 He loved to spear the tusky boar,
 Or pierce the stag with dart ;
 And Dona Elva blithe and yare—
 Whene'er it was her list—
 Would ride abroad the sport to share,
 With marlyon on her fist.

v.

One day the Count went to the chase,
 With gay and num'rous band ;
 But there you saw no damsel's face,
 Nor hooded hawk on hand.
 The varlets walked, and led the hounds
 In leashes, two and two ;
 The nobles rode to bugle-sounds,
 Burning to cry "halloo !"
 Laredo mounted on his grey,
 Whose restive step could ill be stayed,
 A large, but shapely form displayed,
 Attired in hunter's light array.

* *Fist* was the technical word in falconry.

Some twoscore years his looks attest ;
 Long locks upon his shoulders rest ;
 Long beard does partly veil his chest ;
 And though gay mood he knew,
 His lofty and imperious brow
 Not only would the lowly cow—
 Withstood its scowl but few :
 It clearly argued long command,
 One used to grasp the ruler's wand.

VI.

Along Rocias' craggy side
 The troop go winding down ;
 Through Famalosa then they ride,
 Where the mean tillage-serfs abide,
 Who cow'r at warrior's frown.
 They're in Ruesga's valley broad,
 Where herds are grazing on the sward,
 Where, for some miles from west to east,
 On verdure rich the eyes may feast.

Upon the road which stretched across,
 A cripple hobbled forth to plead:
 — " For Jesus who died on the Cross,
 Sir Count, a pittance, in my need !"
 — " Out of the way, thou wretch, beware !"
 — " The smallest coin will bring you luck."
 — " To Hell, then ! we've no time to spare."
 The beggar to the ground was struck,
 And writhed beneath the horses' tread.
 A curse, which dying groans convey,
 Pursues the huntsmen on their way,
 E'en till Massayo's pass they thread,

O'ergrown with plane, white-oak, and beech—
 Whose bark doth oft love's secrets teach.
 Round these woodbine and ivy twine,
 And eke the knotty, teeming vine,
 Whose shoots impleached with leafy branch,
 Festoons by thousands downward launch,
 Forming wild, tangled bowers dense,
 Where hunted game find sure defence,
 And their pursuers matted fence.
 An hour these shady haunts they tread,
 When, down, before their sight,
Tierra de Soba lies wide spread :
 Here naked rocks ; further ahead,
 Thick woods, which darksome gloom might shed
 E'en through a starless night.

VII.

And now a quicker course they steer,
 Full many a crag and glen they clear ;
 But see ne bear, nor boar, nor deer.
 At length some hunters turn a hill,
 When boisterous shouts the open fill,
 Sending through ev'ry heart a thrill :
 Oh joy ! they spy, near neighbouring brake,
 A wild bull and its cow ;

And both were white as snowy flake
Which falls on leafless bough.
The horns are blown ; the hounds are freed,
Nor need the cheering whoop ; .
Each huntsman lends the spur to steed,
Off start the eager troop !
At first the startled creatures stand,
And gaze upon the foe's advance ;
The heifer lowed with resonance,
Like waters on the distant strand :
It was a dismal, hollow sound,
Which seemed to come from underground.
The bull he roared, without alarm ;
'Twas louder than far thunder's rumbling,
It smote the air like mountain crumbling,
In fragments rent by Vulcan's arm.
Such monstrous, such unearthly roar,
Had ne'er been heard from brute before :
Aghast stand all the train !
The whim'ring hounds crouch down for fear ;
The horses stop in mid-career,
Prick up their ears, snort, plunge and rear,
Unheeding voice or rein.

VIII.

“On, gentle feres! Strike deep your spurs!”

Thus, chafed, Laredo spoke.

“Ho, varlets! rouse those coward curs!

Ply well the thong! No more demurs!

Up! up! nor spare the stroke!”

The Count, all wroth, then onward dashed,

The rest pressed on his track;

The menials coaxed, now swore, now lashed,

Until they stirred the pack.

The quarry, seized with sudden fear,

Fly toward the wood, then disappear,

And lo! when they were out of sight,

The steeds recovered from their fright;

The hounds ran on with swifter speed,

And fairly once more took the lead.

All reached the brake; which by degrees,

From brambles, saplings, scattered trees,

Grew to a forest dense and dark

As Nature's wild, primeval park,

Hereynia, which, scarce pierced by beam,

Once shaded Donau's yellow stream.

They through the tangled mazes sweep;

They pass the currents at a leap;

Their nimble steeds, with ready bound,
Clear trunks and rocks that strew the ground,
Nor stays their course the chasin profound.
Dispersed, they're soon shut in by trees;
None any of his fellows sees;
But bugle's blast and bloodhounds' bay
Denote for all one common way.

IX.

As thus the Count rushed on alone
Through mazy thoroughfare,
Breathed in a sweet, harmonious tone,
He heard the word BEWARE!
The voice came from his right, close by;
He turned, but could no form espy.
And eft broke on his ear
A laugh of mingled scorn and hate,
Defying as the word of Fate;
From the left, not so near.
Thrice was the warning iterated,
Which some dire evil intimated;
As often did the laugh resound,
Shaking the forest-trees around.
The Count Laredo's cheek grew pale;
But nought his valiant heart could quail.

His awe was mastered by his pride,
 Nor recked he then what might betide.
 With a loud curse, abjuring fear,
 He onward flew in wild career,
 As reckless as the raging host,
 That erst obeyed dark Wodin's ghost.

X.

The bark and yelp with shriller clang,
 All at once through the forest rang.
 Laredo reached an ample glade,
 Where sunbeams chased the fitting shade;
 And saw beyond, some little way,
 The spotless quarry brought to bay.
 He goaded on his foaming steed,
 Scurring along with lightning speed.

The bloodhounds close now with the male:
 But one by one are tossed on high;
 Writling, all gored, they fall and die;
 A few remain, but whim'ring fly,
 Nor dare the beast assail.
 Just then, alone, Laredo came,
 The first of all the troop;
 He reined his steed and took quick aim,
 As falcon ere its stoop:

'Way went the spear! piercing in full
The vitals of the maddened bull,
Which though not large, nay, somewhat small,
Made ground and woods shake in his fall.
As he lay full length on his side,

He gave but one deep groan,
Then one convulsive spasm, and died.

The cow did strangely moan;
She cast about a look of hate;
Then moved around her fallen mate,
And mad, blew up, or snuffed the dust,
As she the truth would fain mistrust.
But soon the hounds, now void of dread,
Sought their revenge, and laid her dead.
The coats of both was marv'ulous sight,
They were of such a milky white,
That in the group was not the eye
Which could a darker hair descry
To mar the uniformity.

XI.

Péna Rocias' castle proud
Was mantled in its nightly shroud:
The ev'ning meal had long been o'er;

The weary serf, the pampered guest,
Had quitted work or cheer for rest ;
The Count still paced his chamber floor.
What thoughts his haughty mind oppressed?
Why fell his chin upon his breast ?
And why that pensive brow ?
Misgivings fret and chafe him sore,
Terrors unknown to him before,
Tarnish the knightly fame he bore,
But them he scorns t' avow.
A sudden stream of lightning flashed,
And dazed the mountaineer,
A deafning peal of thunder clashed
Upon his startled ear.
He bounded toward the casement high,
To note the aspect of the sky—
The welkin was serene !
No clouds he saw which storm foretold,
But azure vault with dots of gold,
Paled by the moon, which brightly rolled,
And clothed the tarrets high and bold
In dress of silv'ry sheen.
The Count was yet all in a maze,
When in the room shot fiery blaze ;
An awful din rang through the halls

Of slamming doors and shaking walls,
Whose fearful rocking to and fro
Threatened the pile to overthrow :
Each plinth its pillar tottering felt ;
The solder all did seethe and melt ;
And every beam and trave did groan,
Like ship on billows tossed and thrown.
Then sudden crash and mighty jar,
And all was tranquil near and far.

XII.

The walls their firmness had regained,
Once more deep midnight silence reigned ;
 But all is in a glow.
Thick lurid mists the room pervade,
Of every bastard tint and shade :
 There's pink, there's indigo ;
Yellow is there ; the royal blue ;
The em'rald green ; the crimson hue,
And Melibœa's purple too.
But each had lost its brilliant dye
 By mixture with the rest ;
The art which gilds the dappled sky
 Here saw its laws transgressed :

No heav'nly hand had deigned give birth
 To compound so confused,
 Nor would an artist treading earth
 Have such proportions used.

XIII.

But 'twas not this that most appalled
 The brave Asturian peer:
 A monster his attention called,
 Which he saw standing near.
 Its arms were webbed like wings of bat,
 Its legs were bent like those of cat,
 With spring as tensile and as light.
 Measure an ape, you'll have its height.
 The face was that of whiskered owl,
 And fiendish grin was blent with scowl,
 Which nought but mischief dire forbode.
 Body it had of loathsome toad,
 Of dingy colour, flecked with woad.
 Its paunch was creased like moistened bladder:
 For tail it had a wriggling adder.
 And in its claw it held a scroll,
 Which now and then it shook,
 Or rubbed against its feathered jole
 With knowing, wicked look.

The Count stood gazing quite aghast,
And trembled sore at first ;
But when instinctive dread was past,
In violent rage he burst.

XIV.

He lost no time in words, but drew,
And straightway at the creature flew—
Which did not budge, but winked and grinned—
He gave a thrust, and thought he'd pinned
The hideous monster to the board ;
But lo ! as he withdrew his sword,
The fiend stood on its point !
Then down it sprang along the blade,
And sundry jumps and gambols made,
As squirrel sending palisade
With never-wearied joint.
Laredo strove, his best did he,
The weapon from the imp to free ;
He shook and swung it to and fro
Till the lithe blade bent like a bow—
But all was tried in vain !
And when he thus the pow'r did feel
Of him with whom he had to deal,
He flung away the laden steel
With wrathful oath profane.

Up bounced the nimble creature queer,
 Flapping its wings like chanticleer,
 And bobbed and bowed with saucy flier
 As it came drawing near.

XV.

“Thou marvel of deformity!
 Thou toad, or owl, or ape;
 Or—what? for ’twere hard to descry
 What may be thy true shape,
 Why com’st thou here, this time o’ night,
 Wrapt in such dusky glow?
 Dost think thy form can cause me fright,
 Or that I’ll quake before thy might?—
 Such fears are for the low!
 Now use thy tongue, thou thing of hell!
 If one twangs in thy beak,
 What art thou? say! Thy purpose tell;
 Speak out! I bid thee speak!”

XVI.

The creature chuckled, till all shook,
 While malice sparkled in its look,
 Then oped its crooked bill, and spoke
 In a deep, husky, frog-like croak:

“ My name is Topel; I was born
Two hundred years ago,
What time 'twas neither night nor morn,
And 'twixt the ebb and flow.
My mother was a Moorish hag,
My father was a Jew.
And many a night, with spike and bag,
A goat bestriding, black and shag,
She through the welkin flew.
Her limbs besmeared with infant's fat,
Bare-legged, withouten shoes or hat,
Thus reached she moor or mound,
To seek, and grub the groaning mandrake,
Raising a storm, with fire and earthquake,
Ere cock should crow announcing daybreak,
For that was fearful sound.
Or else she robbed the gallows-trees,
When corpses dangled in the breeze;
Or searched the charnel-house for bones;
Or danced upon the heath with crones—
Then many a charm and spell she knew,
Which 'twere too tedious to review.
I said my father was a Jew—
His name is in Leviticus—
But he was then an incubus,

When he my mother knew,
They met, and married near a bog,
Where hissed the snake and croaked the frog.
An owl black performed the rite,
While tempest howling chilled the night.
The nuptials graced an ape and bat ;
There came a toad, a swarthy cat ;
There squatted too the frog hard by,
 Safe in its back the bone ;
There coiled the adder, and its eye
 The carbuncle outshone ;
And none feared then for limb or life,
Though wont to dread my mother's knife.
And, lo ! when I came forth to light,
 On bed of henbane wet with dew,
 I had a spice of all this crew,
As thou mayst clearly see to-night.
I'm mighty Goap's most favoured sprite,
E'en his right arm, my looks despite.
 On earth he lets me dwell :
I'm fed by ants from tiny knoll,
I'm living with my friend the mole,
'Way down, deep in his burrowed hole,
 And seldom visit hell.
And now, my lord, thou know'st my state,

My mission I'll communicate:
My master bade me hither speed,
And 'fore his dread tribunal lead
Thee, e'en this very hour.
This morn didst reach a baleful goal,
Whereby dost forfeit flesh and soul;
But if with blood thou sign this scroll,
Art free from master's power."

XVII.

" Begone! my soul is past his reach,
As I shall soon thy master teach.
Defend thy servant, Mary blest!
Pray rid him of this evil guest!"
With that, the sign the good revere,
And which makes demons speed for fear,
Once and again he made.
Despair! the fiend moved not an ace!
Defying might glared in its face.
Terror stole o'er the Count apace,
While witch-born Topel said:
" The cattle were not raised on earth
Which thou didst scorn to spare;
But parent-stock, that had giv'n birth
To breed unknown and rare.

Thou shouldst have guessed as much, I trow!

Was warning not received?

Did not the brutes their birthplace show?

Did not the voice so near and low,

The distant laughter, let thee know

Some Pow'r would be aggrieved?

Its might thou needst no farther test,

For in thy vain attempt

Thou hast been foiled; thy last request

Has met with sheer contempt.

Yet is all hope not lost for thee,

If on one point we can agree:

Consent this deed to sign,

Whereby thou giv'st thy solemn plight,

That ere five years be over quite,

A bull and cow of spotless white

Thou wilt to us assign.

And more, that if, despite goodwill,

Within the space just named,

The compact thou shouldst not fulfil,

Thy soul will not be claimed,

But Dona Elva shall belong

To him for whom I act.

That the agreement may be strong,

She too must sign the pact."

XVIII.

“ My Elva dear, my own sweet child,
A wicked demon’s tool!
What, angel pure to be defiled
In fallen-angel’s school!
By heav’n! I’ll ne’er my child betray,
Whatever be my fate!
Her beauteous face can well portray
The early blush of lovely day,
But ne’er damned spirit’s hate!
Her glossy hair, so soft and fine,
Eyes which decorum shades—
Swimming in lymph more crystalline
Than dew on quiv’ring blades—
Her hair to Fury’s serpents grow?
Her eyen swim in hellish glow?
Nay, ’tis more like her share
To tread amid the eglantine;
As virtuous maid and wife to shine;
To kneel at sainted Mary’s shrine,
And then to heav’n repair.
Thy prince, who could so much reveal,
Should know a mortal’s heart;
That ere I’ll risk my Elva’s weal,
With my best hope I’ll part.

Yet I'll repair that act so wild,
 Or forfeit my own soul :
 Erase all that concerns my child,
 And *I* will sign the scroll."

XIX.

The fiend he laughs and giggles so,
 That wrinkles e'en his feathers show ;
 And the sound smacks of jackal's cry
 On lone sea-beach when wreck is by.
 "Ho-ho, ho-ho, ho-ho, what wit!
 'Tis easy thus a debt to quit!
 Hast knight beneath thy knee :
 His life, or ransom, dost demand ;
 Quoth he : ' Once more let's try the brand,
 If thine again the victor-hand,
 My life shall be at thy command '—
 Wouldst thou to this agree ?
 Nay—I'm no sot !
 We bargain not
 For what we've got,
 But what we've *not*.
 Bethink thee well ere't be too late ;
 For at the hour of one
 For ever settled be thy fate,

Shouldst thou the contract shun.
 But, sooth, why dread for Elva's sake ?
 Is't task so hard to undertake
 To find a milk-white pair ?
 'Mongst all the herds of northern Spain,
 'Tis odds but thou'lt not seek in vain ;
 And in five years the world's domain
 Could be roamed o'er, I swear !
 Why needst thou pause then to decide
 Which road may be the best ?
 One leads t' abyss all gaping wide,
 Wouldst o'er the other safely stride,
 Nor evil can thy ehild betide,
 If active be thy quest."

XX.

The words no instant answer brought ;
 The Count seemed buried deep in thought.
 The artful speech his mind revolved,
 Debating issues grave involved.
 In truth, the reasons just adduced,
 On him no slight effect produced ;
 For he was fully confident,
 That long before the time were spent,

The fiend he would propitiate ;
Nor scemed the case so desperate.
What famished dog but robs the bonc,
Braving the wrath of kitchen-crone ?
Who will not trust a whit to chance,
When risk is small, one's weal t' advance ?
Nathless the Count did hesitate,
For well he felt 'twas not *his* fate
That luck or failure would confirm.—
What if were giv'n a longer term ?
Oh, then the risk would be as nought !
At least 'twas so Laredo thought :
Yea, TIME's the source of buoyant hope,
Though often baffling mortal's scope.
'Tis used to bear poor wights in hand,
As looming lures on Egypt's sand,
And does in wanton sport contrive,
While robbing life, us to revive.
Too deep its current swift, to sound !
Too thick, to see where shoals abound !
Its ever-quicken'd womb, which fashions
Th' effect of human acts and passions,
Doth ne'er reveal its pregnant state,
Doth ne'er bring forth too soon, or late,
Spite wizard's spell and pantomime,

Or gipsy, midwife-quack of Time.
To dally, else, we'd be less prone ;
Or bide as well philos'pher's stone.

XXI.

" Well, be it so ! " Laredo cried,
When he some space had mused aside ;
 " Thy counsel shall prevail,
If thou, with a stroke of the pen,
'Stead of five years, wilt grant me ten :
 Why not ? thou hast good bail."
Like one who ponders Topel stood,
Though he had but assumed the mood.
For, pray, to spirits what is time,
Be they infernal, or sublime ?
But, in duplicity's deep art
Adept, the imp played well his part :—
He, to be dumb, knew when 'twas meet,
When to be frank ; or when to cheat.
Molehill he raised to mountain height ;
Of weighty matter he made light ;
One cheek if pale, and wet with tear,
Creased wink and smile the other leer ;
And tongue and eye so aptly schooled,
That he both foe and friend befooled.

At length, in tone which might imply
 'Twas grave responsibility,
 He said he'd with the wish comply ;
 And eft unrolled the parchment deed,
 Whose text did shine like glowing gleed ;
 Each word seemed writ in living fire,
 An earnest of its source so dire.
 Dark vapour of a sulph'rous smell
 From Topel's nostril shot,
 Which on the fire-traced parchment fell,
 Leaving a vacant spot.
 Eftsoons from out his mouth there started
 A flash, with hissing strain,
 And when upon the blank it darted,
 TEX glistened there quite plain.
 The bond before the Count he placed,
 With quill which raven's wing had graced.
 Laredo oped a petty vein,
 And signed the covenant of hane.

XXII.

Not far lies Elva softly sleeping ;
 Aromas fill the air—
 For sweet her breath—and smiles are creeping
 Across her face so fair.

Her sleep is light; her visions bright
Are such as angels see :
Whose ways are right, their dreams at night
Must void of terrors be.
Did she her mother's form behold
(Though one she scarce had known),
With sapphire-wings eked out with gold,
And now around her thrown ?
Did she of splendid gardens dream,
Such as—she heard men say—
Made Guadalquivir's sunny stream
On either bank with flowers teem,
Which scent the air around, and seem
Lost Eden to portray ?
Or did the dormant maid her thought
On comely knight bestow,
With whom she willingly had wrought
Her fortunes here below ?
Whate'er her dreams, sure they were fair ;
As balmy as night-summer air,
As innocent as holy prayer.

XXIII.

The sleeper starts, and opes her eyes ;
A cold, moist hand upon her lies !

The nascent scream dies on her tongue—

It was her father o'er her hung,

With face of pale distress.

His frame convulsed, as touched by chill,

His brow and temples drops distil ;

The fatal scroll, the raven-quill,

His icy fingers press.

And now in hurried, trembling tone,

Which scarce a bosom friend had known,

He did in Elva's ear recite

His tale so weird, his horrid plight.

While she—like frail, morn-loving flower,

Which full distends, with blooming power,

When sunbeams play on garden bower ;

But shrinks, contracts, for sudden fright,

If slightest mist should mantle light,

Drooping at earliest shade of night—

As Count Laredo's tale proceeds,

She gathers up her form, recedes,

Recoils, and shudders all appalled—

The while on many a saint she called—

And ere the whole dire case is told,

Her eyelids close, her limbs grow cold,

Her hands are joined on bosom numb—

'Tis marble image on its tomb !

Save that her moving lips declare
The fervour of her silent prayer.

XXIV.

“By holy rood! by Christian’s creed!
Thou shalt not sign this hateful deed!
Ten thousand demons drag me hence
Ere thou, sweet girl, experience
 What might thy peace dissolve!”
And striding quick across the floor,
The Count made toward the oaken door,
 With firm and fixed resolve.
“O father! father!” shrieked the maid,
And ’twas but half the truth she said,
“Forbear! return! thou wert misled;
’Tis not for me, but thee I dread.
The pen! the pen! to liberate
Laredo’s lord from such a fate.”
But now the Count’s assurance failing,
 Misgivings on him seized;
Till Elva’s suasive speech prevailing
 At length his doubts appeased.
Her finger then she pricks with pin,
And blood-drops tinge its satin skin:

In bubbling ink the quill she thrusts,
And weal or woe to hazard trusts—

The fatal act was done!

All courage now forsook her breast;
She felt like one foredoomed, unblest,
And sinking back, the pillow pressed,
Her peace for ever gone!

XXV.

Back to his room Laredo strides,
Where him the hybrid fiend abides,
To whom the pact he hands.

So gripes it Coap's ambassador,
As miser grasps the coined ore,
And flash on flash his eyes outpour,
And joy his face expands.

Then burst forth loud exulting cheer,
Mingled with curses, laughs, and jeer,
A dissonant chorus fell and drear
From deepest depths of hell.

E'en could you to the tumult hark
Of the live freight in Noah's ark—
The medley sound of bray and bark,
Hiss, howl, grunt, roar, and yell—

You would not fully realise
The discord of those Stygian cries.
In quick succession thrice they rise ;
Then every sound subsides, and dies.
Well might th' infernal hue and cry
Have made the Count insane ;
But flashes from the demon's eye
Quickened his shattered brain :
A horrid thought did through it flit—
Awakened by that glare—
Which had till then escaped his wit,
And now brought on a sudden fit
Of hopeless, grim despair.
“ Hold ! If within the term I die ? ”
Exclaimed the frantic peer ;
But mongrel Topel's sole reply,
Sardonic smile and leer.
“ My life then for ten years ensure ! ”
But vainly did the Count conjure
That scoffing thing impure.

XXVI.

“ Thou shouldst, Sir Count, have bent thy mind
Ere putting seal to this ;
'Tis none o' my part to help the blind,

Or prompt for the remiss.
 Who dares to split a lancee with sprite,
 The dust he must expect to bite.
 Now, 'mong my peers 'tis saying trite,
 There ne'er has been, nor can
 A treaty, law, or bond be made,
 By vain, benighted man,
 But that some clause you may evade ;
 Whence comes that warrior's gory blade,
 The crafty lawyer's wrangling trade
 Will ne'er be under ban.
 This, too, may comfort thee a bit,
 I've never met the mortal fit
 A cunning devil to outwit.
 Howbeit 'tis time for me to go,
 I'll tell thee something more—
 Thy sex are under par below,
 Of them there's ample store ;
 Your women, specially the fair,
 Are in demand much greater there—
 We'd give ten men for each—
 They're shrived too oft ; hear daily masses ;
 Take rede from priests—poor simple asses !—
 So many a fair one 'mong them passes
 Away from demon's reach ;

But when we do make shift to get 'em,
We are most chary not to fret 'em,
Yea, always try to please and pet 'em—

They're winning bait, the dears!
Good-night, fair sir, I must away;
I wish you luck, and hope you may
Soon come across the steers!"

Again the lightning flashes fast;
Again the thunder sends its blast;
Again the heaving earthquake's shock
Doth make the castle reel and rock;
As Topel, laughing, disappears,
Escorted by triumphant cheers.

Now came a chilly stream of air,
When lo! the cripple's Shade stood there:
Speechless it gazed, with soulless eye —
As though 't had naught to signify.
Or e'en the curse might fain deny, —
And reached its begging hand once more.
The Count fell senseless on the floor.

Canto Second.

THE HERMIT OF MECAUR.

I.

FAIR ELVA sat within her bower,
Located in the southern tower ;
And from her side not far away
Was seated one in monk's array,
Veila, the abbot, good and bland,
Of San Vicentè's cloistered band.
Her stature was of comely height ;
Her velvet skin was lily white ;
Her sable hair in ringlets fell,
 And jet-black was her eye :
Love's warm, mnte speeoh did there excel ;
There found you tender pity's well ;
But also fire it could expel
 When roused her spirit high—
Though in such mood but seldom seen,
For few would give her cause, I ween :

That rare and blooming maiden face,
That pliant form, that cygnet grace,
Those tap'ring hands, that slender waist,
That ev'ry look so soft and chaste,
Nestling beneath long lashes deep,
As violets from their foliage peep,

All gentleness invite :

Thus humbird treats the flow'r of spring,
And sipping honey, rests on wing,
Nor dares its puny weight to fling
Where texture is so slight.

II.

"Twere needless task here to relate
How Elva's time was spent,
E'er since the night Goap's delegate
Her father's pride had bent.
Once gay and happy as the lark—
Save that of late disquiet's mark
Had giv'n her looks a cast more dark ;
For he to whom her troth was pledged,
While with the Moors the battle raged,
Was ta'en in his despite.
Though sore distressed she knew right well,

For ransom, that the infidel
 Would free the captive knight ;
And such sure hope did oft dispel
 This, then, her only care—
But now, alas, how changed her mood !
She o'er the pact would ever brood,
P'ass sleepless nights, yea, shrink from food,
 And sit with lifeless stare.
Her playful setter moping grew ;
Her falcons pined, perched in the mew ;
Her palfrey claimed in vain its due,
 Her gentle weight to bear.
Nor festal cheer, nor scenting flower,
Nor summer breeze, nor sunset hour,
Brought Elva from her lonely bower,
 Or waked her from despair.

III.

As plotter guards with anxious eye,
That none into his scheme may pry,
Laredo did his secret keep
Within his tortured bosom deep.
To one alone would he confess
The whole extent of his distress :

He hied to the monks in the vale,
And sought, within the cloister's pale,
 The holy abbot's aid.
Conceive good Veila's consternation!
His pious wrath and indignation,
That he his daughter's soul's salvation
 With Satan should have played!
Then did toward heav'n his arms upthrow;
Then crossed his mouth, his heart and brow,
And kissed the floor his locks of snow,
 As he devoutly prayed.
He rose; and said for safety's sake
'Twas well all diligence to make,
 To cross the demon's end;
But did most forcibly declare,
The devil's might would melt to air,
If Elva, to escape the snare,
 Her mind to heav'n would bend.

IV.

And Veila, ever since that day,
Oft to the castle bent his way.
He bade that she dismiss all fear,
And turn her thoughts to angels' sphere,

Implore the saints, tell o'er her beads,
And think of charitable deeds ;
She might with this, and penitence,
Defy hell's pow'r with confidence.
Nor failed his rede her hopes to prop,
Nor balsam on her wounds to drop ;
But 'twas like salve that heals the skin,
Letting the canker lapse within.
As phantoms—which the lone child sees,
When, darkling, treading galleries³—
Fast vanish from its heated eye,
If, humming, nurse should chance come by ;
So life would flow in Elva's cheek,
When Veila came, of hope to speak ;
But was he gone, his accents hushed ?
Then all her terrors back they rushed ;
And when the monk the morrow brought,
He found her doleful or distraught.

V.

Veila the monk was come that morn,
To see the noble maid forlorn ;
And on the way he tried to find
New words to soothe her haunted mind.

But great, I ween, was his surprise
To see joy beam from her bright eyes,
Once more her greeting voice to hear,
So silver-toned, so fresh and clear,
When he but looked for bursting sigh,
Or vacant stare of tearless eye.
Nor was it long ere Veila knew
The cause that could her smiles renew ;
She told him all in phrases few.
“ When Furtan come,” then added she—
“ And come he will, now he is free—
With blither smile and heart more light
I’ll welcome my long-absent knight.”

VI.

Now while their words in converse flow,
A stir awakes the court below :
The clatter of the charger’s heel
Comes mingling with the clank of steel,
Though not as when axe falls on shield,
Or blade meets blade that foemen wield,
But sound which scabbards dangling yield.
And hum of voices upward pressed,
As greeting some a welcome guest.

Surprise o'er Elva's features spread,
 While she to her companion said :
 " To-morrow hopes the Count to see
 Full many a goodly company ;
 But none I wot of near enow,
 Could reach so soon Rocias' brow—

It passes all my skill !

E'en now the summons went abroad
 That all might seize axe, spear, or sword,
 And join at once Laredo's lord

Near San Vicentè's hill !"

She did not long her doubts pursue,
 For soon was heard, and nearer drew,
 The clink of warrior's iron shoe

Through passage paved with tiles :
 Then opes the door, and Elva spies
 The Count, joy glist'ning in his eyes ;
 A mail-clad knight behind him hies—

Don Furtan on her smiles !

VII.

I shall not paint the deep'ning dye
 That mantled in her cheek ;
 Nor how scintilliant danced her eye,
 Late beaming rays so weak ;

Nor the half-stifled flutt'ring strain
Which parted from her lips :
How springs the knight her side to gain,
Or how his arms her form retain,
How mutual questions fly amain,
And love their glances tips.
As well could limner's brush portray
The changing hue, the colours' play,
When mixtures chemist does essay,
Or testing-paper dips.
A noble *Infanzon* was he,⁴
Of ancient stock and pedigree ;
And e'en as if a lance to trail,
He came prepared, all eased in mail ;
His head alone was bare.
The bright, close-fitting, pliant steel,
His seemly frame did full reveal,
Tall, springy, strong, though spare.
Albeit he looked careworn and pale,
Of durance long the trace,
It marred in nought the beauty male
Impressed upon his face.
His forehead high, well-arched and clear,
No vestige wears of frown ;
His air is open, all sincere ;

In graceful curves his lips appear,
 But scanty edged with down.
 Long raven locks adorn his back—
 Proud sign of birth no Goth would lack,
 For hind must crop his hair—
 Exalted soul his dark eyes show,
 Deep-set, and large, their motion slow
 Speaks depth of thought ; but when they glow—
 If love, 'tis rare ; if ire, beware !

VIII.

Don Furtan soon some hints did fling
 That Elva name a day
 When he might give the nuptial ring,
 She don the bride's array ;
 For she was his affianced bride,
 Ere he had joined his monarch's side
 To meet the Moors in fight.
 "Nay," Elva said, with mournful smile,
 "I can't my conscience reconcile—
 Nay, till I'm freed from contract vile,
 I shun the marriage rite."
 "What means this speech, these looks, good
 Heaven ?"

Cried Furtan, "is thy plight not given?"—

He turned a wond'ring gaze, half-wild,

From ehild to sire, from sire to ehild—

"What hast thou on thy conseience now

May prove more biuding than thy vow?

What contraet vile compels thee? say!

What new claim can my elaim outweigh?"

"I'll tell thee, Furtan; ope thine ear,"

The Count replied, "and thou shalt hear

A wondrous tale, which, sure, wilt deem—

Though true—more fit for minstrel's theme,

Or fruit of some mad poet's dream."

He then proceeded to recite

The strange events of that dread night,

Which nipped their joys with sudden blight;

While Furtan, now a look of frost,

E'en ire, would cast upon his host;

Now seize the hands of Elva fair,

And, wild, the demon's power dare;

Then with pale cheek, his awe revealed,

To holy Veila he appealed.

But they all bade him list and wait,

The sequel would his fears abate.

So with more tranquil mind he heard

What after Topel's flight occurred:

IX.

“Distracted with the oversight
Committed on that fatal night;
Spurred by that thought of woe supreme,
My days might fail ere I redeem
 This dear and precious pledge,
Withouten loss of time I bade
My people through Laredo speed,
Yea, farther still, e'en to—if need—
 Asturias' western edge,
To seek that which my fears might tame,
And meet the cunning demon's claim.
Many returned but to declare
They had not found a spotless pair.
Back others came, and homeward drove
What they supposed I would approve;
But each some gloomy sign bewrayed,
When by my anxious eye surveyed;
And ere a full return was made,
My hopes and patience 'gan to fade.
I then bethought me of a plan,
Which did my drooping spirits fan—
Nor, while to this my care I lend,
Need I a wider search suspend.

X.

“So to Oviedo I depnte
A trusty envoy, to salnte
My liege the King, and him request
The needful pow’r in me to vest,
The long-disloyal Basques to bring
 To their allegiance due:
For it would prove an easy thing
Upon them unawares to spring,
And from those boasting rebels wring
 The oath of fealty true.
Thou know’st right well, that since the day
Don Rod’rick’s seeptre broken lay
 On gory Chryssus’ sward,
The proud Vascones have e’er upheld
Their independence, and repelled
 Asturias’ king as lord.
And, sure, ere this thou hast conceived
How well my motion was received:
To me Alfonso gave full sway;⁵
Nor act of mine would he gainsay:
I could upon the conquered foes,
Conditions harsh or mild impose,
As my best judgment might propose.

XI.

" As—when the sultry breezes sleep—
 Abrupt tornado's whirling sweep
 Comes raging over land or wave,
 While wreck, its way, and havoc pave,
 As sudden I, with knightly suit,
 Did through pass Fenestrosa shoot ;⁶
 Rushed o'er Carrancio, mountain-hemmed ;⁷
 Scant Arentales' currents stemmed,
 Athwart Sopeneta wightly pressed,
 Till natives armed tried to arrest
 Our tempest-winged career.
 Passed the Carral, they blocked our way ;⁸
 We closed with them in deadly fray,
 Did many of their phalanx slay—
 The rest proved fleet as deer.
 I northward then my squadrons led,
 And through Sopeneta's passes sped.
 We kept aside Galdánès' hills,
 And scoured its leas and crossed its rills.
 Then gained we Somorróstro's heart,
 E'en mount Triano, caved by art
 Of miner toiling for the ore.⁹
 There did the hollowed earth disgorge

Such din as rose from Vulcan's forge,
Or when Sarantès' lavas pour.¹⁰
But with the sound were tones yblent,
Whose echoes deep might represent
The midnight wailings of the dead
Through battle-sod, on which they bled,
'Neath which they now recline.
That iron-pregnant moumt we seize,
With swarthy tenants, thick as bees ;
'Twas part of my design :
If kept the prize by strength of blade,
The conquered Basques would be too glad
My lenient terms to sign.

XII.

" And on they came, a countless horde,
Ten times our number told ;
But mass confused, without a lord
To temper spirits bold ;
For though each clan a chief could boast,
No captain's voice controlled the host.
With heady rush, and savage yell,
In constant stream on us they fell,
As rows on rows of foaming surge
The oaken side of vessel scourge ;

But as the ship hurls back the spray,
We drove the van, in disarray,
 Back on the heaving rear.
Undaunted still they forward pressed,
With eager tread, with force infest ;
When foremost fell, did bare his chest
 His following compeer.
Now swells the strife with boiling zeal,
And war-cry whets the edge of steel,
While hills send back the mingled peal,
 And crows come flocking near.
But throng untrained could ill withstand
The discipline of vet'ran band
Long drilled in rough *fossado's* fray—
When year by year in war's array
We quit our hills, shend Spania's plains
With fire and blood, then bring in chains
The Moorish slave, Mosarab serf,
To tend our herds, or turn our turf¹¹.—
Nor men afoot could long contest
The ground against barbed charger's breast,
 Or shoek of harnessed knight.
Sure was our serried ranks' advance,
More due to skill than battle's chance ;
And pressed by Goth's long ashen lance,

The Basques dispersed in flight.
Thus worsted on that bloody field,
They to my terms were forced to yield :
To King Alfonso fealty swear,
 And, as subjection's sign,
This annual tribute they must bear—
White bull and cow of spotless hair,
And snowy coursér, fleet and fair ;
 Nought else they need resign.

XIII.

“ I may not claim the first year's due,
Two months are wanting still, 'tis true ;
But tidings e'en this morn I had,
The which, while vexing me, are glad :
It seems, so says my trusty scout,
The Basques have found, without a doubt,
A bull and cow of beauty rare,
Whose snowy white nought doth impair ;
The steed they have, too, ready there—
Though as to steed I little care.
But now—beshrew their traitor heads :—
'Tis said a pow'rful party spreads
 Rebellion's seed amain.

The tribute's pay they would prevent ;
 And though the loyal few dissent,
 'Tis feared, unless support is lent,

Remonstrance will prove vain.

So summons I this day did send,
 That me Laredo's sons attend

Near Mount St. Vincent's edge ;

And ere four suns have set I'll guide

My forces o'er Durango's tide,¹³

And I in Biscay shall abide

Till paid the first year's pledge."

"Wherefore, my lord?" good Veila said ;

"Why such ado? more blood why shed?

An but the cattle be thy care,

Them canst thou reach through purchase fair ;

'Twere best of fealty Basques t' assoil,

To keep them firm, ungrateful toil!"

With look which seemed the monk to chide,

The Count with energy replied :

"Nay, rev'rend sir and trusty friend,

Honour and duty will

That I those faithless spirits bend

Who dare against their lord contend—

This claims my sov'reign!—God forbend

I e'er used trust so ill!"

“ Well spoken, Count ! ” Don Furtan cried,
“ Good faith, true *Rico-hombre's* pride ;
He ne'er betrays his liege.
Albe no summons came to me,
Thy fere in this campaign I'll be
Through battle-field or siege ! ”

XIV.

We'll elsewhere now.—Mundaca's shores,
Where lofty Cosnoaga soars,
E'en where Guernica later rose
(For then no town did there repose),
A lively spectacle disclose.
As far as eye can reach around,
As far as ear can catch the sound,
In groups, or singly, men appear,
Is heard the voice of mountaineer
In song, discourse, or joke.
Some mount, descend, or cross the tide,
Some through the plain or valley stride,
Some step, now leap, down mountain-side,
All toward Guernica's oak.
From townless Biscay's various quarters
They come, prized Freedom's stanch supporters,

Accited to the *Ustaritz*¹³—
 By word of mouth, unknown were writs—
 From Valmaseda, Arcentálès,
 Trucios, Gueñes, and Galdámès,
 Sopuerta, Somorróstro, Zálía,
 Uribè, Zollo, Gordejuéla;
 And from Ondárroa coast along
 T' Ibáy Çabál come many a throng.
 The sierras Dima, steep Lecándè,
 Altub, Gorbea, and Ochándè
 Send forth their hardy denizens,
 Who meet, near Oca's base,
 With those whom claim Durango's glens,
 And mingling there in scores or tens,
 A common way they trace:
 While some in wherries forward urge,
 The rest walk by Mundaca's verge.¹⁴

XV.

Not far from Cosnoaga's side—
 Which greets Astræus' roral bride—
 In midst of fertile plain,
 Whose length does north and southward lie,
 Begirt by many a mountain high,

A huge, far-spreading oak stands nigh
An old, all-hallowed fane.
Of small dimensions is the pile,
Severe and primitive its style.
The early Christian's art, yet crude,
Had raised that simple structure rude.

XVI.

Beside that church, beneath that tree—
Revered by Basque o'er crag and dell,
As emblem old of liberty,
So old that none its age could tell ;
For 'neath its leafy canopy,
Freedom to ward or guaranty,
The elders of that sturdy nation
Had sat for many a generation.
Or there in yearly council met,
Their simple laws they framed,
Or as high court, where each might get
The justice that he claimed ¹⁵—
Now, 'neath that gnarled and hallowed tree,
You men of old assembled see,
All seated on the clover-ground,
While throngs on throngs are pressing round.

But 'mong those men of aspect grave--
 Of flowing beards and locks that wave,
 Whose garb is skin of goat or bear,
 Whose arms and legs no clothing wear--
 Is one who seems there to preside ;
 A knight in mail sits by his side,
 Whom all with searching gazes scan,
 For stranger he to ev'ry clan.
 He scarcely looks ten lustres old,
 His carriage prond, unyielding, bold.
 Bespeak that port, that fearless glance,
 Those scars on brow and face,
 Long use in wielding axe or lance,
 And leadership in prompt advance
 Through many a battle's race.
 The ruddy glow, complexion fair,
 The sky-blue eye and fiery hair,
 The son of boreal clime declare.

XVII.

Long woollen robe, coarse-spun and grey,
 With knotted rope the waist around,
 And naked feet in sandals bound,
 Made up, of him, the sole array,

Who there received the senior's due,
And whom all did with rev'rence view.
His head and chin, with silvern hair,
Showed many a bleaching winter's care;
But his small eyes, whose glance is dark
 As 'neath their shaggy brows they roll,
At times emit the fiery spark,
 Which speaks the heat of youthful soul.
He lived in cell, apart from men,
Down in a deep and lonely glen,
In wild Viscargui's lilly row,
'Twi'x't mountains two, whose peaks of snow—
As keep and tow'r o'er turrets rise—
O'erlook the rest 'mid vap'ry skies.¹⁶

XVIII.

Bakhárra, hermit of Mecaur,
Held o'er the Basques that secret power
Which, though unsought, oft rests secure
Where wisdom moulds devotion pure,
 And fame thereof is spread.
'Twas said Bakhárra, eke, of yore,
Had trodden many a distant shore,
 Seen many a monarch dread:

Great Alfred, who swayed England's realm,
 And treach'rous Karl, whose was the helm
 Of Germany and France.¹⁷

He had Doge Orso seen, in pride,
 Espouse blue Adriatic's tide,
 Cast the ring to his surging bride
 With lordly word and glance.¹⁸

And Rome, whilom the heathens' world,
 Had had him 'mong her guests,
 Where Pontiffs now their Bulls unfurled ;
 But whence as yet they seldom hurled
 Their bolts at kingly crests.

E'en to imperial Basil's court ¹⁹
 Bakhárta did awhile resort ;
 And from those eastern parts he drew
 Such knowledge then as giv'n to few.

XIX.

Now rose the hermit to his feet,
 The while each Ancient kept his seat,
 And, as his head he slowly bowed,
 With solemn look surveyed the crowd—
 Straight hushed was ev'ry sound.
 His op'ning words I leave untold ;

Soon his harangue waxed warm and bold ;
 His accents louder, deeper rolled,
 And fired all those around ;
 Though parts there were, scarce likely food
 For brain of men untaught and rude :

XX.

“ Rank rebels you, my sons, they call
 Who King Alfonso serve ;
 Allegiance claims he of us all,
 And threatens should we swerve.
 REBELS forsooth ! Where thraldom’s wight
 Low bends his neck to Tyrant’s might,
 There, only there, that *master’s* word
 Should e’er addressed to man be heard !
 For there alone its sense is plain,
 Where maddened slaves break yoke in twain.
 The word was coined, certes, in the East,
 Where all are slaves, save king and priest.
 No serf e’er breathed on Biscay’s hills !
 This bracing air mean bondage kills ;
 And steadfast though our rocky land,
 As eastle’s base ’twere moving sand :
 Ne feudal walls their turrets rear,
 Nor lord, nor vassal know we here !

Behold! above Navarnis' height,²⁰
 Yon eagle hov'ring in its flight!
 When from its seres it drop the prey,
 And to its kind shall bow;
 When eagles own the eagle's sway,
 Then, too, shall I allow
 That we, as rebels, cast aside
 Allegiance due to regal pride!

XXI.

“ But grant that till this very hour
 We had cringed to Asturias' power;
 That our forefathers willingly,
 Their hands resigned, on bended knee,
 Had homage paid—or tribute base—
 To all Pelayo's royal race;
 What then? Shall those that pass away,
 Whose souls have parted from their clay,
 For evermore their issue bind,
 Weak spirit worn, cramp healthy mind?
 For people's weal, too often so!
 Too oft from Nature's laws we go!
 The beasts that crowd sea, air, and woods,
 And those for us that toil;
 Trees which with warmth don verdant hoods,

All plants that pierce the soil,
Are made, according to their source,
To follow one unbending course.
But constant change, for weal or woe,
Is lot that man must ever know.
Why else to us alone was given
Immortal soul by sapient Heaven?
Why should ethereal spark unchain
The stunted vision of the brain,
If from its use we must refrain?
As well were we like brutes soul-lorn,
If PAST must fix the FUTURE'S bourn!

XXII.

“No law indissolubly binds
Those bodies formed of diverse kinds:
By Art (wise Nature's true ally,
Which should with it pull evenly,
Which God, whose works none may traduce,
Gave Man for use, but not abuse)
They all may be asunder brought,
And oft to better purpose wrought.
The gold, so faded in the ore,
The copper hid in malachite,

Their atoms join, and quick withdraw
 From alien mass, when moved by heat.
 So race o'erwhelmed by foreign brands,
 Though plentier these than desert sands,
 An it have pith, adhere as one,
 With lawless liege 'twill soon have done!
 Nor heed the oath wrung out by might—
 No oath annuls inherent right!

XXIII.

"Than happiness what greater gift?
 But oh! what manly soul
 Can smiling face to heaven lift
 'Neath Despot's loathed control?
 The more to prop the Tyrant's state,
 More each supporter feels its weight.
 My sons, would you charm Liberty?
 Be ever small community.
 When waters thick and many flow,
 All tints are merged in one;
 The coral reefs in depths below,
 No ruddy tinge can upward throw—
 There never strikes the sun.
 But shallow stream or limpid fount

Reveals its sandy bed ;
There priers can the pebbles count,
Toward them the varied colours mount,
Or yellow, blue, or red.

COY INDIVIDUALITY

Brooks not unwieldy crowd ;
And ah ! when it needs silent be,
Shy FREEDOM dons her shroud !
But where we all are known by name,
Each voice hath weight, can strike a flame,
There rulers fear to merit blame
Of fellow-freemen proud.
Nor, there, despotic erowd can sway,
Whose brainless whims e'en heavier weigh
Than single will which all obey.

XXIV.

“ While they were small, the states of Greece
Preserved their rights in war and peace ;
But some with eager, grasping hands
Seized on their weaker neighbours' lands.
Then grew their numbers, swelled their pride,
Their landmarks stretching wide and wide.
As number's vulgar strength increased
The vigour of their minds decreased,

For pers'nal virtne's credit ceased,
 No more might Freedom there abide ;
 She slow withdrew, and going, sighed
 To think her work o'erthrown.
 Awhile she hovered something nigh,
 For she no home had 'neath the sky,
 Then flew to parts unknown.
 Lo! men ambitious, cunning, deep,
 Their fellows drove, as pastors sheep,
 Till Philip's son, o'er Glory's waves
 Led on the Greeks, but made them slaves !

XXV.

" To arms! to arms! ye Basques, arise!
 Alert! beware of craft's disguise!
 If you the first sad step would stay
 Toward bondage, bar the tribute's pay.
 And when the vass'lage-pledge is claimed,
 Though promised, prove you can't be tamed
 And let the shade of frowning night
 Upon your rigid brows alight ;
 And time your voices to the strain
 Which pours adown Viscargui's chain ;
 And let your step o'er granite floor
 Resound like mountain-torrent's roar,

Unwav'ring, constant, heard afar
 In dire concent, so regular.
 Beware, though, but one voice obey!
 Choose a *Jaön* whom none gainsay.²¹
 Remember how Alava's lands,
 For want of leader skilled,
 Groaned 'neath the tramp of Fruela's bands,
 And blazed beneath flame-sweeping brands;
 Fair maids dragged off by wanton hands,
 Whole legions routed, killed!²²
 Remember why Laredo, mailed,
 With knights so featly trained,
 Our virgin walls of freedom scaled,
 O'er chiefless numbers quick prevailed,
 And Biscay's sentcheon stained!"
 But here the hermit's voice was lost
 Midst clamours of the list'ning host,
 Which, as aroused by sudden shock,
 Like sea enridged did heave and rock;
 " *Jaön* we'll have!" such words they vent,
 " *Jaön* we'll have! we are content!
 To arms! to arms! rise ev'ry man!
 From *aspa*, *aska*, and *aran*!"²³
 And many an arm did heav'nward start,
 Vibrating curtle-axe or dart,

Or wildly whirling whizzing sling,
 Or high the poignard brandishing,
 And kindled so those hairy cheeks,
 You saw the glow of fire
 Pierce matted beards in crimson streaks,
 Strong sign of shame and ire.

XXVI.

Now seized Bakharra by the hand
 The friendly knight from foreign land,
 And made him up beside him stand;
 Then silence asked by gentle nod,
 Which gained, thus spoke the man of God:
 "Behold (if him you will elect
 As your *Jaõn* supreme),
 One who our clans could well direct,
 Whose skill would sure the foe eject,
 And Biscay's name redeem.
 Here stands Sir Fron, a Saxon prince,
 Whom I first met some winters since,
 When to Britannia's isles I strayed,
 Where then heroic Alfred swayed.
 Bound to the king by kindred's chain,
 He ofttimes led the host;

O'ercame on many a bloody plain,
 And helped to beat the roving Dane
 Away from England's coast.
 But now, alas for human guile!
 We find him here a poor exile.
 Obliged, through plotters' craven play,
 His native soil to flee,
 He launched him on the ocean-spray,
 And reached of late Lequeytio's bay,²⁴
 Starting in quest of me.
 Him I to you propose as chief;
 With him you'll prove this land no fief.
 The elders here have giv'n their voice,
 The whole *Bilzaar* approve my choice.²⁵
 Will you not, in your present need,
 My friendly counsel also heed,
 Elect as chief the prince Sir Fron
 Beneath old Freedom's tree?
 What, stranger choose for our *Jaön*!
 Why not, if he can lead us on
 To certain victory?"
 Ten thousand voices rend the air,
 Whose thunder-tones one will declare:
 "Let the *arotz* our chieftain be!²⁶
 In war we bow to Fron's decree!"

Canto Third.

THE AROTZ-JAÖN.

I.

THE shadows falling long and black,
Were far upon their eastern track;
So soft the beams on mountain-crest,
Their heat scarce reached the eagle's nest;
'Twas then, a space ere falls the dew,
A num'rous host was wending through
The longsome vale which opes between
 Tejeda's wall-like side,
And where Saldojas' mounts are seen,
Ending where Nerva's flowing sheen
 Receives Durango's tide.²⁷
The base of Pagazsarra's hill
 The noble-van had won;
The villain-rear was fording still
 The river Salcedon.

Perched on some lofty neighb'ring height,
'T had been a rare and splendid sight
To see that mass move on.

II.

Below in deep and broad defile,
On either side, for many a mile,
Impaled by chains unbroken, stiff,
Of woodland mount or barren cliff,
The undulating, marshalled throng,
Wave after wave advanced along.
Their tramp, the beat of spirit-crowds,
When stalking o'er the thunder-clouds;
So measured eke it smote the ground,
It pierced deep voices' rolling sound.
The vale with groves of lances teems,
Which, moving, blaze as spiked with beams;
And glinted baek from shield and blade
The rays in golden showers;
While nodding plumes of ev'ry shade,
And banners, with the zephyrs played,
And matched the gayest flowers.
Who led the force, you sure have guessed,
His vizor raised, the Count confessed.

All armed at point in burnished mail,
 He speechless rode along ;
 His look was sombre, grim, and pale,
 Nor heeded he the throng :
 His brow contracted seemed to say
 Doubts on his mind perplexing lay.
 Yet now and then he strove to smile,
 Relaxed the frown, and spoke awhile.
 Don Furtan too, as trusty knight,
 Was there according to his plight.
 At times he fell in anxious thought,
 Albeit his rev'ries were but short ;
 For absent mood he scarce allowed,
 Soon brushing gloom away ;
 Which sped as April's shower-cloud,
 When, turning to the noble crowd,
 That round him joked and laughed aloud,
 He seemed as blithe as they.

III.

Now first came those of high degree :
 Some *princes of the realm* there be,
 Some known as *Proccrs, Potestatès,*
 Or *Magnates, Mayors,* and eke *Primatès ;*

They all were peers and men of might,
And also *Rico-hombres* hight.
These round the Throne their functions called,
Save when in shires as lords installed,
Or war was set abroaeh.
Then followed *Infanzonès* proud,
Whose ranks displayed a larger crowd ;
These with no office were endowed,
Nor Council might approach ;
Yet were they Goths of noble fount,
Of lineage pure as Mayor or Count.²⁸
Both first and last rode horses small,
Which though below the mark,
'Mid highland rocks, so trackless, tall,
Were worth the fairest barb in stall,
For sure their hold 'gainst slip and fall,
And fleet were they, and stark.²⁹
Thus horsed, each noble mountaineer
Did in full suit of mail appear ;
His shield no sign or motto bore ;
On side a pond'rous sword he wore ;
And battle-axe, for stubborn foe,
Hung ready at the saddle-bow.
But that which shared his highest trust,
Whose solid pole backed deadly thrust,

Was lance of mountain-ash,
So prized and envied by the Moor,
Whose beechen spear could ne'er endure
So well the focman's dash.

IV.

Of such as formed the bands behind,
To few was lance or horse assigned.
Though none might boast a gentle birth,
They all were born on Freedom's hearth.
Their arms and armour lighter weighed
Than what decked men of noble grade.
But 'mid them rode the villain-knight,
And he bore lance by money's right.³⁰
Some wielded mace as 'twere but rod,
Or used a club with iron shod ;
And many a hand was armed with sling,
Or with the jav'lin, made to fling ;
A number carried shafts and bows,
Most all had knives to close with foes.
The garb, and olive cheeks of some
Said they from southern climes had come ;
None maybe was of Moorish breed ;
'Tis sure all cherished Christian's creed :

Though born and bred where Emirs swayed,
They claim to Gothic lineage laid.²¹

v.

That day, from San Vicentè's hill,
While sun was misting morning chill,
The Count had led his mustered host,
Whose ranks could larger numbers boast

 Than he had hoped to bring;
For him had joined full many a lord,
With suite such as each could afford,

 Thus bidden by the King.
Some hours the force with tardy gait
Had marched athwart the Basques' estate;
But their advance by none was stayed,
Nor started lurking foe with blade

 From hidden pass or cleft.
Across the dales shot frightened stags,
And eagles watched on frowning crags,

 The only warders left.
Upon the brake the wild ass brayed;
Growled bears and wolves in forest shade;
But nought about the dwellings stirred,
The ban-dog's howl alone was heard.

The stubble-field was harvest's sign,
 And pasture gave to sheep and kine;
 But vales which erst with people swarmed,
 Were now to solitude transformed,
 Though 'mid the rocks, in many a nook,
 Were browsing nimble goats,
 Th' invaders spied no shepherd's crook,
 Nor caught his plaintive notes.
 E'er since the border they had cleared,
 Not once had face of man appeared;
 Nor reached them floating echoes shrill
 Of boyish laugh or lassie's trill:
 No human sound where tillage smiled,
 Save army's chorns deep and wild!—
 A cheerless, om'nous feeling stole
 O'er many a stalworth warrior's soul.

VI.

But when Sopeneta they had passed,
 Through Zalla marching on,
 Were seen a couple, coming fast
 Straight from the Salcedon.
 Ere long 'twas found they heralds were,
 Who had been forward sent,
 A message from the Count to bear

To those who might the power share
O'er Basques so turbulent.
With failing breath, but lightning pace,
Rare tidings kindling eye and face,
They drew them near Laredo's side,
When one their case thus certified :
" We news unlooked for hither bear,
And which, my lord, may well breed care.
We long had walked without a goal—
For met we ne'er a living soul
To tell us whither we might seek
Those same with whom you charged us speak—
When lo ! treading with weary pace
Around mount Pagazsarra's base,
Surprised were we anon :
The Basques were hastily passing o'er
Ibáy Çabál t' Uribè's shore
In skiffs, which counted many a score,
Or crowded rafts upon.
While on the other beach, amassed,
Were countless bands, assemblage vast,
Which seemed in order prime to bide
Their turn to cross the swollen tide ;
Whose bosom bore the swimmers too,
Nor were these last in number few.

VII.

“ But, to be brief, we sought to know,
From those this side, in plain below,
Where we might find the men of eld,
Who o'er them primal power held.
When they learnt what our coming meant,
Across the river were we sent,
And ta'en before a warrior tall,
Whom they *Arotz-Jaõn* did call,
To him, as bade, I gave your charge :
' Albe you came with army large,
The war-bird crowed not in the van,
Save loyal Basques were under ban ;
If they would see you homeward turn,
And make the shorter our sojourn,
They might at once the tribute pay,
Nor hold aback till came the day.'
When this my fere an essay made
T' interpret that which I had said,
The chief, with strange, sarcastic smile,
Barred him the word, and spoke the while
In our Latino-Gothic tongue,
Which pure as native accents rung—
Nor skilled was he in Bask the less,

For glib to Basques was his address ;
He is ne Goth nor Basque, I swear,
Though not his speech, his looks declare.

VIII.

“ Thus answered he, while flashed his eye :

‘ Asturias’ king I here defy !

He deems us bound by oath ?

As strong a bond one single hair !

That oath was subtile, shapeless air,

Consigned to mocking echo’s care,

Who snatched it, nothing loath.

The tribute pledged shall ne’er be *paid*,

It must be *ta’en* by might of blade.

But tell the Count, in yonder mead

Are grazing bull and cow and steed

As white as confined prince’s shroud,

As spotless as the silver cloud’

(And sooth hard by we saw all three

Beneath a giant chestnut-tree) ;

‘ So rare are they, they’re rated thrice

The proudest king’s redemption-price.

And pray, sir herald, have a care

To add this more from me :

If he had daughter pure and fair,
Whom fancied demon of the air,
The sprite would mortal love forswear
 As he the kine should see.
To whom the prize, the warrior's art
Alone shall settle—now depart!"

IX.

Recoiled the Count, in his despite,
With awe-fixed eye and visage white,
 As he had spectre seen.
But quick as racking cloud it passed;
He hasty look on Furtan cast,
Whose gaze on him was settled fast,
 Amazement in his mien.
But neither used nor needed speech,
That one the other's thought might reach;
And oft the Count, his qualm repressed,
Thus forcibly his peers addressed:
"By Covadonga's holy shrine!
Soon shall those boasters lie supine,
 Full tamed by Gothic steel.
Methought not they were banded so,
Prepared the first to string the bow,
 And thus to arms appeal.

But this is well! belike our task
Will lighter prove, once thrown the mask.
We ill could muster time this day
To close with Basques in battle's fray;
But on! fair knights, speed we amain,
Mount Pagazsarra first to gain,
The vantage-ground deny;
Then bide, along its eastern slope,
The morning's haze, the triumph's hope,
And shame the raven's eye."

X.

But to resume—the van was now
Beneath mount Pagazsarra's brow,
The villain-bands, which closed the rear,
Fording the river scant and clear.
Dividing there in sep'rate file,
They circled round the mountain-pile;
The one through northern op'ning wide,
The other round its southern side,
Through narrow, deeper pass.
Once more, upon its eastern flank,
They met, and mingled rank by rank,
While vocal din and metal's clank
Swelled with the gath'ring mass.

The Basques afar beheld the sight,
 And raised a shout of fierce delight;
 Though went forth challenge in the cry,
 They made no show of drawing nigh.

XI.

The Count did off his charger leap,
 And bade Don Furtan near him keep;
 Then started both the height to gain,
 Whence they might better view the plain,
 More than his wont, the Count was stern,
 As heretofore expressed;
 'Twas since the heralds' late return,
 His pensive brow and aspect durn,
 Had spoke some doubt or deep concern,
 Which none but Furtan guessed.
 When past the span of stranger's ear,
 Laredo said to his compeer:
 "Now we're alone, my Furtan, pray,
 How reads it to thy mind,
 That marv'llous message sent to-day
 By blust'ring rebel-hind?
 Why passed the shaft so near the mark,
 By merest hazard sped?
 Or lurks there meaning deeply dark,

Might well awaken care and cark
 In anxious parent's head?—
 Nor Nature's throes, nor human shock,
 Could erst my nerves unstring;
 I'd even pulse and heart of rock
 To ev'ry trial bring.
 I've seen a score of weapons pressed,
 All driving at this single breast,
 Yet coolness swayed my arm.
 I've darkling trod war's field alone,
 And heard the dying paynim's groan,
 What time the gliding spectres moan,
 Nor quaked I with alarm.
 I've braved, unmoved, the mountain-blasts
 Along deep torrent's brink,
 And seen huge, reeling forest-masts
 Adown abysses sink—
 But aye, I know the craven's care,
 Since spirit foul and sly
 Upon thy bride, my daughter fair,
 Hath cast malignant eye."

XII.

The cause which racked Laredo's brain
 Had eke set Furtan in a train

Of dark, perplexing doubt,
Resolved those whisp'rings vague to quell,
Which inly thrilled like boding knell,
He made this answer stout :
"Now good St. Withold be thy speed,
And from thy mind vain terrors weed !
A murrain on that braggart chief !
Be his career ill-fated, brief !
How can he know that demon's snare
Is set to trap thy daughter fair ?
Nay, for the nonce, though strange the dress
In which the message came,
I swear 'twas but a flighty stress
To raise the cattle's claim.
Tush ! rebel-boasts are wild and loud ;
We know the boorish Basques are proud,
And scorn to bend the knee.
Now, maugre doubts on other score,
This much we know, nor care for more,
The ransom there, on yonder shore,
Will straight our Elva free,
By all the saints above, I swear,
To-morrow we possess the pair !
But thou, Laredo, harbour well
Th' advice already given ;

Thy death would sound thy daughter's knell,
Might bar her soul from heaven.
So, pray, thy warlike ardour rein,
Of it enough hast given proof;
Ay, from the morrow's battle-plain,
I pray thee, keep aloof."

XIII.

This ill could brook the haughty peer,
It grated harshly on his ear;
His lips could mutter no assent,
Yet ventured not to speak dissent:
He scarce knew which he loved the best,
His honour fair, or Elva's rest.
But converse changed its channel now,
For they had reached the mountain-brow,
Whence spread a scene might gratify
The martial or romantic eye.

XIV.

Where Gordejuela's border-line
Doth with Uribe's edge combine,
There, in the valley all alone,
Heaves steepy Pagazsarra's cone.

Whence looking far—or toward the west,
Or there where Phebus springs from rest—
For many a mile nought stays the eye,
The vales below full open lie;
Whilst north and south are rocky chains,
Edging both sides the valley-plains.
And turning toward the icy home,
 Where hoary Boreas dwells,
Your eyes o'er boundless sea may roam,
Or watch its wild, tempestuous foam
 Bleaching the headland-fells.

xv.

Still, balmy, cool had been the day,
For 'twas the time when Scorpio's sway
 Makes Nature all serene.
And now, no longer riding high,
The sun was painting earth and sky,
 Behind a cloudy screen.
The grand illuminator's brush
Enriched his own departing blush
With floating, glowing scenes so rare,
That lethal hand, in sheer despair,
 Both pen and pencil drops.

Here saw you rippled, fiery lake;
 There flaming hills; here verdant brake;
 There livid tracts yet nought bespake;

Here fields with golden crops;
 While higher, slowly skimming by,
 Some shifting monster took your eye.
 Tejeda, which the welkin mocks,
 A giant 'mid surrounding rocks,
 Seemed set by fiends in ruby frame,
 All dented round with fire and flame.
 Ordúntè's heights, Saldójas' ridge,³²

For castles might be ta'en,
 Piled up to guard the Stygian bridge,
 Which leads to dread domain:
 Gigantic walls as blaek as coal;
 Shed fire the gates and each shot-hole;
 Round bristling tow'rs and turrets roll
 A lurid blaze, which o'er the whole
 Leaves each embrasure plain.

Vengáchia, though, by Nerva's tide,
 Gamúsio and Maríbi's side³³

Displayed more chastened scene:
 Fresh tints, now bright as satin-gloss,
 Now soft as light on dewy moss,
 Fell full their sloping groves across,

In blended shade and sheen ;
 Here purple tinge relieved the sight,
 Taming the glare of saffron bright ;
 Shimmered in belts the temp'ring light
 Of azure, pink, and green.

XVI.

But chieftain's eye, on battle's eve,
 Can it fair Nature's dress perceive,
 When 'fore him camps the foe ?
 Nay, both the Goths, in other vein,
 Now scanned the mountain-girdled plain,
 Which eastward stretched below.
 This side Ibáy Gabál—whose wave
 To steel its hardened temper gave³⁴—
 Nor from its margin far away,
 Were seen the Basques in war's array.
 Their squadrons reached across the plain,
 Flanked either end by mountain-chain ;
 And though large numbers they could boast,
 Reigned perfect order through the host.
 Laredo's eye shot triumph's light,
 And gloom sped from his face,
 As he surveyed, down from the height,
 The features of the place :

"By Satan's scalp! he poorly shows
 For skill, this captain stout!
 See! pent each side by craggy rows,
 With stream behind, retreat to close,
 How can the rebels 'scape their foes,
 An they are put to rout?
 This likes me well! the morrow's field
 Must see for ever treason healed."
 "Nay," Furtan said, "'tis not so sure
 These signs a fool bespeak;
 Retreat cut off doth oft ensue
 Such desp'rate nerve as proves a cure
 For numbers few and weak.
 The case the greater care demands
 That they outnumber all our bands;
 'Tis true they are of armour shorn—
 But look! that's not a foe to scorn."

XVII.

Though ev'ning dimmed the human ken,
 Could ne'ertheless be seen
 The brawny figures of the men,
 As well their savage mien.
 On them no cov'ring might you note

Save shaggy skin of bear or goat,
 And mail-wrought helmet round of shape,
 Tied on the neck with leathern tape.
 Their long, dishevelled, floating hair,
 Their scabrous beards, the dress they wear,
 Might liken them, in distance dim,
 To bipeds huge, ferocious, grim,
 Which Afric's wilds contain.
 That space-devouring creature fair,
 Which toil and war with man must share,
 You looked for there in vain.
 Of various make the arms they wield :
 The sickle, used to reap in field ;
 Some, choice of curtle-axe had made,
 Or wide Cantabrian poignard-blade ;
 Some whirled the sling with marv'llous art ;
 Some poised the short Iberian dart ;
 While num'rons bands nor sling, nor strike,
 But thrust with four-foot crescent-pike.⁸⁵
 Thus rustie weapons, coats of hide,
 On such those freemen stanch relied.
 Against the sword and foreeful lance,
 The metal suit and charger's prance,
 They cast within the scale
 Breasts steeled in Freedom's temp'ring blast,

United will t' atone the past,
Or die; but ne'er to quail.

XVIII.

Long did the Count and Infanzon
Look down the swarming plain upon;
And many a word passed 'twixt the two,
And many a well-thought plan they drew;
Till darkness let her curtain drop,
Bidding them leave the mountain-top.
While fast the welkin-tapers gain
Full mast'ry through Day's late domain,
They turned them to depart—
When sudden, piercing tempest-blast,
Came wildly howling, rushing past,
And through their frames such chillness cast
As numbed them to the heart.
'Twas shortlived as the arrow's flight,
And shot from clond as black as night,
Which rising from the distant main,
Came sweeping over hill and plain,
Fast toward them drawing near.
The warriors straight foresaw a storm,
When lo! it took such monster-form
As filled them both with fear.

Two giant-arms grew out, increased,
One toward the west, one toward the east ;
And claws like harpy's, bent and long,
Convulsive, clutched the stellar throng.
'Twi'th these, above, from out the cloud,
Which veiled the form in sable shroud,
Appeared a female neck and head,
With lambent tresses blue and red.
Two eyes of fire which glowed apace,
Illumined full the spectre's face ;
It pictured rage, the baleful look,
And ev'ry line with terror shock,
And hate, revenge were mingled there,
Which all came in for hell's despair.
Those lurid eyes a moment glared
Upon the two, who pallid stared
With wonder on the low'ring sprite,
Which through the ether ploughed ;
Then did those monster-hands unite,
When, leaving darker darksome night,
All sunk behind the cloud.

XIX.

The mass crenated edges rolled,
And eft assumed a smaller mould ;

The while its pitchy darkness sped,
And sapph'rine silver through it spread ;
Then so diaph'nous was its sheen,
That twinkling stars athwart were seen.
Such vap'ry stool had lightly pressed

Kind MARY'S feet, I trow,
When she, 'mid cherubim, angels blest,
Gave from on high some holy hest,
Or her esteem in smiles expressed,
To rapted saint below.

The crystal clond came drawing nigh,
The while descending from the sky.
Thus gently floating on aloft,
There poured adown sweet accents soft ;
And as through ev'ning-dew they sank,
Some falling drops they surely drank,
So mellow, fresh their chime.

Where startled sore, the nobles both ;
They knew the voice, yet were they loath
To let their fancy climb.

But with the tones came words along,
Came from the clond this warning song :

SONG.

I.

“ Storm-beaten oak, yet sound and hale,
 All shaking laughs at summer-gale,
 Nor heeds the clond, that slipp’ry jail
 Of lightning-flash;
 Till struck, it rends—ere thunder’s wail—
 With awful crash!

2.

“ Right stoutly battles ship with wave;
 So strong, she sure her freight will save,
 And sports, as round her billows rave—
 She sees no rock!
 But there awaits her yawning grave,
 When comes the shock.

3.

“ The bear espies the huntsman near;
 Can monster huge a pigmy fear?
 He springs to seize the sav’ry cheer,
 But never knows
 He hath to meet death-speeding spear,
 Which huntsman throws.

In changing folds appear to stir,
As thus she smoothly, slowly passed,
A mournful look on both she cast,
 Speech to her tongue forbid.
Her eye spoke hope, and faith sincere ;
Far more withal of doubt and fear,
And you might swear the melting tear
 Was swelling 'neath the lid.
He spoke nor breathed the elder peer,
His impulse checked by mystic fear ;
With arms outstretched he stood agazed,
As bound by spell, more than amazed.
"My bride!" cried Furtan with a gasp,
 Whom thrilled the vision bright ;
He forward rushed with open grasp,
But lo! the form he thought to clasp
 Had melted in the night. . . .
They saw the vap'ry mass on high,
Skimming again athwart the sky—
Then once more through the heavens spread
 That dark and massive cloud ;
And fell huge drops, heavy as lead,
And forked the fiery lightning red,
 And pealed the thunder loud.

.

XXI.

As night was gath'ring back its shade,
And all the eastern sky displayed
A slow suffusing, hazy grey,
Pale, beamless harbinger of day;
Ere stars ceased twinkling in the cope,
Or larks their rested eyes did ope—
In either camp was bustle rife,
Each foe preparing for the strife;
And with the rosy morning glow,
Hot passion's blood began to flow.

XXII.

Long raged the battle on the plain,
Shifting as gusts that sweep the main:
Now hovered wrack o'er Freedom's cause,
The Basque must bow to Gothic laws;
Now fickle Fortune's favours veer,
When, in their turn, quick toward the rear,
Asturias' knights go falling back
Before the rallied foe's attack.
Laredo and a chosen band,
Upon the mount, observing, stand;

None yet had shared the bloody fray
Though many blamed their chief's delay.
The bull impenned (that sees the crowd
Convulsed with joy vocif'rous, loud,
And hears, without, its fellow's roar,
When foiled by wily *torreador*),
With nostrils venting heated air,
And eyeballs shooting crimson glare,
Mad, raving, paws th' enclosure's soil,
All wild to share the circus' broil ;
So—as he watched each ebb and flow,
Which marked the hattle's tide below,
Cursing the fate that chained him there,
And bade him arms that day forswear—
Laredo's eyes would roll in fire,
His chest would swell beneath its ire ;
He now would pace, or restless stand,
Or half unsheathe his heavy brand ;
Now raise a shout, a joyous cheer,
When staggered foe seemed struck with fear ;
Now broken words he strung with curse,
Or, watched, his temper tried to nurse,
And crossed his arms, and reared him high,
With ghastly smile and stifled sigh.
At times, though, when his gallant troops

Were sorely pressed by Biscay's groups,
He sprang adown with naked blade,
As bound to give his warriors aid,
When, sudden, chimed upon his ear
That cloud-born song of omen drear,
Impressed his now awakened mind
Those phantom-shapes, so ill combined :
Thus summoned up his orphan child,
It always curbed his impulse wild.

XXIII.

But what two forms are those below,
On chargers mounted high ;
Who, with bright arms, so bravely show,
And, thus conspicuous midst the foe,
Rivet Laredo's eye ?
Their heads were sheathed in visored casques,
But clear it was they led the Basques.
The one bestrode a glossy bay,
And crowned his helm a feather gay
Of brightest scarlet hue.
So red the silken shirt which dressed,
O'er coat of mail, his back and chest,
'Twas dazzling to the view.

And all combustion seemed the knight :
Wherever hottest raged the fight,
As revelled he in battle's storm,
Moved in its midst his supple form.
Full many a warrior bit the dust,
So sure his lance's forceful thrust.
And when on serried van or flanks
 Embattled bands he led,
As wedge that rends the toughest planks,
They pierced and clove the Gothic ranks,
 And strewed the ground with dead,
Though often forced to ward the blows
Dealt at one time by many foes,
Unpunished yet he seemed by steel,
His armour sound from head to heel.

XXIV.

But strangely dark that other knight,
And dark the thoughts bred by his sight :
A flaunting plume of sable hue,
High from his furbished helmet grew.
As sunbeams on his armour shot,
 Their lustre back was thrown ;
But from his shield they glinted not,
 'Twas black as Kaaba's stone.

And black his steed, without a spot,
Nor speck of froth its mouth begot,

 Though high its mettle shone.

Laredo marked, mistrusting sight,
How, armed with lance, the sable knight,
With lightning speed would course the field,
His nodding plume, his boding shield,

 An ever-shifting shade.

His giant form high domineers
The moving hordes of mountaineers,
As through their ranks he wightly steers,

 To cheer them, or upbraid.

And once or twice, o'er battle's roar,
Up to the Count the echoes bore
A voice like cavern's deep reply
To little truant's feeble cry.

But strange to say, that lance's head
Had not a single warrior bled ;
Nor had the knight received a blow,
Or once been grazed by blade of foe.
Yet shunned he neither villain-bands,
Nor dodged at strokes from noble hands,

 But went his way unchecked.

Through square or column, file or rank,
Where'er he sped, he left a blank ;

Before his lance all foemen sank,
All in his wake bewrecked,
More wondrous still, scarce had he passed,
The fallen rose, where they were last,
Again prepared in due array,
For shock and brunt of battle's fray.

XXV.

The strife had lasted many an hour,
When, urged by Biscay's teeming power,
Asturias' bands begin to reel,
Disorder aim the blows they deal.
Through the Bask ranks then went a change
Unlooked for, sudden, rapid, strange.
When myriads of the feathered breed,
Migrating, through the heavens speed,
What sudden moves to shift array!
How apt, combined their pinions' play!
Now closely packed in gapless crowd,
They shade the fields, the sky becloud;
Now, prompt, its rows the flock expands,
Or, parting, flies in sep'rate bands;
Now fast as builds enchanter's art,
The first more swiftly onward dart,

The last on wing a moment halt,
Then all in file wave through the vault.
Thus quick, the Basques two bodies massed,
A creseent forming deep and vast,
One by the sable chieftain led,
The other by the warrior red.
They fold around, by van and flanks,
The decinated Gothic ranks,
Which struggling hard, and loath to yield,
Contesting ev'ry foot of field,
Must needs retreat through sloughs of blood,
Before that whelming human flood.

XXVI.

Just then a Gothic warrior brave,
With dash and force of surging wave,
Through his compeers a passage made,
And rushing on with brandished blade,
 Attacked the red-plumed knight.
The Count at once the champion knew;
'Twas Furtan thus who forward flew
 To die, or eheck the flight.
The crimson chief perceives his foe,
With ready shield he wards the blow,
 Then all his ire released.

Forthwith a furious combat raged,
And while the two were thus engaged,
 All fighting near surceased.
Now side by side and shield to shield,
Braying the dead which strew the field—
Their chargers tossing neck and mane,
 With fury champing lathered bit,
 Their hinder sinews firmly knit,
Their fore-paws beating battle-strain—
Each knight his falchion's pond'rous weight
Plies on his foe's helmet-plate,
Or, maddened, drives its thirsting point
To sate itself at armour's joint;
And as the blades shake in the sun,
On these in sheets the flashes run.
Now round each other whirl the twain,
Now start they back to meet again.
Now, stunned beneath some mighty blow,
One bends his head to saddlebow;
Now sore on side the other pressed,
Or stormed his beavered throat, or chest,
 Maugre the buckler bossed,
He leans aside, as vessel heels,
Or for a moment backward reels,
 To rise at foe's cost.

Their morions soon no feathers bear,
 The weightless fragments sail the air;
 The plaited steel, life's trusted pledge,
 Admits the falchion's hardened edge;
 The crimson tide in earnest flows,
 But nothing weaker fall their blows.

XXVII.

Meantime, while pends this contest cruel,
 Another hope-inspiring duel
 Divides Laredo's sight.
 As Furtan rushed upon the scene,
 A champion of majestic mien
 Had charged the sable knight.
 His plume and targe were white as milk,
 And o'er his arms he wore
 A mantelet short of argent silk,
 With crosses studded o'er.
 Snow-white the charger he bestrode,
 Of fleet and mettled breed;
 Its fellow felt Santiago's goal,
 When, armed, he rushed down cloud-paved road,
 His vot'ry's cause to speed.³⁷
 None saw from whence or how he came,
 None recognised that godlike frame,

Or knew that gold-tagged spear.
He neared his foe with speedy force ;
The black knight must have marked his course,
For, feat'ring spear, he spurred his horse—

They met in mid-career.

The lances straight in shivers split,
As each the foeman's buckler hit ;
The coursers barbed dashed breast on breast,
And reeled beneath this vigour-test ;
But both the knights, as rooted rock,
Unmoved and firm, withstood the shock ;
And seizing each his battle-axe,
Hard thumps exchanged without relax.
'Twere much to tell who might prevail,

For vantage neither showed ;

Each blow conveyed impending bale ;
In many a place though rent their mail,

No blood from either flowed.

Now fast recoiled the warrior white,
Now back was driv'n the sable knight ;
Now one must life alone defend,
Now was the other forced to bend—

For their recuperative power

So equal seemed to rank,

That like the balanced plank,

As soon as one was seen to tower,
Adown the other sank.
Stood both the armies, Goth and Basque,
On them agazed, deferred their task,
As though these mighty champions four
Were left to settle ev'ry score.

XXVIII.

Soon from the Gothic right arose
Peals deep as atmospheric throes—
'Twas triumph's wild delight.
Don Furtan sat his charger high,
While on the ground did sprawling lie
The red-accoutred knight.
And eft the clamour up was ta'en
By all the Goths across the plain ;
For on the left the stranger white
At mercy had the sable knight,
Who (fall'n his steed on haunch and knee)
Struggling in vain his legs to free,
Essayed with laboured blow
The tow'ring warrior back to beat,
Who bending downward from his seat,
To mighty strokes did ruthless treat
His now defenceless foe.

The battle's meed was surely won,
 The prize secured ere set of sun!
 Thus thought the Count with beaming eye,
 Whilst cheered the nobles standing nigh.
 When lo! a threat'ning murmur loud
 Passed up from Biscay's warlike crowd.
 Their brandished arms all bristling rise,
 These war-whoops echoing through the skies:
 "Save Fron, our chief! Ho! pike and knife!
 On to the rescue hie!"
 "Bakhárta, ho! we'll guard his life!
 Though a thousand freemen die!"
 Then hasten those who nearest stand
 To save their chiefs from foe-man's brand.
 Success their efforts seems to crown,
 Where Furtan just had won renown;
 But pow'r their strenuous fellows lack
 To reach their fallen chieftain black:
 Albeit the white knight none did slay,
 He kept with ease the Basques at bay.

XXIX.

That sudden lapse from hope to gloom
 Doth oft the judgment's clearness doom:

When weal or woe hang on a thread,
Or poise the scales of crisis dread,
Blind impulse doth thought captivate—
We prop the load or add the weight.
Laredo saw impending flight,
The pressure on Asturias' right,
And Furtan, late a victor proud,
Now battling 'mid a savage crowd—
He saw no more, nor this could bear,
Forgot all else, e'en Elva fair.
With fever's eye, and blade in hand,
He, forward springing, spoke his band:
"Ho! to the rescouse, comrades, all!
To horse! to horse!" They mind the call,
Quick rush below, their chargers mount,
And sweep the field led by the Count.
Concurred with this a strange event,
Was it design or accident?
Scarce had Laredo left the height,
When disappeared the warrior white.
He vanished with such mystery,
It baffled keenest scrutiny;
And ere the Goths missed from the plain
His lofty, radiant form,
They saw the black chief up again,

Dense masses rushing on amain
With force of wrackful storm.

XXX.

Were fleeing fast across the plain,
O'er bloody heaps of mangled slain,
Asturias' vanquished bands ;
The haughty peer and lowly swain
Now levelled on its sands.
And banners grimed, in tatters shred,
Some, as for shame, all blushing red,
Lay trampled on the field ;
And morions, basnets many a score,
And tagless lances smeared with gore,
And many a sword and shield.
In turmoil wild and hopeless rout,
The Goths go flying all about ;
The foe, close pressing on their heels,
Nor quarter give, nor heed appeals.
Their darts the nimble courser catch ;
Their knives the pleading Goth despatch ;
Nor ruth to wounded wretch they show,
Though cease his groans as falls the blow.
But all had not the fight forsaken,
Some knights hold out with nerve unshaken :

Don Furtan's figure high appears,
'Mid scanty group of valiant feres,
Beset by jostling, shaggy forms,
As thick as maddened honey-swarms,
When plying buzzing voice, and sting,
 Around their menaced hive;
And black the show'rs of darts they fling,
And loud their yells through heaven ring,
 While bands on bands arrive.

XXXI.

Laredo came—it was too late!
The youth had met foiled valour's fate.
With arms outstretched, he backward fell,
And o'er him closed the hollow swell
 Of restless, rocking heads;
Thus falls o'ertopping forest-tree,
And sinks immerged in foliage-sea,
 Which far its verdure spreads;
Or fades from view the falling stone,
 Intombed in mountain-snows.
The Count he bawled in tempest-tone:
"No stain bedim Pelayo's throne!
The day we'll yet triumphant own—

Aim well your blows! Count not your foes!"
 They dashed amidst the seething throng,
 And such momentum bore along,
 That Biscay's staggered ranks gave way,
 All falling back in disarray.

XXXII.

Despite his wounds, the hermit ran
 And tried to mass his scattered van.
 His silk pelisse, now torn in shreds,
 Before the Count its scarlet sheds:
 Loud calls on him his butchered friend,
 Keen vengeance tags his lance's end.
 But as the hated foe he nears,
 Mid-way a sable targe appears:
 'Twixt him and vengeance now is seen
 The knight of atramentous mien,
 His flourished blade on high.
 "Ha, rebel! wast thou not laid low?
 Howbeit didst worst that mighty foe,
 'Tis not from thee I'll fly!"
 Thus cried the Count, and winged his course
 Against that form of boding force.
 Withouten sound was struck the shield,
 And splinters, blackened, strewed the field.

Down came the awful champion's sword,
Which barely smote Laredo's lord,
When off he tumbled from his steed,
Unwounded, on the bloody mead.

But such a shock went through his frame
As drives the cloud's electric flame:
Seemed ev'ry nerve and sinew strained,
And all his bones of marrow drained;
Sore dislocated all his joints,
Alive his flesh with needle-points;
Sparks crackled through his ev'ry vein,
And wild confusion numbed his brain.
'Twas as he fell this through him ran,
And lasted but a second's span.

Then as he wakened from the stun,
Bent o'er him stood the warrior dun,
His visor raised, his features bare,
And grin, exulting was the stare.
'Twas Fron, the prince of Saxon race!
But though the Count knew not that face,

A light coursed through his brain—
His agonised and piercing cry
Shot through the battle-din on high—
For lived a demon in that eye—

'Twas TOPEL's flash again!

“O El—!” But blades gleam in the air,
Cut short the phrase, resolve despair.
A hundred wounds on breast and side
Let forth in streams the purple tide;
A hundred Basques in circle stand,
With poignards reeking high in hand;
A corpse lies welt’ring in its gore,
Laredo’s lord shall rise no more!³⁸

Canto Fourth.

THE CLOVEN-FOOT.

I.

“ ANOTHER missive come to hand
From him who pines in Moslems’ land !
’Tis time, my Egas, ample time—
Nay else, beshrew me ! ’twere a crime—
My father from the Moors to wrest,
Since gold is scarce, by force of breast.
The Basques—at the clowns with a curse !
Are stubborn ; nay, ’tis growing worse.
The last Bilzaar were dry and terse :
‘Tis ransom large, too much to pay ;
Why did he go ?—We begged him stay.
The gold we can’t afford !’
Tut ! In truth, they scarce own the sway
Of him they call their lord.
‘La ! let him rot !’—thus whisper they—
‘Among the unbelieving horde

Who turn to Mecca when they pray.
 'Tis only when we wield the sword
 A chief we need or shall obey!"
 Stripling or man, you scarce could tell,
 Was he from whom those phrases fell.
 His height bespoke about sixteen,
 But greater age might claim his mien.
 His was a figure, his a smile,
 To fix a maiden's glance awhile.
 His beardless face did strangely clash
 With the bold look and manly dash.
 There lived a meaning in his eye
 Which spoke of thoughts and purpose high;
 But there were times it shot a spark
 Which cast around a shade of dark,
 And when his brow gathered a frown,
 Such would be found 'neath Satan's crown.
 He held a letter in his hand,
 With pendent seal and woollen band;
 And as he paced Vusturio's hall,
 His voice and steps rang on the wall.

II.

Anear the monster chimney-place—
 Though summer breezes blew—

Sat one whose stoop and wrinkled face
 Showed that he had near run the race

All mortals must go through.

He major-domo long had been
 Of dark Vusturio's wide demesne;
 Than Egas, more no man had won
 The favour both of lord and son.

"Sir Lopo, if on Basques alone

Thy sire's release depends,
 Art right—the dog will yield his bone,
 The field the seed the serf has sown,
 Sooner than Basque will prop the throne

Which Basque but ill befriends—
 Alas! to think that Biscay's lord
 Is even now a slave!

Must carry loads or turn the sward,
 The hand so used to brandish sword!

That voice submit to crave—
 At sting of miscreant's fell whip—
 Which erst was wont to kiss the lip

Whose curl could daunt the brave!"

III.

"By Satan's hoof, and my good sooth!
 I'll to the King," exclaimed the youth—

" Although no friend of ours—
 And promise him the vass'lage-pay
 ('Twixt thee and me, when come the day,
 His envoy's heels shall dangle gay
 From topmost of these towers!)—
 Thus he will raise his coffer's lid—
 I trust—but if his wants forbid,
 I then shall claim a chosen band
 To scour Toledo's cursed land,
 If Furtan lives and I don't fall,
 I swear he sits within this hall
 Ere autumn days be o'er!"
 " That oath is rash, too fraught with pride,
 On treach'ry based, what's more."
 He seemed the youth by look to chide,
 That trusty servitor.

IV.

" But there is one who, in our need,
 Could help us if she chose;
 She hath the pow'r—'tis vast indeed—
 Which time nor distance can impede,
 Nor mortal might oppose"—
 " Whom wouldst thou name? I fain might
 know."

“THE LADY,” whispered Egas low,
And crossed his forehead, mouth, and chin,
As if that name involved a sin.
Then looked he round the hall with fear,
And beckoned that the youth draw near:
“Since my Lord Furtan went his way,
A gladsome voice, at close of day,
Some men have heard at times in song,
As they from work did homeward flock,
E’en as they trod the path along
Which passes near the LADY’S ROCK.
Since the dread hour she took her flight,
From, of this hall, within the span,
As ev’ning ushered in the night,
She never has been seen by man.
That was her voice—we all agree;
The Lady sure would welcome thee.”

v.

“Thou ne’er, till now, didst tell as much!
Thou always hast—my father too—
Upon this theme refused to touch,
Whenever I have questioned you.
’Tis time, methinks, to tell the tale

Of which I've guessed, in your despite,
 The darkest part—why turn so pale?—
 I know this much—I'M HALF A SPRITE!"
 Old Egas' face fell 'twixt his knees;
 And, as if chilled by wintry breeze,
 He shook from crown to heel.
 Then, falt'ring, slowly raised his head,
 His cheeks as white as wheaten bread,
 And in a smothered voice he said,
 With fervent faith and zeal:
 "To such dread fancies give no heed!
 If darksome spell hang o'er thy birth,
 Is not the curse on Adam's seed
 Washed out by pledge of Christian's creed?
 Does then a parent's sinful deed
 Condemn the son she left on earth?
 The Lady's aid is wanted now;
 I'll tell thee all, nor break my vow,
 The time is come."—Down sat the youth;
 Here is the tale he heard uncouth.

VI.

"Oft hast thou heard Lord Furtan say
 How he right badly wounded lay

On blood-stained field hard by—
Vusturio's battle either hight,
Or Arrigorriaga's fight—
Where Gothic ranks were put to flight,
 Won Basques the victory;
How, when a foeman's pointed knife
 Was nearly buried in his heart,
A knight rode up and saved his life,
 Had his wounds dressed with care and art.
That knight was Fron, whom, on the field,
The grateful Basques raised on a shield,
Proclaiming him their rightful lord,
As well in peace as bearing sword.
Opposed none but a hermit old—
And eke was he a captain bold—
Bakhárra was his name; and then
With him opined a few old men,
'If chief they had in time of peace,
Their freedom soon,' they said, 'would cease.'
But numbers' will was not undone,
For Fron their faith and love had won.
Bakhárra, he and all his feres,
Retired with curses, threats, and tears.

VII.

“The love they bore Lord Fron increased—
But was it love? ’Twas feeling strange,
For scarce within the human range
Was what he did with man and beast.
He climbed the peaks, where till that day
No human foot had found a way ;
But what was more, he went well horsed,
In saddle sat without a girth,
Leaped o’er the rivers, scud the earth,
Defied the chasms, the slipp’ry frost,
The seething floods, the tow’ring flanks
Which none but eagle haves ;
And those that followed kept their ranks,
Nor safer for them bridge of planks,
Or stream which garden laves.
’Twas thus he went with trusty Basques,
As straight as pigeon’s flight,
Clean o’er the hills, to chain which masks
Laredo’s border white.
Then down they poured like raving herd
Of wounded tusky boars ;
Laid waste the land where they appeared,
And many a town of tenants cleared,

And made them ample stores.
Thence on they swept, e'en farther west,
Toward fair Ovicdo's royal nest.
And when the King, ta'en unaware,
Received the news, a message fair
He sent, to know what terms they ask.

Lord Fron vowed he would still advance
Unless Laredo's whole expanse
Forthwith were ceded to the Basque.
The King, though brave, was forced to yield,
So unprepared to take the field.
Their rapid course the mind dismays ;
The whole campaign took three short days.

VIII.

"They loved Lord Fron ; he knew their tongue,
So kindly talked to old and young.
He, fierce in war, was mild in peace ;
Knew each man's name, and ev'ry face.
His was a way which curbed them all ;
The boldest knave obeyed his call—
And yet no man alive, they swore,
Took to their ways and customs more.
Gave he command, or made request,
It seemed to suit each man's behest.

There ne'er was such a happy land ;
For no one felt the master's hand.
Yet oft they toiled like slaves, in crowds—
This castle, perched so near the clouds,
The first e'er raised on Biscay's hills,
Attests how he controlled their wills.

IX.

“ Lord Fron had ta'en in strange regard
His youthful captured foe ;
Of ransom's right though him debarred,
And placed him under strictest guard,
And would not let him go.
When chosen lord, his earliest thought—
To keep his ward secure ;
His people then to work he brought,
To build this castle high and haught,
Where him he might inmure.
They, willing, undertake the task,
And gaily toils the freeborn Basque.
Some cleave the rock which chisel shapes,
Some bear the loads upon their napes ;
Some on the mountain's airy head
Dispose the blocks, nor mortar spread—

Stonecutter's work so neat is sent,
The blocks adhere without cement.
The mountain-side seems all alive :
Like bees which swarm about their hive,
Or ants which plod in single file,
The Basques elimb toward the rising pile,
And bear their loads with ease the while ;
They wind around from base to top,
Nor once to eatch a breath they stop.
Ere ev'ning falls huge walls arise,
And feudal towers flout the skies ;
Then, as the morning hoarfrost steams,
On countless turrets shoot the beams ;
And eft did gauntly upward creep
The sombre giant donjon-keep.
Lo ! as the third morn shed its light,
The eastle stood completed quite ;
And o'er the vale which sinketh west,
 Far up the slope, then damp with dew,
Vusturio's flanks and grafted crest
 A longer, darker shadow threw.

X.

" 'Twas made thy father's foreed abode,
When Fron and Basques so swiftly rode

Laredo's county through.
He had the range of court and hall,
Might wander o'er the castle all,
But durst not pass the outer wall,
For guards were sure and true.
But now when, after absence short,
Lord Fron returned he home,
This place he chose to be his court,
Then Furtan called to board and sport,
Would to the woods with him resort,
With him in state affairs consort;
Alone he might now roam.
Fron seemed to love him like a son,
And Furtan's fancy he had won—
'Twas passing strange, I'll add aside,
For Furtan had a lovely bride,
Whom he, it seems, had quite forgot,
Indeed his past seemed all a blot,
He revelled now in joy and mirth,
And thought of nothing else on earth.
Lord Fron adopted him as heir,
Convoked the Basques, and made them swear,
That when he died they would obey
This gallant Infanzon, so gay.

XI.

“ Long years rolled on . . . or days perhaps ?
I take no oath how long the lapse—
My service here had not begun,
And folks about are not at one ;
Then time is measured by the sun,
And if you sleep, your reck’ning must,
For sure, I ween, be ta’en on trust—
When, on a sudden, came a change
Full startling, unexpected, strange.
Lord Fron fell ill, and kept abed,
 And ’twixt the night and morn
His lengthy locks, all fiery red,
Were turned so white, you might have said
He’d wound a turban round his head,
 And by the Koran sworn !
His full and florid checks had sunk,
His bulk was gone, his muscles shrunk ;
His fingers pawed like spider’s claws,
Grinned like a skull his parted jaws ;
His ashy, corrugated skin,
His slanting, pointed, grisly chin,
His achromatic, glassy eye,
Foretold that Death was passing by.

XII.

“ Of changes all, the oddest one,
His way toward his adopted son :
‘ And who art thou ? I know thee not !
Thou smooth-tongued knave, wert in the plot !
Have at him now ! Aroint thee, fiend !
He kept me in the nimbus screened.
For lengthy span my soul was there,
Beneath the zones of angel-air,
Whilst here this flesh, of spirit rid,
The Devil, not I, knows what it did !
Yea, while my disembodied soul
 Was in the foggy ether swung,
I neither saw the Spirits’ goal,
 Nor deeds from earthly passions sprung.
It was a long and endless night,
Without taste, scent, ear, feeling, sight.
But primal elements of thought—
Which from a single point are wrought,
Wherein the germs, though latent, lie,
Of all the world’s vastity—
Revolved within the shapeless ME ;
Of ev’rything I found the key.
Existence, though, not anywhere

Except within my substance rare ;
Being converged in me alone—
'Twas dreary Oneness on its throne !
Nay, pure Idea, lifeless, still,
For Motion none, not even Will—
Had WILL emerged, that termless hour
Had seen me crowned Almighty-power !
Though wanting that, unbodied Thought,
I scarce, methinks, was else than nought.—
But, by the mass ! what's that to you ?
When I to middle spheres withdrew,
I left a body strong and young,
Now in a carcass am I flung !—
Go with a wanion ! Fiend, be off !'
With that Lord Fron began to cough,
A vacant stare around him cast,
Then, sinking back, he breathed his last.

XIII.

"Anon, Sir Furtan aired his mind,
Began to rub his eyes ;
A vague suspicion he was blind,
Had left another life behind,
Dim mem'ries in his heart cushrined,

Did of a sudden rise.
Laredo's ghost now haunted him,
And Elva, his fair bride ;
The former's look was dark and grim,
Was she the toy of dragon's whim ?
Gall filled his cup e'en to the brim—
He to the stables hied ;
Then singled out the swiftest horse,
And down the mountain winged his course.
Encompassed soon by motley erowd,
The air was voiced in ehorus loud,
Saluting him as Biscay's liege,
Laredo's too, by foree of siege
(Although Laredo, Fron deceased,
From Biscay's yoke was soon released).
Bright hopes possessed him in that hour :
Lord Furtan thought that with such power,
He might find means to pay the debt
Would Elva free from demon's net,
But first he must secure the gem,
Which he prized more than diadem.
A ehosen band he there enrolled,
And pushed on for Roeias' hold.

XIV.

“ Lord Furtan sat beneath a tree ;
Some distance off his people lay,
They fast asleep, but slept not he—
Nay, fretful seemed at the delay.

It was the soft hour when kind Nature doth throw
Her siesta-ropes over all bodies that grow ;
When, panting, the flowers, low bending their heads,
Inhale the rare moisture retained in their beds ;
When tame browsing cattle or wild roving stags
Seek shelter round trees, or in caves 'mid the crags ;
When all moving creatures, save only the snake,
Repose in the covert, asleep or awake.
The forest was dormant, and not a leaf stirred,
Nor caught ye the sound of a frog or a bird—
Ay, nought but the pouring, scarce causing a shock,
Of a streamlet which flowed from a rend in the rock,
Whose summit, projecting, was not to be seen,
For dense was the foliage wide spreading between.

Now accents woke, in dulcet song,
Which rose and ebb'd and wav'd along
O'er tops of trees, the branches through,
Lighter than sunbeams' dust, or dew.

Their magic pow'r did surely change
 The measure of the fountain's range,
 Which took the base, full, deep, and soft ;
 The treble notes fell from aloft.

Lord Furtan, enraptured—his soul and his brain,—
 All round the air harping the gentle refrain,
 Through the tips of the leaves, off the face of the
 rock,
 Of harmony's fluid received he the shock.

XV.

“ How long this lasts, not conscious he ;
 When lo ! anon, just o'er the tree,
 A well-known voice broke forth amain,
 In soft, withal a wilder strain :—
 ‘ O Furtan, 'tis one day too late !
 For nine long years she mourned thee dead ;
 E'en yesternight was sealed her fate ;
 Thou, Biscay's lord, mayst backward tread.
 Rocias' hold is desert now—
 'Tis not her fault she broke her vow.

Return, oh return ! for thy journey is vain ;
 She must sail on the wind in the sun or the rain,

She must roost on the eaves with the long-beaked
crane,
Or must, darkling, go flapping her wings in the lane
With the owlet and bat, when the moon's on the
wane.'

XVI.

“The young—alas! was he still young?—
Lord Furtan to his feet he sprung
With flutt'ring heart, and head agog.
But nought he saw; 'twas like a fog,
So dense the foliage in the grove.
Then through the thicket on he drove
To the foot of the fell.
He clambers up with heyday-ease,
O'erlooks the crests of lofty trees,
And, as he lives! before him sees
The form he loves so well!
'Tis the same face, as fresh and fair,
But round her falls her raven hair;
Her arms are bare, her garments light,
Girts waist so spare, black girdle slight;
But else her drap'ry all is white.
She sits aloft on summit bare,

Forming a wisp of aconite,
Which, as a coif, alone grew there.

XVII.

“ ‘What awful doubts invade my breast !
O Elva !—no !—A wanton jest
Of some dark pow’r !—a dream !—a spell,
O God !’—‘ Oh spare me ! stay !’ she cried—
A shadow o’er her features fell—
‘ Behold, alas, thy former bride !
Yet calm thy fears, I’m living still ;
But barred of home, and on this hill
Condemned to make my dwelling, till
The day I be enslaved—
Or find a mate to risk his weal.
But I to *him* dare not appeal
By whom I might be saved.
If nearly lost, not so my heart—
I love thee still.—Let hope depart,
But on the road shalt never start,
By dread and sorrow paved.’
‘ Dread ! sorrow !’ and he laughed in scorn.
‘ What else remains ?—’Tis rankling thorn
To think thee thus depraved !

Oh tell me how, and when, and where,
I may thy precious being tear
From out the meshes of this snare—

Though even hell be braved !'

'How canst thou wed me in such guise?'

'Tis all I crave!' Lord Furtan cries,

And fires of love dart from his eyes.

'Go to! When dove will feed the snake,
Dace brave the pike which rules the lake;

When reindeer, snuffing winter's cold,

Outlives the leech-like glutton's hold;

When friends the cabbage and the rue,

Then thou withouten risk mayst sue

To have me for thy wife.'

'Where then the risk?'—'Wilt thou eschew

The sign of Christian life?

Confession? prayer? the temple's door?

Till the appointed time be o'er,

· Nine summers hence and sev'n weeks more?

If strong thy will, the risk were nought,

And Elva freed of ev'ry score;

But once forgot, in deed or thought,

Then she were lost; and as for you,

Would needs, for life, stern penance do,

Or be for ever blasted too!'

XVIII.

“ Lord Furtan shuddered, pale with awe ;
He thought he felt a demon’s claw
 With fastened gripe on him.
How could he bow to such a law,
 To such conditions grim ?
He was not given much to prayer,
More used to hunt the strong-limbed bear,
Than kneel beside confessor’s chair,
 Or join the Sanctus hymn.
But then we always rue a loss,
Eft prize what once we took for dross ;
And to make the sign of the cross
 Was habit grown with time.
Yea, but he loves his Elva so !
 She shows so soft and fair ;
E’en now when she must bend so low
 To dragons of the air.
She is not theirs beyond recall,
And he alone can stay the fall,
 And snatch her from despair.

XIX.

“ ‘Tis done! Thy law shall shape my lot!
I'll rub my tongue with lotus-flower;
Shalt tie this hand by magic-knot;
Thus speech and freedom be thy dower—
Thou must be mine—mine shalt thou be,
Though Satan have my soul for thee!’
He gloats upon the smiling maid;
Then up he speeds to lend her aid,
And help her from her seat.
She takes his hand and leaps adown;
The motion waves her airy gown,
And bares her naked feet.
The lover starts with horror's frown—
One CLOVEN FOOT he saw!
‘Think nought of this,’ she whispers low,
Whilst in her cheeks the blushes glow;
‘’Tis but contingent sign of woe,
And to thy love I'll thankful owe
Redemption from this flaw.’

XX.

“ ’Twas here he brought the bride he won;
Their honeymoon, ’twas here they spun;

For years love brightened this abode,
Nor Discord once her visage showed.
Lord Furtan kept his plighted word,
Nor prayers he said, nor masses heard,
Nor saintly name he uttered now,
Nor signed the cross upon his brow.
Adays he hunted wolves and bears,
Nor looked he much to state affairs—
The more as Basques, since Fron's demise,
Had changed their ways and oped their eyes;—
At eventide—his Elva there—
She then his only thought and care,
And she was blithe and ever kind,
Beloved by all, both lord and hind,
Yet mingled with a spark of awe,
More roused by doubts than what we saw.

XXI.

“’Twas whispered that, ’twixt twelve and two—
But this her husband never knew—
She had anight been near the moat,
In parley with a black He-goat;
Then once it was a Raven came,
And once a Wolf, in voice the same.

Some swore that she, e'en o'er this hearth,
One night sat with a Cat all swarth;
He purred, then mewed, deep sighs she drew,
And sev'n times at her face he flew.

These may be lies; but sooth! one morn,
I saw her cheeks all scratched and torn.
She ne'er was found when gale swept by,
But cries fell from the cloudy sky.

When first she crossed the castle's ditch,
There came with her a jet-black bitch,
No larger than a small-sized hare;
Afar, as scared, it tracked the mare.
Eftsoons 'twas Lady Elva's pet,
And when away from her, would fret.

Now people there were who said she had been seen,
In river close by, one cloudless night serene,
To plunge the black bitch, where full the current
flows,

When lo! from the stream a handsome youth arose;
And locked arm in arm they strode along the shore,
Till clouds veiled the moon, and then were seen no
more.

What with these rumours best did square—
To which alone, as truth, I'll swear—

Was that she made a woman whole,
 And rid her of a tumid mole,
 Which she touched with the severed head
 Of infant child but lately dead,
 Holding it there till the head grew warm,
 Beneath the throes of a thunder-storm.

XXII.

“ ’Tis just nine years ago,
 Less sev’n months, three weeks, and a day,
 That thou wert born in twilight grey.
 When seen thy feet, was Furtan gay—
 No cloven foot, no ‘ sign of woe ’ !
 And ere that sun unveiled the morn,
 Thy sister Alda she was born,
 Nor cloven foot did Alda show.
 Thy father now grew hopeful, sure—
 A few years more and Elva too
 Would cast her hoof, that sign impure,
 And heav’nly grace obtain anew.

XXIII.

“ One eve—thou wert then barely five,
 Nor larger than most boys that thrive,—

At supper you were seated all—
It was here in this very hall,—
Elva and Alda side by side,
Facing my lord and thee, his pride—
 Such was the custom here.
At Furtan's feet a mastiff lay,
His faithful friend by night and day ;

The bitch, on the board, in a cushioned tray,
 Sat snuffing the fumes of a smoking deer ;
Whilst next to the window upon the floor,
The body lay stretched of a monster boar,
 Which had fall'n that day by thy father's spear.
The lady was blithe, and gay was her lord,
So laughter and smiles enlivened their board.

XXIV.

“ Now, to his hound, in fondling tone,
Lord Furtan flung a well-fleshed bone.
'Twas scarcely 'twixt the mastiff's paws,
Down pounced the bitch with open jaws,
 And, snapping, closed them on the prey.
Then rose a fight the twain between,
Without a growl, but fierce and keen,

And strangely short—but whose the day?
 The noble hound maintained his right,
 Albeit disdained to hurt the mite
 Which thus had dared provoke the fray.
 At length he seized the bone once more,
 And turned to where he lay before.
 His tiny foe then coming round,
 Him by the weasand held,
 And brought his muzzle to the ground—
 And rolled aside the mighty hound
 As if by giant felled.
 He gave one long and mournful cry,
 And on his master cast his eye,
 As blood from his throat welled.
 A spasm, a moan—and life was flown!

XXV.

“ ‘ Was like e’er seen, O Mary blest!’
 In wonder lost, Lord Furtan cried;
 And signed the cross from brow to breast,
 Forgot the promise to his bride.
 Then rings amain an awful howl—
 The lady’s face assumes a scowl,
 Grows dark, distorted, rough with hair,
 As up she rises from her chair.

She reached across the table wide,
To drag thee from thy father's side,
Whilst he in terror drew thee back.
Her arm waxed longer, hairy, blaek,
To horny claws her fingers sprouted,
And panie-struck yon bawled and shouted,
As her arm longer, longer grew,
Came stretching nearer, nearer you.
My lord, shielding his cherished heir,
With crosses wildly cut the air.
'Depart!' he cried, 'aroint thee, witch!
Baek to thy lair, e'en with the bitch!'
Her arm contracts, the claws retreat,
She snatches Alda from her seat—
The walls shook as, with savage cry,
She flew out through yon casement high;
The bitch sailed in her wake close by.
A wolvisk howl, a raven's note,
The voices of a eat and goat,
Were heard in chorus from the cloud,
As tempest through the heavens ploughed.

XXVI.

"From that dark hour Lord Furtan's soul
Was lasting prey to dread and dole.

He turned him to a life devout,
Of nought but penance thought about.
Just then abroad was holy war ;
He joined crusade against the Moor,
Accoutred as a simple knight,
Compelled, by force of solemn plight,
His name and rank to keep unknown—
For else in chains he had been thrown
E'en by the kindred Christian hand,
As haughty liege of rebel land.
He deeply mourned the Lady's fate,
His grief for Alda, too, was great ;
But thou didst many a doubt recall,
Though he had saved thee from their fall.
Yea, since that day of bitter woe,
Sir Lopo, thou began'st to grow
Beyond God's wonted law to men,
And e'en far quicker grew thy ken.
This marvel made thy father dread
That spirits foul loured o'er thy head ;
But he would blast their efforts grim—
Shouldst go to holy war with him,
As soon as thou wert strong enough
To bear the brunt of battle rough.

Art now as strong as man, and brave;
Go forth, thy father then to save,
And he will put thee on the road
Where demon dare not ply his goad."

Canto Fifth.

THE GOBLIN-MARE.

I.

So after morning meal next day,
Alone, Sir Lopo rode away
To seek his mother in the grove,
Or rather, on the rock above.
Though stout his heart—beyond his age—
This was to him a novel stage ;
Nor ev'nly flowed his youthful blood,
Now on the ebb, now on the flood.
At first he made his courser fly,
Urged on by curiosity ;
Then checked its speed—to let it rest,
He thought—but awe weighed on his breast,
By Egas' story weird impressed.
That grisly arm, its baffled grasp
Might close him now within its clasp !

What if that face so rough with hair,
Were pleased to kiss its son and heir?—
Young Lopo shuddered at the thought—
The kiss!—the rights with which 'twas fraught!
If he go now to seek her aid,
Will she not claim to be obeyed?
Without a price, do demons give?
Is not the bargain like a sieve
Wherein the dross remains for you,
And what is precious falleth through?
But what son fears a mother's snare,
Tread she the earth, or sail the air?

II.

'Twas nearly noon when Lopo neared
Th' enchanted spot he inly feared;
Then slow and slower grew his pace,
And less his wish to meet that face.
He wanted time to nerve his breast,
To wipe the drops from brow and cheek,
To give his trembling limbs some rest,
Before he climbed the rocky peak,
And braved the object of his quest,
Or brought his backward tongue to speak.

He flung himself upon the ground,
 And listened to the only sound
 Which there the silence broke—
 The water gushing from the rock,
 So measured that it seemed to mock
 His heart's disordered stroke.
 The nervous qualm got under rule,
 His fancies soon began to cool;
 And then he thought 'twere but a fool
 Would terrors thus evoke.

III.

"Come hither, my son;
 Thy mother ne'er fear;
 She bore thee in pain;
 Thy swathing she spun;
 To mother art dear,
 Shalt love her again.
 Hast kissed her of yore,
 She'll kiss thee once more.
 I'll down to my son,
 'Tis speedier done."

The voice was soft—no screech of hag;
 It came adown from shaded crag—

Then followed a rustling of leaves,

And, descending 'mid trees,

Sir Lopo he sees

The fairest, most witching of Eves.

His mem'ry bore no trace

Of his lost mother's face—

He stood transfixed, amazed, agape—

Was this the dreaded monster-shape!

“Wilt thou shun my embrace?

Dost refuse me a kiss?”

In each step there was grace,

In her smiles there was bliss.

Sir Lopo knelt before those charms;

Then threw him in his mother's arms.

IV.

“Thy father shall be resened, aye,

Nor ransom need, nor war's array.

He traitor turned before the time—

To break one's promise 'tis a crime.

I might reply—no aid from me!

But he is pardoned, shall be free.

At twelve to-night, till then the term

His wedding-pledge should have been firm.

It falleth well ; for ere this day,
 I mnst have told thee, Lopo, nay"—
 " Why hadst refused, sweet mother, say ?"
 " I'll teach thee many things, my son ;
 But there are questionis I mnst shun.—

Thou shalt slay by the sword, by the heart shalt
 thou kill ;
 None shall harm thee with blade, or refuse, shouldst
 thou will.
 I will teach thee the virtues of laurel and night-
 shade,
 Of elder, the olive, the hazel, and fern's blade,
 Of moonwort and betony, henbane and hemlock,
 And certain rare herbage which grow round this
 weird rock ;
 And the use of choice pluckings from man, child, and
 brute ;
 How to silence by spells ; how give speech to the
 mute ;
 How, spite poppy and jasmine, shalt turn aside fate,
 Though the smoke, from the seed, should ascend
 light and straight.³⁰
 And in time that will come, thou shalt visit the
 living,

Do thy will where thou list, leave thy mark, or for-
giving.

Thy successors, for ages, o'er Basques holding sway,
Thy good favour to win, here their off'rings shall
lay." 40

V.

The Lady—for chaste Elva's name
I dare not give to such a dame ;
'Twas Egas did so, sure not I,
And where the tale without a lie ?—
Now led her near bewildered son
Straight up the mountain, where begun
More open view of crag and creek,
And noontide gilding many a peak ;
A wide expanse of cliff and dell,
Where lonely hermit's fenceless cell
From man secure might rest ;
Where only prowling creatures dwell,
And echoes wakened by their yell
Need scarce his thoughts molest.

VI.

"Pardalla, come hither !" cried she ;
Shrill was the tone, high pitched the key,

And flinty sides of hills around
Repeated wide and far the sound.
A filly eft of wondrous flight
Came scudding rock and leaping cleft,
And Lopo scarce had it in sight,
When, standing still, 'twas on his left.
Of graceful mould, its limbs are fine,
Well marked you see each sinuous line;
Of purest breed 't has ev'ry sign—
Sharp overlapping upper lip;
Thin veiny ears, withouten dip;
Depressions o'er the brows but slight;
Wide forehead, lengthy forelock bright,
And narrow jaws, but wide beneath;
Of faultless white its shapely teeth;
Of puissant breadth its noble chest,
Which, salient, doth good lungs attest.
Its mane and tail so silky float,
And spotless black its glossy coat.
As glazed, its hoofs unshod are shining;
Is flaming-red large nostrils' lining;
And, oh, the fire that shoots awry,
As, speech-fraught, moves its wistful eye!

VII.

With studded bridle, polished black,
The mare the Lady dressed ;
Then placed a saddle on its back,
And said, as she its neck caressed :
“ My warning, Lopo, heed thou well—
Pardalla's speed seek not to quell ;
Unbridle her for nought on earth,
Nor loosen thou her saddle-girth ;
She must not taste of corn or oats,
Or hay, or ought that sinks or floats ;
She must not drink, though gath'ring froth,
While going south, or coming north ;
Nor must her virgin hoofs be shod ;
Beware thy spurs ! drop down thy rod !
She'll stop at Furtan's prison door ;
Place him in front, on saddlebow—
Vusturio's moat you shall be o'er
At twelve to-night, before cock's-erow.”

VIII.

Sir Lopo took the reins, and put,
Deep in the stirrup-shoe, his foot—

When sudden round he wheeled :
 "Bnt, mother, where is Alda, tell"—
 His speech was broken, as he fell,
 Or, rather, backward reeled.
 Pardalla plunges, kicks, and rears,
 And snorts, and neighs, and prieks her ears,
 And flings her graceful body round,
 Whilst, champing bit, she stamps the ground ;
 The while the Lady holds the rein,
 And strokes her neck and dancing mane :
 "Up, Lopo! make no longer stay!
 Pardalla winces at delay.
 Ho-a! ho-a! away! away!"

IX.

Scarce falls he on the saddle's seat,
 The filly bolts; her tread so fleet,
 He gasps for want of breath.
 She southward points outstretched her neck,
 Goes straight ahead—nor suffers check—
 As hushed as moving death.
 She sends the plain, scours up the hill;
 She skims the marsh, behind all still;
 O'er river leaps; whisks down the cliff;
 Sweeps through defile like sudden whiff;

Clears rocks, the wall, the hedge, by jump,
Nor feels her rider jerk or thump;
Nor land untrod, nor water deep,
Pardalla from her bearings keep;
Save that she fain the woods will skirt
To keep her trusted charge from hurt.
He easy sits, nor feels a jolt,
Despite her rush of thunderbolt.

X.

Bleak Biscay's hills behind are lost;
Alava's western edge is crossed;
Through wide Castile away they speed,
Not wrung yet from Almoravide⁴¹—
Yea part; for yonder, on their right,
Of Burgos' tow'rs they catch a sight,
O'er which the breezes ne'er shall wave
The Crescent, flouting Christian's grave.
Not yet within her new-built walls,
That splendid pile, which now recalls
The time when Faith did reign supreme,
Unblent with bigot's block or flame.
Not yet arose those tow'ring shafts,
Caressed by Zephyr's gentle draughts,

Or lashed by Tempest's mighty blast,
 Unshaken now as in the past,
 Though Spirit from its throne is hurled,
 And Matter's demon rules the world.—
 But when the bloated fiend keeps his last night,
 That throne will shed again its hallow'd light.⁴²

XI.

Away, the mare! o'er turf and sand,
 Athwart the turbaned Moslem's land.
 O'er beaten road, or village street,
 No clatter raise her pinioned feet,
 Nor dust; the Moor, in wonder lost,—
 When seen how she the Dnero crossed,
 Where now Aranda lies,
 Quite sure some elf is on his bent
 From northern parts, by Christian sent,—
 Toward Mecca casts his eyes.
 Now Guadarrama, capped with snow,
 Is crossed while sun is falling low.
 The startled wild-goat, wolf, or hind
 Run on—at once are left behind.
 The eagle thinks he spies a hare,
 His rapid stoop he makes;

But, far away that goblin-mare,
Ere fall his talons breaks,
And soon she springs the current o'er,
Which washes Manzanares' shore,
Some distance west that arid spot,
Madrid, in later times, shall dot.⁴³

XII.

The wide, wide field! where men and boys
Are plying sheaves, e'en harvest's toys,
Which to the cart fly from the forks,
Like battledoor's light feathered corks,
But ne'er fly back again.
How merrier now the sorest toil,
Than when they, doubting, fed the soil—
For one, now many a grain!
They see a something leap the wall—
A fox?—a deer?—a horse?—They call—
Whiz! driz! 'tis in their midst. Aghast
They scatter, or they fall. 'Tis past!
A mile away. The hedge is cleared—
Ere Echo ceased, 't had disappeared.
And now, soon after sun went down,
Pardalla reached Toledo's town,

And through the crowded streets she sped,
As shadows move, with soundless tread.

XIII.

'Twas in Toledo's strongest hold,
By moat begirt, by guards untold
Secured against access, two years,
And more, had lived, 'mid sighs and tears,
Lord Furtan; and, beside his cell,
A narrow court, by sentinel
Unguarded,—for the wall was high,—
He oft would pace; thence gaze the sky,
And watch the stars, now bright, now wan,
Which slowly crossed the niggard span
Above—too fast, alas, for him!
Yea, oft, e'en till his sight grew dim,
With eager eye he'd mark, observe
Some chosen orb of light, nor swerve
Till, shooting him a soft farewell,
Behind the dingy wall it fell.
Then his emancipated gaze
Would seek another, 'mid the maze
Of signs which say, in language terse,
Our world is not the Universe.

And thus to know the chart, he came,
Of his own sky, and call by name—
Though new to wizards—many a star;
If not all friendly, some there are.

XIV.

Ay, some there are, he thinks—and one
Is brighter to him than the sun,
Though not the brightest 'mong those orbs;
But when 'tis passing, it absorbs
His faculties of mind and heart.
'Tis small; its light is pale; apart,
A lonely cheerless course it steers,
Nor sparkles like the other spheres.
He twice had lost it from his view,
For months; for the third time, anew
It came with weak but limpid beams—
As beacon in the distance gleams,
Held by the tremulous hand of love—
To call him forth to cast above
His sleepless eye, and murmur low—
By watch unheard—his tale of woe,
A prayer, or pour forth his repentance;
But oft—as doomed by some dread sentence

Immutable—a still despair
 Alone shoots from his hopeless stare
 To the lone star he doth adore—
 And ELVA was the name it bore.

XV.

Ay, Elva was the name it bore.
 Not she whose marriage-yoke he wore,
 While bound to infamy and shame,
 THE CLOVEN-FOOT was now *her* name—
 He had placed her, too, in the sky,
 For some nights seen her o'er him fly
 With lurid face and shaggy tail,
 A dread portent of coming bale,
 Invader wild, unknown of scope,
 An outlaw in the starry cope;—
 But she who was betrayed by fate,
 Like bird unfledged which doth await
 Its parent, when by serpent's breath
 Its hunger is appeased by death—
 But no! grim death, or what was worse,
 Had not pronounced the blasting curse!
 'Twas this that made him mad, and rave
 To think there yet was time to save
 Her from that doom—and he a slave!

Like haltered brute to manger tied,
He could but live!—Oh, had he died,
Yea, e'en in sin, his future sealed,
Before such truth had been revealed :

XVI.

Ay, the dark truth had been revealed.
At first his heart in hope he steeled,
That soon this duranee vile would end,
And give him ample scope to mend
The shocking fault which bleached his brow—
All he asked for was freedom now.
But this came not—days, months, a year
Rolled on, him nearer brought, too near,
The dreaded day, he once thought past,
Which now was drawing on too fast.
Then each new sun which warmed his cell,
Chilled him, as doth the funeral knell
Heard by condemned. As nearer drew
The term, still colder, colder grew
The fastened gripe of fell despair.
At length it came—the last day's glare!

XVII.

The sun is down.—Comes sudden blast—
 The face of heav'n is overcast—
 The lightning licks the prison wall,
 The thunder heaves a mighty call,
 In torrents pours the clatt'ring rain,
 And the wind blows a hurricane.
 The captive on his knees, within,
 Was scarcely startled by the din,
 So full was he of prayer;
 When now abruptly opes the door,
 And Lopo strides across the floor,
 And meets his father's stare
 Of maze—the youth so tall had grown,
 So changed his mien, his manly tone.
 When all was heard, he pallid grew,
 And toward his brow his hand he drew,
 Which Lopo seized: "Pray have a care,
 Your dungeon, else, I needs must share—
 The mare! the mare!" . . .
 A sudden shock roused Furtan's frame;
 His sunken eye shot forth a flame.
 "Let us away!" 'twas all he said,
 And straightway to the court they sped.

They mount the mare; he by the mane;
The son, behind, keeps hand on rein.
The wall is cleared. Through tempest's blast,
The courts, bulwarks, and moat are passed.
Toledo left soon in the rear,
They northward go in full career.
And now the storm is spent, and dies;
The stars shine through the azure skies;
The fireflies shoot their fitful light,
And dot the mantle of the night.

XVIII.

Alava's border-line was neared,
And straight the course Pardalla steered—
"Let go the reins! hold fast to me!"
Cried Furtan in a Stentor-key.
"Rocias, thither lies my way,
Straight as an arrow! quick! obey!"
Pardalla kicked and snorted too,
Changed not her course, nor quicker flew,
Knew not the rein—'twas tugged in vain.

"By the curse that lies on me,
By the spell that forces thee,

By the rebel power which
Has so changed thy form of bitch,
As I hold thee by the bit,
To my bidding shalt submit!"

Pardalla stopped, reared, plunged around,
To throw her riders on the ground.
"Ah! So? Alas!—Oh, nature's call!
I must compel her though withal."
Thus he aside; then louder cried:

"By the knot that bound us both,
Which still makes her mine, though loath
By the blood that gave *thee* birth,
And thus makes thee mine on earth,
I enforce thee to my will!
Thou art subject to me still,
As before her fiendful claw
Did remove thee from my law."

XIX.

Pardalla shivered, trembled sore,
And held aback a moment more,
Then veering, went, north-west by north,
With fleeter step than ever, forth.

Scarce had she stirred, a voice was heard :

“ Back, like a quiver !

Back, the right road !

Or the rest of thy liver

Shall be crunched by the toad.”

With purpose stout did Furtan shout :

“ The Cloven-Foot’s own howl !

Aroint thee, goblin foul !”

The mare, bewildered, spite the spur,

Stood shaking like a half-drowned cur.

“ By the breast which distils

The dark venom that kills ;

But did life in thee drip,

And was sucked by thy lip,

Get thee back o’er the heath !

Mind the black bitch’s teeth !”

Thus spoke that haggish voice again ;

But Furtan said, while tight’ning rein :

“ Pardalla is mine, this side the grave.

Thou, Cloven-Foot, art, too, my slave ;

Depart ! nor dare me further brave.”

A hissing, rolling wail replied,

Like shore-wave of the foaming tide.

Again the voice, but not that side :

XX.

“By the snake, for his fangs, which I slew in the
night;
By the eagle I blinded to give thee his sight;
By the owl’s head I scooped to bedeck thee with
ears;
By the bride whom I smothered, to cut off with
shears,
On the night of her wedding, the hair for thy tail;
By the cobwebs I raked, for thy mane, from the
gale;
By the gull which I lured, flying in from a storm,
Its bill, as I wanted, thy forelock to form;
By the fins, for thy hoofs, which I slashed from the
shark,
As I gave it the limbs of a forfeited clerk;
By the sweven I charned, while extracting thy teeth
From hyena that shadowed the witch of the heath;⁴¹
By the dying hound’s scent which I bagged for thy
sake;
By the murd’rer’s last gasp I inhaled at the stake,
To strengthen thy lungs so thy speed shouldn’t
break;
By the infant asleep, for its fat, that I smote,

Which, with charnel-house marrow, gives gloss to
thy coat;

By the truss of live adders I used as a cane,
When I broke thee to harness, to bit, and to rein—
I bid thee, Pardalla (my power dost know),
To repair to the hills, but thy riders to throw."

XXI.

Pardalla plunged, reared, beat the air.

"Zounds! father mine, give me the reins,"

Quoth Lopo, "I'll soon tame this mare,

Romps demon's blood not through my veins?"

"That gives thee not what I command;

The rein alone were goss'ner-band."

Thus Furtan spoke, then forth he broke:

"Thy wanton lie once kept me back;

Fair mask assumed thy features black;

Didst give thyself to me on oath;

Thy loins did bear my children both

(And both, this hour, are in my power).

Revealed the spell thy master cast

On me—the while nine days did last,

To twelvemonth spread each daily round—

Thy missive pow'r falls to the ground.

"Tis through thy oath, mask, lie, and twins,
I can compel thee, spite my sins.
Not twice my journey shalt thou break!
Avaunt, fiend! by this sign I make!"
And in the dark he traced a cross,
Which glowed, a space, like golden floss.

XXII.

On haunch and knee Pardalla dropped,
Quiv'ring as though her limbs were lopped;
While frantic yells the night awoke,
And moans and serpent-hisses broke
 On ev'ry side around.
The lightning forked athwart the clouds,
Swept monster-shapes the sky in crowds,
Long bony arms tore back their shrouds,
 Grim, lurid faces frowned.
The forest trees swung to and fro,
As frightened at such ghastly show;
And crash on crash rose far and wide,
Like bounding rocks down mountain-side.
'Twas but a spasm—those spectre-forms
Dispersed like vapours after storms;

Soon nought remained but fitful glow,
Retreating tempests backward throw.

XXIII.

With forelegs stretched Pardalla lay,
Her belly resting on the clay ;
Her head was down ; she shook with pain.
Lord Furtan's hand still held the rein.
"Up with thee, now!" he cried ; "the feud
Is over, thou art tamed, subdued.
We are upon the midnight hour ;
Ere then, reach thou Rocias' tower!"
Up starts the mare ; like thunderbolt
She forward shoots, without revolt.
Before the half-hour passes by
Rocias' keep is seen on high.
Now, strange the sight that meets the eye.
The way is crossed by meand'ring stream,
Not broad or deep, but strong the tide ;
Way off the castle-turrets gleam,
As waning moon doth upward glide.
But right across, down in the vale,
Where verdant maze nor flowers fail,
Stands Benedictine convent old,
St. Anne de Cava's sisters' fold.

'Tis wrapt in blazing glow of light,
 Like sudden break of day on night.
 From ev'ry window, ev'ry cell,
 The rays of burning tapers fell,
 And so illumed the groves and park,
 That sure was roused, deceived the lark.
 The church resplendent stood beside ;
 Its western door was open wide.
 Lord Furtan guessed what all this meant ;
 His glist'ning eye evinced content.

XXIV.

A sudden halt Pardalla made
 In middle-stream ; and like a blade
 Struck by the wind, she quiv'ring stood,
 Nor take another step she would.
 " Alight, my son ; our course is o'er ;
 Wade through, and wait thou on the shore."
 Lord Furtan, too, got off the mare,
 But held her by the rein ; and there,
 Up in her face he water threw :
 " Resume thy shape and features true,
 My Alda, thou art henceforth free ;
 Shalt goblin's slave no longer be ! "

Pardalla dropped, as struck by blast.
 Two struggling arms were upward cast,
 Which Furtan seized, and to the shore
 An almost lifeless form he bore—
 A child who looked nine summers old,
 Now dripping, fainting, shiv'ring, cold.
 Her eyes were closed, convulsed her face,
 And life seemed ebbing there apace.
 Straight to the convent is she ta'en;
 An easy entrance there they gain.

XXV.

What form is that kneels in the choir,
 With nuns around in sable dressed,
 While scores of waxen tapers blest,
 Disperse, through nave and aisles, their fire?
 What form is that which bends so low
 Beneath the altar's crucifix,
 Where blessèd image seems to fix
 Its look upon his locks of snow?
 'Tis doubtless Abbot Veila's mien,
 Though stooping more than when last seen.
 The one who 'mong the sisters kneels,
 Sure Elva's form and face reveals;

But gone the smile, the youthful bloom ;
 A shadowy figure, weak and frail ;
The same soft look, but cast in gloom ;
 O'er thin white hands bend features pale.
Of mourning deep the robes she wears,
But not the convent-habit shares.

XXVI.

What need to tell that since the day
The tidings came that both, they lay—
 Yea, both her dearest ones—
Upon the field as ravens' prey,
Woe's bleeding hand did point the way
 To Anne de Cava's nuns ?
She durst not ask, nor they consent
She take the veil ; though penitent,
She still was under bond with one,
All, caring for their souls, must shun.
But there she dwelt in prayer and fast,
And long and sleepless nights she passed ;
Or when she slept her rest was broken
 By ghastly dreams ; and fiends outspread
A monster scroll, grim words were spoken,
 Long finger-nails, two crosses red

There pointed at. No rest abed:
From 'neath her pillow spectres crept.
Nor e'en by day!—her prayer's "amen"
Was oft a swoon, or loud shriek, when
Uncarthy whisp'rings by her swept.
Her steps were balked by phantoms dark,
When walking cloister through, or park.
What wonder, then, herself she grew
To be a living shadow too?

XXVII.

The dreaded night was now at hand—
United all the cloister's band
At midnight mass, backed by display
Of sacred pomp, to drive away
The Spirit should it dare exact
The due fulfilment of the pact.
With trembling voices, as they sat,
In chorus the *MAGNIFICAT*
They sang; and swelled the concord deep,
Which floated high the soul exalting,
While smoking incense toward the vaulting
In spiral wreaths did spread and sweep.
Resounded then the sacring bell,
And all upon their knees they fell,

Save him who held the Host on high ;
 Now downward bent was ev'ry eye,
 So hushed and silent all around,
 You might have heard a footfall's sound.

XXVIII.

The " Ite, missa est," Veila said,
 And signing cross, John's Gospel read—
 When " Come ! 'tis time !" reached Elva's ear,
 She thought, in accent deep and drear.

She looked, but did not stir—
 She saw a tall form at the door,
 Its face by helm was covered o'er,
 A suit of armour dark it wore,
 And in its hand a something bore,
 With which it beckoned her.

She rose up from her aching knee :

" O sisters, nought availeth now ;

I'm called—the flame hath singed my brow.

Yet, when I'm gone, oh pray for me !"

Her feeble voice no terror shook ;

She farewell gave with lifeless look,

Then slowly moved adown the nave,

Not like a spirit damned to rave,

But weary soul that seeks the grave.

And those who saw, and heard her speak,
Thought surely her poor brain was weak;
They stayed her not, nor followed, 'fore
She had passed through the western door.

XXIX.

In armour eased a knight stood there,
But she of this seemed unaware;
With steady gaze she forward went—
“O Elva! Elva! whither bent?”
She started, then these words did vent:
“Why hast thou risen from the tomb?
To mock me, when so near my doom?
Or comest thou here in my defence?
Then save me!—yonder—in the gloom—
Its arm—oh help!—it drags me hence.”
She ran, by frenzy wild impelled,
And Furtan saw she was insane;
His hand her flowing garments held,
And tried to keep her back in vain.
He caught her in his arms at last—
She fell back in a swoon;
When lo! a shadow black and vast
Arose and gathered round them fast,
An open scroll did overcast,

Like cloud, the rising moon.
 " Ah ! " Furtan cried, " is this the game ?
 Fool ! hop'st thou thus to reach thy aim ?
 From thy gripe she, thou knowest, is free,
 Till *she* betake herself to thee,
 As martin, urged by frenzy's laws,
 Springs in the great toad's poisoned jaws.
 That ne'er shall be, while I am nigh ;
 Thy claws upon her ne'er shall fall.
 Begone ! roll up yon empty scrawl—
 Thy might and malice I defy ! "

XXX.

Near thicket's edge, upon the green,
 A ghost-like battle rages fierce,
 Round which revolves a misty screen
 That moonbeams tinge, but scarcely pierce ;
 Within its midst huge champions two,
 Their nodding forms confused to view
 Like faceless shadows on the wall,
 Recede, now on each other fall.
 But phantom-blows not those they dealt ;
 So loud they clanged sure they were felt.
 Of one the left arm seemed t' enfold
 A lifeless shape of human mould.

The other's left hand something pressed,
Which truncheon might, or scroll, suggest.
In the attack the aim of each—
As seemed—his foeman's charge to reach ;
And when they deftly ward the blow,
'Tis what they keep unseathed by foe.
And long they fought behind the mist ;
 'Twere hard to tell where vantage lay ;
So equal seemed, untired, each wrist,
 They might have fought till judgment-day.

XXXI.

A solemn strophe now floats on high,
And thrills the midnight moonlit sky ;
And o'er the sward a pious throng
In slow procession wave along,
 By Abbot Veila led,
The mitre on his brow did rest ;
One near him bore the water blest ;
As ceuser-bearer walked abreast,
 The burning coals he fed.
They toward the nebulous lists advance,
On which the silv'ry moonbeams glance.
" Ah, craven fiend ! dost trip ?—Art felled ?"
Such words were from the mist expelled ;

" Then, that thou ne'er again arise,
 Nor visit Earth in any guise,
 This stake I through thy body drive ;
 Therefrom thou never canst revive." ⁴⁵
 They saw a prostrate shadow writhe ;
 Another high, triumphant, blithe.
 Good Veila took the sprinkling-stiek,
 Then holy water threw in showers
 Upon the mist, and evil powers
 Conjured in church-like rhetoric.

XXXII.

The yielding mist arose, dispread—
 There Elva lay, as if quite dead,
 Across Lord Furtan's lower arm,
 The while, with fevered passion's charm,
 His right—its hold loath to forsake—
 Pressed down a deeply buried stake.
 But as the melting haze did rise,
 He started back in high surprise—
 No form did there or writhe or roll.
 But hold !—What blots the grassy floor ?
 The stake from out the ground he tore ;
 A something near its point it bore—

It was an open parchment scroll,
Black as a cinder, charred all o'er ;
The text was gone, but, moist with mud,
Two signs appeared still, writ in blood.
He grasped it fast, while danced his eye,
And, flushed, he waved it round on high :
" Here, Elva, is the surest token,
The pact is void, the spell is broken—
Hell shrinks when Holy Church hath spoken !"
But she nor heard, nor gave reply—
Had she escaped, then, but to die ?

XXXIII.

She had not yielded her last breath ;
But wavered long 'twixt life and death.
Recov'ring slowly, she at length
Regained her mind, her body's strength.

Soon told the rest I have to say :
Though strong their love, without allay,
A monk Lord Furtan now became ;
'Neath Veila's rule he dwelt.
At Cava, she did much the same—
She took the veil and changed her name—
A pang she must have felt.

But then what man who, having been,
For years, in more than deadly sin—
The living spouse of inborn fiend,
Though by angelic beauty screened
(A strange phenomenon—poor men!—
Which still may happen now and then),
Nay worse perhaps, of her begot
A brace—'twere hard to tell of what!—
Dare offer his half satyr-paw
To angel free from sin or flaw?—
Though, there is venture in the query,
For it might make some people merry;
But he was no such bold adept.—
And him what angel would accept?
None living now, I freely swear;
Yet, on the score of Elva fair,
I would not be too close a prier—
But Firtan did not chose to try her.
He full of years, an abbot died;
As abbess she from life did glide.
As to the child, Alda yclept,
I hope her human shape she kept;
Whether she died or lived, and how,
The mouldy records don't avow.
The cloven-footed lady's son,

As Biscay's lord much glory won—
Provided glory live in fame,
No matter whence or how it came,
If you but have a noisy name.
'Tis said, in life, he was the deuce—
 Though, half a devil he by birth,
The Fates should plead in his excuse,—
 And that his spectre visits earth,
And plays a prank I dare not name,
Nor safe for mortals were the game.⁴⁶

*

NOTES.

“In days when Zimimar was King

Obeyed Amaimon's hest.”—Page 1.

The division of demon-world into four great monarchies—governed by Amaimon, King of the East; Gorson, King of the South; Zimimar, King of the North; and Goap, King and Prince of the West—is on the authority of Reginald Scot's “Discovery of Witchcraft.” See book xv. chap. iii., edition of 1584, very scarce; or chap. xii., same book, in the edition of 1665.

Amaimon seems to have been the most famous of the four kings. He is mentioned twice by Shakespeare (King Henry IV., Part I. act. ii. scene 4: “*Fal.* That same mad fellow of the North, Percy; and he of Wales, that gave Amaimon the bastinado, and made Lucifer a cuckold;” and again, in “Merry Wives,” act ii. scene 2: “*Ford.* Terms! names! Amaimon sounds well; Lucifer, well; Barbason, well; yet they are devils' additions, the names of fiends”). Amaimon is also the only one of the four kings to whom allusion is made in R. Scot's list of sixty-nine out of the seventy-nine principal devils (book xv. chap. ii.), unless Gaap, *alias* Tap, one of the most powerful among the latter, be the same as Goap, the King of the West, which seems likely enough, because he says, “Gaap, *alias* Tap, a great President and a Prince, he appeareth in the meridiall sign, and when he taketh human shape, he is the guide of the four principal kings, as mighty as Bileth.” Among other attri-

butes of the said Gaap or Tap was to make "consecration of those things that are belonging unto the domination of Amaymon," and of "transferring men most speedily into other nations; he ruleth sixty-six legions [of devils], and was of the order of Potestates." Be it known to the gentle reader that each legion was composed of 6666 devils, so that Gaap had an army of 439,956 rank and file—nothing to boast of, certes, in view of our modern armies! But that seemed to be the highest number allowed; for the forces of each chief demon are stated, ranging from forty to sixty-six legions. Among the dark powers invoked by necromancers, one of the principal was Gerson, a sprite of the air; but whether the same as Gorson, King of the South, we do not know.

(1.) ". . . . Laredo's wild domain."—Page 2.

Corresponding to the modern province of Santander, bounded on the west by Asturias, and on the east by Biscay. Ruesga and Soba, mentioned further on, were territorial divisions of Laredo.

(2.) "On high Rocias' rocky crest."—Page 2.

Peña de Rocias is the most westerly of four mountains which stand some distance apart, running from west to east, and on the border-line which separates Ruesga from Soba. The most easterly of these four mountains is called the *Pico de San l'icenté*, being the highest of them all. They are separated by three wide passes, named respectively, beginning from the west, Masayo, Salgoso, and Ancillo.

(3.) "As phantoms—which the lone child sees,
When, darkling, treading galleries."—Page 38.

*Nam veluti pueri trepidant, atque omnia cæcis
In tenebris metuunt.*

LUCRET., *De Re Nat.*, L. ii. l. 54.

(4.) "A noble *Infanzon* was he."—Page 41.

The *Infanzonès* composed the noble class; their inferiority to the Counts, Rico-hombres, Magnates, &c., was, as it were, only official, inasmuch as the latter were *ex officio* distinctions, reserved to such as filled high posts at Court, or in the administration of provinces.

(5.) "To me Alfonso gave full sway."—Page 45.

Alfonso III., surnamed "the Great," who reigned in Asturias from 866 to 910.

(6.) "Did through pass Fenestrosa shoot."—Page 46.

Fenestrosa is the ancient name for *La Nestosa*, where, through a wide pass, access is gained into *Carranza* from *Soba*.

(7.) "Rushed o'er Carrancio, mountain-hemmed."—Page 46.

Carrancio, or, as it is now called, *Carranza*, is a territorial division of Biscay, and the most westerly of all, adjoining the province of Laredo or Santander. Whilst its centre consists of hills and dales, its western, southern, and part of its eastern borders are hedged with high mountains. *Arcentales* (the smallest of all, and watered by many small streams), *Sopuerta*, *Galdàmès*, and *Somorróbastro*, mentioned subsequently, are likewise divisions—or *encartaciones* as they are termed—of Biscay. This district was the seat of the late Carlist war.

(8.) "Passed the Carral, they blocked our way."—Page 46.

The *Carral* is a small stream in the vale of *Sopuerta*.

- (9.) "E'en mount Triáno, eared by art
Of miner toiling for the ore."—Page 46.

The iron mines of mount *Triáno*, in *Somorróstro*, though of great antiquity, are still famous for their richness, the ore yielding over a third of pure metal.

- (10.) "Or when Sarantès' lavas pour."—Page 47.

Mount *Sarantès*, in *Somorróstro*, though no longer a volcano, has been pronounced by men of science as having formerly had a crater.

- (11.) "Long drilled in rough *fossado's* fray," &c.—Page 48.

The annual incursion made in the spring of the year by the Asturians into the Moorish territory, went under the name of *fossado*. "*Spania*" was the term employed by the Christians when intending to designate that part of the Peninsula in possession of the Mahouctans. In the sudden irruptions just alluded to, the Christians were in the wont of slaying all the Moors found in arms, when captured. The unarmed Moors and the Mosarabs (Christians living among, and subject to, the Moors) were driven north—the Moors became *slaves*, the Mosarabs *serfs of the soil*.

- (12.) " . . . O'er Durango's tide."—Page 50.

The *Durango* is one of the largest rivers of Biscay; its course is from east to west, but irregular. It empties into the *Nerva*, *Nervion*, or *Ibáy Gabál*, in about the centre of Biscay.

- (13.) "Accited to the *Ustaritz*."—Page 52.

Ustaritz signifies the "Conneil-oak," formed from the Bask words *uste*, conneil, and *writz*, oak. It was under the oak of Guer-

nia that the *Bilsaar*, or "Council of the Ancients," held their sessions.

(14.) "The rest walk by Mundaca's verge."—Page 52.

The river *Mundaca* rises at mount *Oca*, just on the northern border of the *merindad* of *Durango*, about three leagues south of *Guernica*, which is situated on the *Mundaca's* left bank. *Durango*, through which the river of the same name flows, is the south-eastern division of *Biscay*. The chains of mountains mentioned are to the west of *Durango*, some of them forming part of *Biscay's* southern boundary.

(15.) "Beside that church, beneath that tree," &c.—Page 53.

As to the church—called *Nuestra Señora la Antigua*, whose first foundation is supposed to date as far back as the third century, when Christianity was introduced among the *Vascones*—it no longer exists in its original state, having been re-edified in the fifteenth century by the celebrated *Dr. Gonzalo Moro*, first *Corregedor* of *Biscay*. Again, in 1826, were laid the foundations of a new structure on a much larger scale; but the works were suspended, owing to civil war, and, I believe, the edifice still remains unfinished.

The famous oak of *Guernica* was of the remotest antiquity; and beneath its shade the Estates of *Biscay* had met, from time immemorial, to transact the business of the Republic. Since the fifteenth century, however, the debates take place inside the church. The original tree, so long held in reverence by the *Basques* (under which, at a later period, the lords and governors of *Biscay*, and even some of the Spanish monarchs, took the oath to respect the *fueros* of the people), was destroyed at the commencement of the present century, during the French invasion. It has since been replaced by another.

The town of *Guernica* was only founded in 1366; and although

it is within its limits that the *junta* of Biscay meets, and the general elections take place, it does not contain more than about a hundred houses, nor does its population exceed 1000 souls.

(16.) "O'erlook the rest 'mid vap'ry skies."—*Page 55.*

The *Sierra Santa Cruz Morga de l'iscargui* commences something more than a league south-west of Guernica; its direction is due west.

(17.) "Aud treach'rous Karl, whose was the helm, &c."
Page 56.

Karl or Charles II., surnamed "the Bald;" he mounted the throne of France in 840, became Emperor of the West in 875, dying in 877.

(18.) "He hail Doge Orso seen, in pride," &c.—*Page 56.*

Orso Particiaco I., Doge of Venice from 864 till 881. The allusion to the doge's sponsals with the Adriatic—of which Hoffman, in his "Doge and Dogaresse," has given such an entertaining description—is a licence the author has permitted himself: that pride-swollen, but romantic, albeit extravagant ceremony, peculiar to that most peculiar of States, was only established in after-times.

(19.) "E'en to imperial Basil's court."—*Page 56.*

Basil I., Emperor of the East from 867 till 886.

(20.) "Behold! above Navarnis' height."—*Page 58.*

Mount *Navarnis* is about half a league east of Guernica, across the *Mundaca*.

(21.) "Choose a *Jaön* whom none gainsay."—Page 63.

The Bask word *jaön* means "elected chief."

(22.) "Groaned 'neath the tramp of Fruela's bands," &c.
Page 63.

Fruela I. reigned over Asturias from 757 to 768. He made a successful incursion into Alava, the most southerly of the three Bask provinces, and among his female captives was Dona Munia, whom he afterwards made his queen.

(23.) "From *aspa*, *aska*, and *aran*."—Page 63.

Bask words signifying, viz., forest (*aspa*), crag (*aska*), valley (*aran*).

(24.) "And reached of late Lequeytio's bay."—Page 65.

Lequeytio is at the mouth of the river of the same name, where the latter empties into a small gulf, which opens into the Bay of Biscay; it is about three leagues and a half from Guernica, to the north-east. *Lequeytio* was for some time (in 1874) the headquarters of Don Carlos.

(25.) "The whole *Bilzaar* approve my choice."—Page 65.

Bilzaar signifies "Council of the Ancients."

(26.) "Let the *arotz* our chieftain be!"—Page 65.

The Bask word *arotz* means "stranger."

(27.) "The longsome vale which opes between," &c.—Page 66.

The "longsome vale" is in reality nothing more than a succession of valleys, each taking the name of the *encartacion* through which it passes. The *Saldójas* are to the south, and mount *Tejeda* to the north, of the vale of *Arcentalès*, and from thence eastward to the *Nerva* is about four and a half leagues; to mount *Pagazsarra* three and a half; and to the river *Salcedon*, or *Cadaque*, as it is also called, two and a half. The *Nerva* bears also the name of *Nervion*, after its junction with the latter above *Miravallès*; the Bask name for it is *Ibáy Gabál*, or "broad river," i.e., *ibáy*, river; *gabál*, broad. It empties into the Bay of Biscay, and has *Bilbao* on its right margin, some two leagues from its mouth. The waters of *Ibáy Gabál* were celebrated for the fine temper they gave to steel: the ancient Cantabrians would use no arms that had not been tempered in the *Chalybs*, as they called this river.

(28.) "Some princes of the realm there be," &c.—Page 68.

See note 4. The nobles who held high offices of state, or whose functions retained them near the king's person, are generically designated in the old documents as *Principes Regni*; *Primates*; *Potestates*; *Ordo Consularis*; *Proceres*; *Nobiles* or *Magnates*, or *Maiores Palatii*. These terms are used synonymously.

(29.) "Were worth the fairest barb in stall," &c.—Page 69.

These horses were so thoroughly trained as to come up at their master's call if within hearing. When the rider came across places the passage of which was unsafe except on foot, and such were numerous in the Asturian fastnesses, he would dismount and let his horse take care of itself.

(30.) "And he bore lance by money's right."—Page 70.

The larger proprietors, who could afford to have a horse (then

valued at very high prices in respect of other commodities), were bound to do military service on horseback armed as knights. This was one of the chief conditions upon which they held the land granted to them, or to their ancestors. The free plebeians may be divided into two classes: those who held land in their own right, called *presures* or *hereditarii*; and such as were mere tenants, called *juniores*. The late Alexandre Herculano, in his "Historia de Portugal," has thrown much new light upon the intricate subject of the inferior classes, both free and servile, of the Neo-Gothic kingdom.

(31.) "Though born and bred where Emirs swayed," &c.

Page 71.

These were Mosarabs. Such as emigrated voluntarily from among the Moors were allowed their freedom, and, for the most part, received waste lands to settle on; some brought their slaves with them, whom they retained, although not as *slaves*, but as *serfs of the soil*. Most of the *presures*, mentioned in the preceding note, were Mosarabs, or descended from Mosarab emigrants. During their residence among the Moors matrimonial alliances between these and the Mosarabs were frequent. Hence many of those that removed north had Arab blood in their veins. Compare with note 11.

(32.) "Tejeda, which the welkin mocks," &c.—Page 83.

Mount *Tejeda* and the ridges *Saldájas* and *Ordúntè* are some three and a half leagues to the west of mount *Pagazsarra*. The two former have been mentioned in note 27; the *Ordúntè* mountains separate the south-east corner of *Carranza* from *Val de Mena*.

(33.) "Vengáchia, though, by Nerva's tide," &c.—Page 83.

Mount *Vengáchia* is half a league east of the *Ibáy Çabál* (from whose margin Mount *Pagazsarra* stands about one league

off, westward); *Gamásio* and *Maribi*, which are very lofty, especially the latter, stand, near one another, a league and a half beyond Mount *Vengáchia*, in the same easterly direction.

(34.) "To steel its hardened temper gave."—Page 84.

See note 27, *ad fin.*

(35.) "But thrust with four-foot crescent-pike."—Page 86.

This kind of pike had in fact three prongs or spear-heads; the middle one was straight, the other two, one on each side, being curved so as to form together a crescent. It measured four feet in length. The Iberian dart was three feet long.

(36.) "Her right held oleander gay," &c.—Page 91.

In the language of flowers, *oleander* signifies "beware," *laurel* represents "perfidy," and *bindweed* "doubt."

(37.) "Its fellow felt Santiago's goad," &c.—Page 101.

At the battle of *Olavijo*, according to historico-legendary accounts, Santiago is said to have appeared clothed in white, bearing a white banner, and mounted on a charger of the same colour, giving the victory to Ramiro, King of Leon, against the Moors.

(38.) "Laredo's lord shall rise no more."—Page 110.

The battle was fought near a village called *Vusturio* (or "Nusturio," according to a fine MS. we possess of the "Nobiliario," copied in the sixteenth century). Near where stood this village there now exists a small town called *Arrigorriaga*, which, in Bask,

means "among red stone"—i.e., *arri*, stone; *gorri*, red; *aga*, among. This tallies with what is said in the "Nobiliario," which gives an account of the tradition, and was written by several unknown pens, though ascribed chiefly to Don Pedro, Count of Barcellos, natural son of King Dinis of Portugal, who reigned A.D. 1279-1325. We subjoin a translation of the text of the "Nobiliario" (titulo ix. 1st rubric) relating to the tradition upon which we have partly based our story:—

"Biscay at first had no lord. A count named Dom Moniño was then living in Asturias, who was wont to harass the Basques. He finally compelled them to pay a tribute, consisting of a white cow, a white bull, and a white horse; and thereupon he ceased his inroads. Shortly afterwards there came a ship having on board a man of high degree, named From, brother to the King of England, and he brought with him a son named Furtan Froes, and the king had banished them. On arriving among the Basques, and learning what had occurred, he told them who he was, and that if they would take him as lord, he would defend them against Moniño. To this they consented. When the count sent to claim the tribute, it was refused by From. Moniño collected his forces and invaded Biscay. From brought his people together, and went to meet him, and the battle was fought near a village called Vusturio; and From and his Basques were victorious, and killed Count Moniño on the field, and so many of his people, that the field was deluged in blood, so that all the stones and the ground about were red, wherefore that field was called Arrigorriaga, which in Bask language means red stones. And after a time From died, and his son, Furtan Froes, became Lord of Biscay, and married Elvira Vermiz, daughter of Vermmy Laindez, and granddaughter of Alim Galvo, and he begot of her Lopo Ortiz, who became Lord of Biscay. This Lopo Ortiz was the same who was with Count Fernan Gonçalvez in the battle of Almanzor; and he [Lopo Ortiz] begot a son named Diego Lopez." (*Vide Portugaliae Monumenta Historica; Scriptores*, vol. i. p. 258, published by the Royal Academy of Sciences of Lisbon.) This "battle of Almanzor," in which Lopo, the third Lord of Biscay, took part, was no doubt

the encounter between the Count of Castile, Fernan Gonçalvez, and Almanzor, mentioned by the historian Condé, under the year of the Hegira 370, corresponding to A.D. 980. (*Vide* Hist. de la Dominacion de los Arabes en España, P. II. cap. 12.) It will readily be seen that this Count Moniño is no other than our Count of Laredo.

(39.) "Though the smoke, from the seed, should ascend light and straight."—Page 146.

When this occurred it was considered, according to magic, an unfavourable sign; but a good one, when the smoke was thick and scattering.

(40.) "Thy good favour to win, here their offerings shall lay."
Page 147.

The allusion will be understood by referring to the latter part of the legend given in the last note hereafter.

(41.) "Not wrung yet from Almoravide."—Page 151.

Almoravide is used here generically for Moslem. The domination of the particular tribe called Almoravides only commenced in Spain at the end of the eleventh century.

(42.) "Not yet arose those tow'ring shafts," &c.—Page 151.

Allusion to the splendid Cathedral of Burgos, and its two fine towers with their belfries. The town of Burgos had not been in existence more than thirty years; its foundations were laid about A.D. 882. The famous cathedral, to which allusion is made, was only built in the fourteenth century.

(43.) "Madrid, in later times, shall dot."—Page 153.

The first known mention of Madrid in documents or chronicles is in the twelfth century, and then only as a small insignificant place.

(44.) "From hyena that shadowed the witch of the heath."
Page 162.

"Hyæna de muliere mala, subsannatrice, venefica, magicam exercente, intelligitur." *Vide* Apomasaris Apotelesmata.—De-promp. ex Io. Sambnei, page 376; being the interpretation of dreams according to the Indian, Persian, and Egyptian doctrines: published at Frankfort in 1577.

(45.) "This stake I through thy body drive," &c.—Page 174.

This was a tenet in Scandinavian demonology, in cases where the fiend occupied the body of a particular person already deceased; when pinned to the ground by a stake, he could not again disturb that body from its grave. (See the story of Asmund and Assueit in Sir Walter Scott's "Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft," Letter Third.) If not quite applicable in the present case, it agrees sufficiently with the opinion that a foiled devil, like our Topel, or Ben Jonson's Pug, was not likely to be again employed by his master on a mission to earth.

As to the appropriation of dead bodies by sprites, and their doings pending this uncouth association, the treatise by King James I. may be also consulted, entitled "Dæmonologie," London, 1603; see book iii. chap. iii.

(46.)—Page 177.

As one or two friends who saw "Elva" in manuscript opined that we should have brought about a happier termination regarding the fates of Furtan and his bride, which indeed there was

nothing *per se* to prevent; and as some of our readers may possibly feel disappointed, and be of the same opinion, we may perhaps be permitted to remark that, besides the reasons of good taste hinted at in the text for not ending the story by a marriage, we think it can hardly be said the issue is not a happy one, since we have brought our hero and heroine back safely from impending perdition to a life of sanctity and promised bliss.

For the benefit of the curious reader we subjoin a translation, as literal as possible, of the legend which served as the groundwork of Cantos Fourth and Fifth. It is taken from the "Nobiliario do Condè Dom Pedro," and follows immediately after the passage quoted under our note 38, forming the 2d rubric of the título ix. pp. 258 and 259 of the Academy's edition, which we there mention. It will be remembered that Diego Lopez was son of Lopo Ortiz, third Lord of Biscay, Diego succeeding as fourth lord.

"And this Dom Diego Lopez was a good huntsman, and being one day on the watch waiting for the wild boar to pass by, he heard a woman singing in a high-pitched tone, from the top of a cliff; and he approached her, and saw she was very beautiful and well dressed, and he at once fell in love with her and asked her who she was; and she replied that she was a woman of very high pedigree; and he said that since she was so high-born he would marry her if she liked, for he was the lord of all the country about; and she answered that she would do so if he promised never to make the sign of the cross, and he consented, and she went away with him. And this lady was very handsome, and well shaped in all her person, except that she had a cloven-foot, like the foot of a goat. And they lived [together] a long time, and had two children, and one was named Enhegnez Guerra, and the other was a female, and named Dona.* And when Dom Diego Lopez and his wife took their meals, he used to place his son beside him, and she her daughter beside her, opposite. And one day he went to the chase and killed a wild boar of large size and brought it home, and placed it by him

* The name is in blank in the printed edition as well as in our MS., and all known MSS.

while he was eating with his wife and children. And they threw down a bone, which caused a fight between a mastiff and a setting bitch (*padenga*), so fierce that the bitch caught the mastiff by the throat and killed him. And when Dom Diego Lopez saw what had happened, he thought it was a miracle, and crossed himself and said, 'Holy Mary, help us, whoever saw the like!' And when his wife saw him sign himself, she caught hold of her daughter and her son, and Dom Diego Lopez seized his son and would not let her take him; and she went off with her daughter through a casement of the palace, and went to the mountains, so that she was never more seen nor her daughter.

"Later, after awhile, this Dom Diego Lopez went to do hurt to the Moors, and he was taken and removed as prisoner to Toledo. And his son Enheguez Guerra grieved much at his being in prison, and came to speak with the people of the land (*i.e.*, of Biscay), to know how he could get him out of prison. And they told him they did not know how he could reach him unless he went to the mountains in search of his mother, and she would tell him how to do it. And he went there alone on horseback, and found her on a cliff, and she said, 'Son Enheguez Guerra, come hither, for I well know wherefore thou comest;' and he approached her, and she said, 'Thou comest to ask how to free thy father from prison.' Then she called a horse which was going about loose among the hills, named P'ardallo, and she called it by its name; and she put a bridle, which she had, on the horse, and told him (*i.e.*, her son) not to try to unsaddle it, nor to unbridle it, nor to give it food or drink, nor to shoe it; and she told him this horse would last him his lifetime, and that he would never enter battle without gaining it through it (*i.e.*, the horse). And she told him to ride the horse, which would bring him to Toledo, before his father's prison door, that very day, and that before the door whither the horse would take him he should dismount, and would find his father in a yard, that he must then take him by the hand, and do as if he wished to speak to him, and draw him towards the door where the horse was, and as soon as he was there to mount, and put his father in front of him, and that before nightfall he would be home with his father; and so it hap-

pened. And after awhile Don Diego Lopez died, and left the land to his son Enheguez Guerra. And there are people in Biscay who said, and still say, that this mother of Enheguez Guerra is the 'old woman' (*coouro*, *i.e.*, literally "hide") of Biscay. And whoever may be Lord of Biscay, in a village called Vnsturio, he always has the refuse of the cows which are killed for his household put in a heap on a cliff outside the village, and the next morning nothing is found; and they say that if he did not do so he would suffer some evil during that day or that night in the person of some squire of his household, or in something that would grieve him much. And all the Lords of Biscay were subject to this till the death of John the Crooked (*Torto*); and some wished to try the effect of not doing so, and evil befell them. And it is further said that nowadays that he (*i.e.*, Enheguez Guerra—we give the rest in the original) 'jaz com algumas molheres hi nas aldeas ainda que nom queyram, e vem a ellas em figura de escudeiro, e todas aquellas com que jaz se tornam escooradas.' The text adds that this Enheguez Guerra, fifth Lord of Biscay, left an only daughter, Dona Muña Enheguez, who was married to Don Fernando, bastard son of the King of Navarre.

This quotation *in extenso* dispenses us from making any remarks about the use we have put the legend to for the purposes of our story; and we shall merely add that it was also made use of by the late lamented Alexandre Herculano in a story he wrote in Portuguese prose, entitled "A Dama Pé-de-Cabra," and which we read many years ago, but of which we have no copy now at hand. His treatment of the legend is quite different from ours, and the only thing we are conscious of having borrowed from him is the growing of the hair on the Cloven-Foot's face, the lengthening of her arms, and sprouting of her fingers when she took her departure from the castle, as detailed in Canto Fourth, stanza xxv.; and also the idea of making a storm coincide with the rescuers' arrival at Toledo in Canto Fifth, stanza xvii.

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