

BÉCQUER
GUSTAVO
ADOLFO

LEGENDS, TALES AND
POEMS

Gustavo Bécquer
Legends, Tales and Poems

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Bécquer G.

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Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer

Legends, Tales and Poems

PREFACE

In preparing this collection of Becquer's legends, tales, and short poems, which is the only annotated edition of this author's works that has been published as yet for English-speaking students, the editor has aimed to give to our schools and colleges a book that may serve, not only as a reader for first or second year classes, but also as an introduction to Spanish literature, through the works of one of the most original and charming authors of the Spanish Romantic school.

Fondness for good literature should be stimulated from the very first, and the quaint tales and legends of old Spain contained in this edition, told, as they are, in a most fascinating style, are well adapted to captivate the student's interest and to lead him to investigate further the rich mine of Spanish literature. Becquer's poetry is no less pleasing than his prose, and not much more difficult to read. With the aid of the ample treatise on Spanish versification contained in the introduction, the student will be enabled to appreciate the harmony and rhythm of Becquer's verse, and in all subsequent reading of Spanish poetry he will find this treatise a convenient and valuable work of reference.

The Life of Becquer, though concise, is perhaps the most complete that has yet been published, for it embodies all the data given by previous biographers and a certain number of facts gathered by the writer at the time of his last visit to Spain (in 1905–1906), from friends of Becquer who were then living.

The vocabulary has been made sufficiently complete to free the notes from that too frequent translation of words or phrases which often encumbers them.

The notes have been printed in the only convenient place for them, at the bottom of each page, and will be found to be as complete and definite as possible on geographical, biographical, historical, or other points that may not be familiar to the student or the teacher. All grammatical or syntactical matter, unless of a difficult or peculiar character, has been omitted, while the literary citations that abound will, it is hoped, stimulate the student to do further reading and to make literary comparisons of his own.

It remains for the editor to express his profound gratitude to the following gentlemen for their aid in collecting facts regarding Becquer and for their encouragement of this work: the Exc^{mo} Sr. Conde de las Navas, the Exc^{mo} Sr. Licenciado D. Jose Gestoso y Perez, and the Exc^{mo} Sr. D. Francisco de Laiglesia. It is his pleasure also to convey his thanks to Professor George L. Burr of Cornell University for aid in certain of the historical notes, and most especially to gratefully acknowledge his indebtedness to the aid, or rather collaboration, of Mr. Arthur Gordon of Cornell University, and Mr. W. R. Price of the High School of Commerce, New York City.

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INTRODUCTION

LIFE OF BECQUER

"In Seville, along the Guadalquivir, and close to the bank that leads to the convent of San Jerónimo, may be found a kind of lagoon, which fertilizes a miniature valley formed by the natural slope of the bank, at that point very high and steep. Two or three leafy white poplars, intertwining their branches, protect the spot from the rays of the sun, which rarely succeeds in slipping through them. Their leaves produce a soft and pleasing murmur as the wind stirs them and causes them to appear now silver, now green, according to the point from which it blows. A willow bathes its roots in the current of the stream, toward which it leans as though bowed by an invisible weight, and all about are multitudes of reeds and yellow lilies, such as grow spontaneously at the edges of springs and streams.

"When I was a boy of fourteen or fifteen, and my soul was overflowing with numberless longings, with pure thoughts and with that infinite hope that is the most precious jewel of youth, when I deemed myself a poet, when my imagination was full of those pleasing tales of the classic world, and Rioja in his *silvas* to the flowers, Herrera in his tender elegies, and all my Seville singers, the Penates of my special literature, spoke to me continually of the majestic Bétis, the river of nymphs, naiads, and poets, which, crowned with belfries and laurels, flows to the sea from a crystal amphora, how often, absorbed in the contemplation of my childish dreams, I would go and sit upon its bank, and there, where the poplars protected me with their shadow, would give rein to my fancies, and conjure up one of those impossible dreams in which the very skeleton of death appeared before my eyes in splendid, fascinating garb! I used to dream then of a happy, independent life, like that of the bird, which is born to sing, and receives its food from God. I used to dream of that tranquil life of the poet, which glows with a soft light from generation to generation. I used to dream that the city that saw my birth would one day swell with pride at my name, adding it to the brilliant list of her illustrious sons, and, when death should put an end to my existence, that they would lay me down to dream the golden dream of immortality on the banks of the Bétis, whose praises I should have sung in splendid odes, and in that very spot where I used to go so often to hear the sweet murmur of its waves. A white stone with a cross and my name should be my only monument.

"The white poplars, swaying night and day above my grave, should seem to utter prayers for my soul in the rustling of their green and silver leaves. In them the birds should come and nest, that they might sing at dawn a joyous hymn to the resurrection of the spirit to regions more serene. The willow, covering the spot with floating shadows, should lend to it its own vague sadness, as it bent and shed about its soft, wan leaves, as if to protect and to caress my mortal spoils. The river, too, which in flood tide might almost come and kiss the border of the slab o'ergrown with reeds, should lull my sleep with pleasant music. And when some time had passed, and patches of moss had begun to spread over the stone, a dense growth of wild morning-glories, of those blue morning-glories with a disk of carmine in the center, which I loved so much, should grow up by its side, twining through its crevices and clothing it with their broad transparent leaves, which, by I know not what mystery, have the form of hearts. Golden insects with wings of light, whose buzzing lulls to sleep on heated afternoons, should come and hover round their chalices, and one would be obliged to draw aside the leafy curtain to read my name, now blurred by time and moisture. But why should my name be read? Who would not know that I was sleeping there?"[1]

[Footnote 1: *Obras de Gustavo A. Becquer*, Madrid, 1898, vol. II, pp. 242–245.
This edition will be understood hereafter in all references to the works of Becquer.]

So mused the poet Becquer[1] in the golden days of his youth, when his veins were swelling with health, when his heart was fired with ambition, and in his ears was ringing the joyous invitation of his muse.

[Footnote 1: The name is spelled indifferently with or without accent—*Bécquer* or *Becquer*. In the choice of the latter spelling, the authority of his principal biographer, Ramón Rodríguez Correa, has been followed.]

His knowledge of the world was confined to the enchanting city of his birth. Her gems of art and architecture had wrought themselves into the fabric of his dreams; he had mused in her palm-gardens, worshiped in her temples, and dreamed long afternoons on the shores of her historic river. He knew nothing of the cold, prosaic world of selfish interests. The time had not yet come when, in bitterness of spirit, and wrapping his mantle about him against the chill wind of indifference, he should say: "To-day my sole ambition is to be a supernumerary in the vast human comedy, and when my silent role is ended, to withdraw behind the scenes, neither hissed nor applauded, making my exit unnoticed." [1]

[Footnote 1: *Obras*, vol. II, p. 251.]

Indeed, in those later days of trial and hardship, he would often look out wearily upon Madrid, the city of his adoption, the scene of his crushing struggle with necessity, as it lay outspread before his windows,—"dirty, black, and ugly as a fleshless skeleton, shivering under its immense shroud of snow," [1] and in his mind he would conjure up the city of his youth, his ever cherished Seville, "with her *Giralda* of lacework, mirrored in the trembling Guadalquivir, with her narrow and tortuous Moorish streets, in which one fancies still he hears the strange cracking sound of the walk of the Justiciary King; Seville, with her barred windows and her love-songs, her iron door-screens and her night watchmen, her altar-pieces and her stories, her brawls and her music, her tranquil nights and her fiery afternoons, her rosy dawns and her blue twilights; Seville, with all the traditions that twenty centuries have heaped upon her brow, with all the pomp and splendor of her southern nature." [2] No words of praise seemed too glowing for her ardent lover.

[Footnote 1: *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. iii.]

[Footnote 2: *Obras*, vol. III, pp. 109–110.]

By some strange mystery, however, it had been decreed by fate that he should only meet with disappointment in every object of his love. The city of his birth was no exception to the rule: since Becquer's death it has made but little effort to requite his deep devotion or satisfy his youthful dreams. You may search "the bank of the Guadalquivir that leads to the ruined convent of San Jerónimo," you may spy among the silvery poplars or the willows growing there, you may thrust aside the reeds and yellow lilies or the tangled growth of morning-glories, but all in vain—no "white stone with a cross" appears. You may wander through the city's many churches, but no tomb to the illustrious poet will you find, no monument in any square. His body sleeps well-nigh forgotten in the cemetery of San Nicolás in Madrid.

If you will turn your steps, however, to the *barrio* of Seville in which the celebrated D. Miguel de Mañara, the original type of *Juan Tenorio* and the *Estudiante de Salamanca*, felt the mysterious blow and saw his own funeral train file by, and will enter the little street of the Conde de Barajas, you will find on the facade of the house No. 26 a modest but tasteful tablet bearing the words

EN ESTA CASA NACIÓ
GUSTAVO ADOLFO
BECQUER
XVII FEBRERO MDCCCXXXVI.[1]

[Footnote 1: This memorial, which was uncovered on January 10th, 1886, is due to a little group of Becquer's admirers, and especially to the inspiration of a young Argentine poet, Román García Pereira (whose *Canto á Becquer*, published in *La Ilustración Artística*, Barcelona, December 27, 1886, is a tribute worthy of the poet who inspired it), and to the personal efforts of the illustrious Seville scholar, Don José Gestoso y Pérez. It is only fair to add here that there is also an inferior street in Seville named for Becquer.]

Here Gustavo Adolfo Dominguez Becquer opened his eyes upon this inhospitable world. Eight days later he was baptized in the church of San Lorenzo.[1] He was one of a family of eight sons, Eduardo, Estanislao, Valeriano, Gustavo Adolfo, Alfredo, Ricardo, Jorge, and Jose. His father, Don Jose Dominguez Becquer, was a well-known Seville genre painter. He died when Gustavo was but a child of five, too young to be taught the principles of his art; but he nevertheless bequeathed to him the artistic temperament that was so dominant a trait in the poet's genius. Becquer's mother, Doña Joaquina, survived his father but a short time, and left her children orphaned while they were yet very young. Gustavo was but nine and a half years old at the time of his mother's death. Fortunately an old and childless uncle, D. Juan Vargas, took charge of the motherless boys until they could find homes or employment.

[Footnote 1: The following is a copy of his baptismal record:

"En jueves 25 de Febrero de 1836 años D. Antonio Rodriguez Arenas Pbro. con licencia del infrascrito Cura de la Parroquial de Sn. Lorenzo de Sevilla: bautizó solemnemente á Gustavo Adolfo que nació en 17 de dicho mes y año hijo de José Dominguez Vequer (*sic*) y Doña Juaquina (*sic*) Bastida su legitima mujer. Fué su madrina Doña Manuela Monchay vecina de la collación de Sn. Miguel á la que se advirtió el parentesco espiritual y obligaciones y para verdad lo firmé.—Antonio Lucena Cura." See *La Ilustración Artística*, Barcelona, December 27, 1886, pp. 363–366. Citations from this periodical will hereafter refer to the issue of this date.]

Gustavo Adolfo received his first instruction at the College of San Antonio Abad. After the loss of his mother his uncle procured for him admission to the College of San Telmo, a training school for navigators, situated on the banks of the Guadalquivir in the edifice that later became the palace of the Dukes of Montpensier. This establishment had been founded in 1681 in the ancient suburb of Marruecos as a reorganization of the famous *Escuela de Mareantes* (navigators) of Triana. The Government bore the cost of maintenance and instruction of the pupils of this school, to which were admitted only poor and orphaned boys of noble extraction. Gustavo fulfilled all these requirements. Indeed, his family, which had come to Seville at the close of the sixteenth century or at the beginning of the seventeenth century, from Flanders, was one of the most distinguished of the town. It had even counted among its illustrious members a Seville Veinticuatro, and no one who was unable to present proof of noble lineage could aspire to that distinction.[1]

[Footnote 1: "Don Martin Becquer, *mayorazgo* and *Veinticuatro*, of Seville, native of Flanders, married Doña Úrsula Díez de Tejada. Born to them were Don Juan and Doña Mencia Becquer. The latter married Don Julián Dominguez, by whom she had a son Don Antonio Domínguez y Becquer, who in turn contracted marriage with Doña Maria Antonia Insausti y Bausa. Their son was Don Jose Dominguez Insausti y Bausa, husband of Doña Joaquina Bastida y Vargas, and father of the poet Becquer." The arms of the family "were a shield of azure with a chevron of gold, charged with five stars of azure, two leaves of clover in gold in the upper corners of the shield, and in the point a crown of gold." The language of the original

is not technical, and I have translated literally. See *Carta á M. Achille Fouquier*, by D. Jose Gestoso y Pérez, in *La Ilustración Artística*, pp. 363–366.]

Among the students of San Telmo there was one, Narciso Campillo, for whom Gustavo felt a special friendship,—a lad whose literary tastes, like his own, had developed early, and who was destined, later on, to occupy no mean position in the field of letters. Writing of those days of his youth, Señor Campillo says: "Our childhood friendship was strengthened by our life in common, wearing as we did the same uniform, eating at the same table, and sleeping in an immense hall, whose arches, columns, and melancholy lamps, suspended at intervals, I can see before me still.

"I enjoy recalling this epoch of our first literary utterance (*vagido*), and I say *our*, for when he was but ten years old and I eleven, we composed and presented in the aforesaid school (San Telmo) a fearful and extravagant drama, which, if my memory serves me right, was entitled *Los Conjurados* ('The Conspirators'). We likewise began a novel. I wonder at the confidence with which these two children, so ignorant in all respects, launched forth upon the two literary lines that require most knowledge of man, society, and life. The time was yet to come when by dint of painful struggles and hard trials they should possess that knowledge, as difficult to gain as it is bitter!"[1]

[Footnote 1: Article on Gustavo Adolfo Becquer, by Narciso Campillo, in *La Ilustración Artística*, pp. 358–360]

Shortly after the matriculation of young Becquer, the College of San Telmo was suppressed by royal orders, and the lad found himself in the streets. He was then received into the home of his godmother, Doña Manuela Monchay, who was a woman of kind heart and much intelligence. She possessed a fair library, which was put at the disposal of the boy; and here he gratified his love for reading, and perfected his literary taste. Two works that had considerable influence upon him at this time were the Odes of Horace, translated by P. Urbano Campos, and the poems of Zorrilla. He began to write verses of his own, but these he later burned.

"In 1849," says Señor Campillo, "there were two noteworthy painters in Seville, whose studios were open to and frequented by numerous students, future rivals, each in his own imagination, of the glories of Velasquez and Murillo. One of these studios, situated in the same building as the Museo de Pinturas, was that of D. Antonio Cabral Bejarano, a man not to be forgotten for his talent, and perhaps also for his wit, the delight of those who knew him. The other, situated in an upper room of the Moorish *alcázar de Abdelasis*, near the patio *de Banderas*, was directed by D. Joaquin Dominguez Becquer, a brother and disciple of D. Jose, Gustavo's father." [1]

[Footnote 1: Narciso Campillo, *loc. cit.*]

In spite of this relationship, Gustavo Adolfo, at the age of fourteen, entered the studio of Bejarano. There he remained for two years, practicing the art of drawing, for which he had a natural talent. He then came under the instruction of his uncle, who, judging that his nephew was even better qualified for a literary than for an artistic career, advised him to follow the former, and procured for him a few Latin lessons. Meanwhile Gustavo continued to enlarge his poetical horizon by reading from the great poets and by the contemplation of the beauties of nature. With his friend Campillo he composed the first three cantos of a poem entitled *La Conquista de Sevilla*, and with him he wandered about the beautiful city of his birth and dreamed such dreams as the one with which this Introduction begins.

Gustavo's godmother, who was a woman in easy circumstances and without children or near relatives, would doubtless have bequeathed to him her property had he fulfilled her wishes and settled down to an honorable mercantile life. But the child, who had learned to draw and to compose almost before he could write, and who had always paled before the simplest problem of arithmetic, could not reconcile himself to such a life. The artist within him rebelled, and at the age of seventeen and a half, feeling the attraction of the capital strong upon him, he bade farewell to the friends of his

youth and set out to seek for fame and fortune. It was in the autumn of 1854 that Becquer arrived in Madrid, "with empty pockets, but with a head full of treasures that were not, alas, to enrich him." Here he encountered an indifference that he had not dreamed of; and here he remained in the shadow of oblivion, eking out a miserable existence of physical as well as mental suffering, in utter loneliness of spirit, until he was joined in 1856 by one who came to be his lifelong friend and first biographer—Ramón Rodríguez Correa, who had come to the capital with the same aims as Becquer, and whose robust health and jovial temperament appealed singularly to the sad and ailing dreamer. The new-found friend proved indeed a godsend, for when, in 1857, Gustavo was suffering from a terrible illness, Correa, while attending him, chanced to fall upon a writing entitled *El caudillo de las manos rojas, tradición india*. Charmed by its originality in form and conception, he urged his friend to publish it. Becquer acquiesced, and the story was accepted and published by *La Crónica*. The joy of this first success, and perhaps the material aid that resulted, must have had a great deal to do with Gustavo's speedy recovery.

A short time after this he entered with his friend Correa the office of the *Dirección de Bienes Nacionales* as copyist, at the munificent salary of some \$150 a year. The employment was decidedly contrary to his taste, and to amuse his tedium he used often to sketch or read from his favorite poets. One day, as he was busy sketching, the Director entered, and, seeing a group about Gustavo's chair,—for the young artist's sketches were eagerly awaited and claimed by his admiring associates,—stole up from behind and asked, "What is this?" Gustavo, suspecting nothing, went on with his sketch, and answered in a natural tone, "This is Ophelia, plucking the leaves from her garland. That old codger is a grave-digger. Over there..." At this, noticing that every one had risen, and that universal silence reigned, Becquer slowly turned his head. "Here is one too many," said the Director, and the artist was dismissed that very day.

It cannot be said that he received the news of his dismissal regretfully, for he had accepted the position largely to please a sympathetic friend. Slight as was the remuneration, however, it had aided him to live; and when this resource was removed, Gustavo was again obliged to depend upon his wits. His skill with the brush served him in good stead at this time, and he earned a little money by aiding a painter who had been employed by the Marquis of Remisa to decorate his palace, but who could not do the figures in the fresco.

In 1857, together with other *littérateurs*, Becquer undertook the preparation and direction of a work entitled *Historia de los Templos de España*.^[1] Like so many of the author's plans, this work remained unfinished; but from the single volume that appeared can be seen how vast was the scope of the work, and how scholarly its execution. Gustavo is himself the author of some of the best pages contained in the volume, as, for example, those of the Introduction and of the chapters on *San Juan de los Reyes*. He is likewise the author of many of the excellent sketches that adorn the work, notably that of the *portada*. These sketches, as well as others published elsewhere, show how eminent his work as artist would have been, had he decided to cultivate that field instead of literature.

[Footnote 1: The complete title of the work is *Historia de los Templos de España, publicada bajo la protección de SS. MM. AA. y muy reverendos señores arzobispos y obispos—dirigida por D. Juan de la Puerta Vizcaino y D. Gustavo Adolfo Becquer. Tomo I, Madrid, 1857. Imprenta y Estereotipia Española de los Señores Nieto y Compañía.*]

Essentially an artist in temperament, he viewed all things from the artist's standpoint. His distaste for politics was strong, and his lack of interest in political intrigues was profound. "His artistic soul, nurtured in the illustrious literary school of Seville," says Correa, "and developed amidst Gothic Cathedrals, lacy Moorish and stained-glass windows, was at ease only in the field of tradition. He felt at home in a complete civilization, like that of the Middle Ages, and his artisticopolitical ideas and his fear of the ignorant crowd made him regard with marked predilection all that was aristocratic

and historic, without however refusing, in his quick intelligence, to recognize the wonderful character of the epoch in which he lived. Indolent, moreover, in small things,—and for him political parties were small things,—he was always to be found in the one in which were most of his friends, and in which they talked most of pictures, poetry, cathedrals, kings, and nobles. Incapable of hatred, he never placed his remarkable talent as a writer at the service of political animosities, however certain might have been his gains." [1]

[Footnote 1: Ramón Rodríguez Correa, *Prólogo*, in *Obras de Becquer*, vol. I, xvi.]

Early in his life in Madrid, Gustavo came under the influence of a charming young woman, Julia Espín y Guillén. [1] Her father was director of the orchestra in the Teatro Real, and his home was a rendezvous of young musicians, artists, and *littérateurs*. There Gustavo, with Correa, Manuel del Palacio, Augusto Ferrán, and other friends, used to gather for musical and literary evenings, and there Gustavo used to read his verses. These he would bring written on odd scraps of paper, and often upon calling cards, in his usual careless fashion.

[Footnote 1: She later married Don Benigno Quiroga Ballesteros, an illustrious engineer, congressman, minister of state, and man of public life, who is still living. She died in January, 1907.]

His friends were not slow in discovering that the tall, dark, and beautiful Julia was the object of his adoration, and they advised him to declare his love openly. But his timid and retiring nature imposed silence upon his lips, and he never spoke a word of love to her. It cannot be said, moreover, that the impression created upon the young lady by the brilliant youth was such as to inspire a return of his mute devotion. Becquer was negligent in his dress and indifferent to his personal appearance, and when Julia's friends upbraided her for her hardness of heart she would reply with some such curt and cruel epigram as this: "Perhaps he would move my heart more if he affected my stomach less." [1]

[Footnote 1: Facts learned from conversation with Don Manuel del Palacio, since deceased.

The editor of this sketch is indebted to the courtesy of the Exc^{mo}. Sr. D. Benigno Quiroga Ballesteros and to his lately deceased wife, Doña Julia, the muse of at least some of Becquer's *Rimas*, for an opportunity to examine a couple of albums containing some of the poet's verse and a most interesting collection of pencil sketches, which but confirm his admiration for Becquer's artistic talent. Here is a list of the sketches:

First Album:

Lucia di Lamermoor—Eleven sketches, including frontispiece.

A dream, or rather a nightmare, in which a man is pictured in a restless sleep, with a small devil perched upon his knees, who causes to fly as a kite above the sleeper's head a woman in graceful floating garments.

A fat and jolly horned devil in the confessional box, with a confessor of the fair sex kneeling at one side, while at the extreme right two small acolytes point out to each other a suspicious looking tail that protrudes from beneath her skirts, thus stamping her as Satan's own.

A belfry window with a swinging bell, and bestriding the bell a skeleton tightly clutching the upper part of it—ringing the *ánimas* perhaps.

Gustavo himself seated smoking, leaning back in his chair, and in the smoke that rises a series of women, some with wings.

A nun in horror at discovering, as she turns down the covers of her bed, a merry devil.

A woman's coffin uncovered by the sexton, while a lover standing by exclaims, "¡¡Cáscaras!! ¡cómo ha cambiado!"

A scene at the *Teatro Real* with Señor Espin y Guillén in a small group behind the scenes, and a prima donna singing. Actors standing apart in the wings.

A visit to the cemetery. A skeleton thrusting out his head from his burial niche, and a young man presenting his card. "DIFUNTO: No recibo. VISITANTE: Pues hai (*sic*) queda la targeta (*sic*)."

A fine sketch of "Eleonora," a stately form in rich fifteenth-century garb.

A number of sketches of women, knights, monks, devils, soldiers, skeletons, etc.

Second Album: Les morts pow rire, Bizarreries dédiées à Mademoiselle Julie, par G. A. Becker (sic).

Fantastic frontispiece of skulls, bones, and leafy fronds, and two young lovers seated, sketching.

Skeletons playing battledore and shuttlecock with skulls.

A tall slim skeleton and a round short one.

Skeletons at a ball.

A skeleton widow visiting her husband's grave.

The husband returning her visit, and coming to share her lunch in the park.

A circus of skeletons, in two scenes: (1) Leaping through the hoop. (2) One skeleton balancing himself, head downward, on the head of another who is standing.

A skeleton singer on the stage.

A skeleton horse leaping a hurdle.

A skeleton drum-major with his band.

A skeleton bull-fight.

A duel between skeletons.

A tournament on skeleton horses.

A woman recently deceased, surrounded by skeletons offering their compliments. They are presented by one of their number, with hat in hand.

A balcony courting scene between skeleton lovers.

The word *FIN* in bones concludes the series of grotesque and uncanny sketches, which but emphasize a fact ever present in the poet's mind—that while we are in life we *are* in death.]

Finding his devotion to Julia unrequited, Becquer, in a rebellious mood, and having come under the influence of the charms and blandishments of a woman of Soria, a certain Casta Estéban y Navarro, contracted, in or about the year 1861, an unfortunate marriage, which embittered the rest of his life and added cares and expenses which he could ill support. He lived with his wife but a short time, during which period two sons were born to them—Gustavo, whose later career was unfortunately not such as to bring credit to the memory of his illustrious father, and, Jorge, who died young. Becquer was passionately fond of his children, and succeeded in keeping them with him after the separation from his wife. They were constantly the objects of his affectionate solicitude, and his last thoughts were for them.

About 1858 the newspaper *El Contemporáneo* had been founded by the able and broad-minded Jose Luis Albareda, and Correa, who was associated with the management, succeeded in obtaining for his friend a position on its staff. Becquer entered upon his new labors in 1861, and was a fairly regular contributor until the suppression of the paper. Here he published the greater part of his legends and tales, as well as his remarkable collection of letters *Desde mi Celda* ("From my Cell"). The following year his brother Valeriano, who up to that time had exercised his talents as a genre painter in Seville, came to join him in Madrid. He too had been unfortunate in his domestic relations, and the brothers

joined in sympathy to form a new household. A period of comparative comfort seemed to open up before them. This period was of short duration, however; for Gustavo (who was never strong) soon fell ill, and was obliged to withdraw from the capital, in search of purer air, to the historic monastery of Veruela, situated on the Moncayo, a mountain in northern Spain. His brother Valeriano accompanied him, and there they passed a year in complete isolation from the rest of the world. The spur of necessity, however, compelled them both to keep to their work, and while Gustavo was writing such legends as that of *Maese Pérez*, and composing his fascinating *Cartas desde mi Celda*, Valeriano was painting Aragonese scenes such as *La Vendimia* ("The Vintage") or fanciful creations such as *El Barco del Diablo* or *La Pecadora*.

The next year the two brothers returned to the capital, and Gustavo, together with his friend D. Felipe Vallarino, began the publication of *La Gaceta literaria*, of brief but brilliant memory. During this same year and during 1863 Gustavo continued on the staff of *El Contemporáneo*, enriching its pages with an occasional legend of singular beauty.

At the Baths of Fitero in Navarre, whither, with his inseparable brother, he had gone to recuperate his health in the summer of 1864, Gustavo composed the fantastic legend of the *Miserere*, and others no less interesting. On his return from Fitero he continued in *El Contemporáneo*, and shortly after entered a ministerial daily, the irksome duties of which charge he bore with resignation.

At this time Luis Gonzalez Bravo, a man of *fine* literary discrimination, whatever may be thought of him politically, was prime minister under Isabel II. He had become interested in the work of Gustavo, and, knowing the dire financial straits in which the young poet labored, he thought to diminish these anxieties and thus give him more time to devote to creative work by making him censor of novels. A new period of calm and comparative comfort began, and for the first time in his life Becquer had the leisure to carry out a long-cherished project, at once his own desire and the desire of his friends: that of gathering together in one volume all his scattered verse and of adding to the collection other poems as well that had not yet seen the light. This he did, and the completed volume so charmed his friend and patron, Gonzalez Bravo, that he offered of his own accord to write a prologue for the work and to print it at his own expense. But in 1868 came the revolution which dethroned Isabel II, and in the confusion that followed the downfall of the ministry and the hasty withdrawal of Gonzalez Bravo to the French frontier the volume of poems was lost. This was a sad blow to Becquer, but he courageously set to work to repair the loss, and with painful effort succeeded in recalling and rewriting his *Rimas*, which were published after his death in the third volume of his works by his friend Correa.

Becquer, with extreme punctiliousness, tendered his resignation as censor of novels. A pension of 10,000 reals that the government had assigned to Valeriano for the study of national customs was withdrawn, and both brothers were again deprived of permanent employment. They joined forces, and while the one sketched admirable woodcuts for the *Almanac Anual* of Gaspar y Roig, the other wrote such original articles as *Las Hojas Secas*, or chafed under such hack work as the translation of popular novels from the French, which language he read with ease, though he did not speak it well. Gustavo had already felt and described the charm of the old Moorish city of Toledo in his *Historia de los Templos de España*, and in 1869 he and Valeriano moved their little household temporarily to the city of their dreams, with a view to finding inspiration for their pens and brushes, and thus subsistence for their joint families.[1]

[Footnote 1: It was at this time that Gustavo wrote the letter which is published for the first time on page xxxix.]

An amusing account is given by Correa of an adventure that befell the two brothers one night in Toledo as they were wandering about its streets. He says: "One magnificent moonlight night both artists decided to contemplate their beloved city bathed in the fantastic light of the chilly orb. The painter armed with pencils and the writer with his souvenirs had abandoned the old city and on a

ruined wall had given themselves up for hours to their artistic chatter ... when a couple of *Guardias civiles*, who had doubtless those days been looking for marauders, approached them. They heard something of apses, squinches, ogives, and other terms as suspicious or as dangerous ... and observing the disarray of those who thus discoursed, their long beards, their excited mien, the lateness of the hour, the solitude of the place, and obeying especially that axiomatic certainty of the Spanish police to blunder, they angrily swooped down upon those night birds, and, in spite of protests and unheard explanations, took them to continue their artistic themes in the dim and horrid light of a dungeon in the Toledo jail.... We learned all this in the office of *EC Contemporáneo*, on receiving from Gustavo an explanatory letter full of sketches representing the probable passion and death of both innocents. The staff *en masse* wrote to the mistaken jailer, and at last we saw the prisoners return safe and sound, parodying in our presence with words and pencils the famous prisons of Silvio Pellico." [1]

[Footnote 1: Correa, *op. cit.*, pp. xxi-xxiii.]

In this same year, 1869, we find the brothers housed in modest quarters in the Barrio de la Concepción in the outskirts of Madrid. Here Adolfo wrote some new poems and began a translation of Dante for a *Biblioteca de grandes autores* which had been planned and organized by *La Ilustración de Madrid*, founded by Gasset in 1870. The first number of this noteworthy paper appeared on January 12 of that year, and from its inception to the time of his death Gustavo was its director and a regular contributor. [1] His brother Valeriano illustrated many of its pages, and here one can form some idea of his skill as a portrayer of Spanish types and customs. "But who could foretell," says their friend Campillo, "that within so short a time his necrology and that of his beloved brother were to appear in this same paper?" [2]

[Footnote 1: These articles of Gustavo's have not, for the most part, been published elsewhere. There remains for the future editor of his complete works a large number of such articles, which it would be well worth while to collect.]

[Footnote 2: *La Ilustración Artística*, p. 360.]

Their life of hardship and anxiety was tearing to shreds the delicate health of the two young artists, and on September 23, 1870, Valeriano breathed his last in the arms of Gustavo. His death was a blow from which Gustavo never recovered. It was as though the mainspring was broken in a watch; and, though the wheels still turned of their own momentum, the revolutions were few in number and soon ceased. "A strange illness," says Correa, "and a strange manner of death was that! Without any precise symptom, that which was diagnosed as pneumonia turned to hepatitis, becoming in the judgment of others pericarditis, and meanwhile the patient, with his brain as clear as ever and his natural gentleness, went on submitting himself to every experiment, accepting every medicine, and dying inch by inch." [1]

[Footnote 1: Correa, *op. cit.*, p. xix.]

Shortly before the end he turned to his friends who surrounded his bed, and said to them, "Acordaos de mis niños." [1] He realized that he had extended his arm for the last time in their behalf, and that now that frail support had been withdrawn. "At last the fatal moment came, and, pronouncing clearly with his trembling lips the words "Todo mortal!", his pure and loving soul rose to its Creator." [2] He died December 22, 1870.

[Footnote 1: This fact was learned from a conversation with Don Francisco de Laiglesia, who, with Correa, Ferrán and others, was present when the poet breathed his last.]

[Footnote 2: Correa, *op. cit.*, p. xx.]

Thanks to the initiative of Ramón Rodríguez Correa and to the aid of other friends, most of the scattered tales, legends, and poems of Bécquer were gathered together and published by Fernando

Fe, Madrid, in three small volumes. In the Prologue of the first edition Correa relates the life of his friend with sympathy and enthusiasm, and it is from this source that we glean most of the facts that are to be known regarding the poet's life. The appearance of these volumes caused a marked effect, and their author was placed by popular edict in the front rank of contemporary writers.

Becquer may be said to belong to the Romantic School, chief of whose exponents in Spain were Zorilla and Espronceda. The choice of mediaeval times as the scene of his stories, their style and treatment, as well as the personal note and the freedom of his verse, all stamp him as a Romanticist.

His legends, with one or two exceptions, are genuinely Spanish in subject, though infused with a tender melancholy that recalls the northern ballads rather than the writings of his native land. His love for old ruins and monuments, his archaeological instinct, is evident in every line. So, too, is his artistic nature, which finds a greater field for its expression in his prose than in his verse. Add to this a certain bent toward the mysterious and supernatural, and we have the principal elements that enter into the composition of these legends, whose quaint, weird beauty not only manifests the charm that naturally attaches to popular or folk tales, but is due especially to the way in which they are told by one who was at once an artist and a poet.

Zorilla has been said to be Becquer's most immediate precursor, in that he possesses the same instinct for the mysterious. But, as Blanco Garcia observes, "Becquer is less ardent than Zorilla, and preferred the strange traditions in which some unknown supernatural power hovers to those others, more probable, in which only human passions with their caprices and outbursts are involved." [1] Correa says of his legends that they "can compete with the tales of Hoffmann and of Grimm, and with the ballads of Rückert and of Uhland," and that "however fantastic they may be, however imaginary they may appear, they always contain such a foundation of truth, a thought so real, that in the midst of their extraordinary form and contexture a fact appears spontaneously to have taken place or to be able to take place without the slightest difficulty, if you but analyze the situation of the personages, the time in which they live, or the circumstances that surround them." [2]

[Footnote 1: *La Literatura Española en el Siglo XIX*, Madrid, 1891, vol. II, p. 275.]

[Footnote 2: Correa, *op. cit.*, p. xxx.]

The subtle charm of such legends as *Los Ojos Verdes*, *La Corza Blanca*, *Maese Pérez el Organista*, etc., full of local color as they are, and of an atmosphere of old Spain, is hard to describe, but none the less real. One is caught by the music of the prose at the first lines, enraptured by the weird charm of the story, and held in breathless interest until the last words die away. If Becquer's phrase is not always classic, it is, on the other hand, vigorous and picturesque; and when one reflects upon the difficult conditions under which his writings were produced, in the confusion of the printing-office, or hurriedly in a miserable attic to procure food for the immediate necessities of his little family, and when one likewise recalls the fact that they were published in final book form only after the author's death, and without retouching, the wonder grows that they are written in a style so pleasing and so free from harshness.

Becquer's prose is doubtless at its best in his letters entitled *Desde mi Celda*, written, as has been said, from the monastery of Veruela, in 1864. Read his description of his journey to the ancient Aragonese town of Tarazona, picturesquely situated on the River Queiles, of his mule trip over the glorious Moncayo, of the peacefulness and quiet of the old fortified monastery of Veruela, and you will surely feel inspired to follow him in his wanderings. Writing of his life in the seclusion of Veruela, Becquer says: "Every afternoon, as the sun is about to set, I sally forth upon the road that runs in front of the monastery doors to wait for the postman, who brings me the Madrid newspapers. In front of the archway that gives entrance to the first inclosure of the abbey stretches a long avenue of poplars so tall that when their branches are stirred by the evening breeze their summits touch and form an immense arch of verdure. On both sides of the road, leaping and tumbling with a pleasant murmur

among the twisted roots of the trees, run two rivulets of crystalline transparent water, as cold as the blade of a sword and as gleaming as its edge. The ground, over which float the shadows of the poplars, mottled with restless spots of light, is covered at intervals with the thickest and finest of grass, in which grow so many white daisies that they look at first sight like that rain of petals with which the fruit-trees carpet the ground on warm April days. On the banks of the stream, amid the brambles and the reeds, grow wild violets, which, though well-nigh hidden amongst their creeping leaves, proclaim themselves afar by their penetrating perfume. And finally, also near the water and forming as it were a second boundary, can be seen between the poplar trunks a double row of stocky walnut-trees with dark, round, compact tops." About half way down the avenue stands a marble cross, which, from its color, is known in the vicinity as the Black Cross of Veruela. "Nothing is more somberly beautiful than this spot. At one end of the road the view is closed by the monastery, with its pointed arches, its peaked towers, and its imposing battlemented walls; on the other, the ruins of a little hermitage rise, at the foot of a hillock bestrewn with blooming thyme and rosemary. There, seated at the foot of the cross, and holding in my hands a book that I scarcely ever read and often leave forgotten on the steps of the cross, I linger for one, two, and sometimes even four hours waiting for the papers." At last the post arrives, and the *Contemporáneo* is in his hands. "As I was present at its birth, and as since its birth I have lived its feverish and impassioned life, *El Contemporáneo* is not for me a common newspaper like the rest, but its columns are yourselves, my friends, my companions in hope or disappointment, in failure or triumph, in joy or bitterness. The first impression that I feel upon receiving it, then, is one of joy, like that experienced upon opening a letter on whose envelope we recognize a dear familiar handwriting, or when in a foreign land we grasp the hand of a compatriot and hear our native tongue again. The peculiar odor of the damp paper and the printer's ink, that characteristic odor which for a moment obscures the perfume of the flowers that one breathes here on every hand, seems to strike the olfactory memory, a strange and keen memory that unquestionably exists, and it brings back to me a portion of my former life,—that restlessness, that activity, that feverish productiveness of journalism. I recall the constant pounding and creaking of the presses that multiply by thousands the words that we have just written, and that have come all palpitating from our pens. I recall the strain of the last hours of publication, when night is almost over and copy scarce. I recall, in short, those times when day has surprised us correcting an article or writing a last notice when we paid not the slightest attention to the poetic beauties of the dawn. In Madrid, and for us in particular, the sun neither rises nor sets: we put out or light the lights, and that is the only reason we notice it."

At last he opens the sheet. The news of the clubs or the Cortes absorbs him until the failing light of the setting sun warns him that, though he has read but the first columns, it is time to go. "The shadows of the mountains fall rapidly, and spread over the plain. The moon begins to appear in the east like a silver circle gleaming through the sky, and the avenue of poplars is wrapped in the uncertain dusk of twilight.... The monastery bell, the only one that still hangs in its ruined Byzantine tower, begins to call to prayers, and one near and one afar, some with sharp metallic notes, and some with solemn, muffled tones, the other bells of the hillside towns reply.... It seems like a harmony that falls from heaven and rises at the same time from the earth, becomes confounded, and floats in space, intermingling with the fading sounds of the dying day and the first sighs of the newborn night.

"And now all is silenced,—Madrid, political interests, ardent struggles, human miseries, passions, disappointments, desires, all is hushed in that divine music. My soul is now as serene as deep and silent water. A faith in something greater, in a future though unknown destiny, beyond this life, a faith in eternity,—in short, an all-absorbing larger aspiration, overwhelms that petty faith which we might term personal, that faith in the morrow, that sort of goad that spurs on irresolute minds, and that is so needful if one must struggle and exist and accomplish something in this world." [1]

[Footnote 1: *Obras*, vol. II, pp. 222–229.]

This graceful musing, full in the original of those rich harmonies that only the Spanish language can express, will serve sufficiently to give an impression of the series as a whole. The broad but fervent faith expressed in the last lines indicates a deeply religious and somewhat mystical nature. This characteristic of Becquer may be noticed frequently in his writings and no one who reads his works attentively can call him elitist, as have some of his calumniators.

Beautiful as Becquer's prose may be considered, however, the universal opinion is that his claim to lasting fame rests on his verse. Mrs. Humphrey Ward, in her interesting article entitled "A Spanish Romanticist,"[1] says of him: "His literary importance indeed is only now beginning to be understood. Of Gustavo Becquer we may almost say that in a generation of rhymers he alone was a poet; and now that his work is all that remains to us of his brilliant and lovable personality, he only, it seems to us, among the crowd of modern Spanish versifiers, has any claim to a European audience or any chance of living to posterity." This diatribe against the other poets of contemporary Spain may seem to us unjust; but certain it is that Becquer in the eyes of many surpasses either Nuñez de Arce or Campoamor, with whom he forms "a triumvirate that directs and condenses all the manifestations of contemporary Spanish lyrics." [2]

[Footnote 1: *Macmillan's Magazine*, February, 1883, p. 307.]

[Footnote 2: Blanco Garcia, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 79.]

Becquer has none of the characteristics of the Andalusian. His lyrical genius is not only at odds with that of Southern Spain, but also with his own inclination for the plastic arts, says Blanco Garcia. "How could a Seville poet, a lover of pictorial and sculptural marvels, so withdraw from the outer form as to embrace the pure idea, with that melancholy subjectivism as common in the gloomy regions bathed by the Spree as it is unknown on the banks of the Darro and Guadalquivir?" [1] The answer to the problem must be found in his lineage.

[Footnote 1: *Ibid.*, p. 80.]

In spite of the fascination early exercised by Julia Espin y Guillén over the young poet, it may be doubted if she can fairly be said to have been the muse of his *Rimas*. She doubtless inspired some of his verse; but the poet seems to sing the praises or lament the cruelty of various sweethearts. The late Don Juan Valera, who knew Gustavo well, goes so far as to say: "I venture to suspect that none of these women ever lived in the world which we all corporeally inhabit. When the mind of the poet descended to this world, he had to struggle with so much poverty, he saw himself engulfed and swallowed up by so many trials, and he was obliged to busy himself with such prosaic matters of mean and commonplace bread-winning, that he did not seek, nor would he have found had he sought them, those elegant and semi-divine women that made of him now a Romeo, now a Macías, now an Othello, and now a Pen-arch.... To enjoy or suffer really from such loves and to become ensnared therein with such rare women, Becquer lacked the time, opportunity, health, and money.... His desire for love, like the arrow of the Prince in one of the tales of the Arabian Nights, shot high over all the actual *high-life* and pierced the golden door of the enchanted palaces and gardens of the Fairy Paribanú, who, enraptured by him, took him for her spouse." [1] In fact Becquer, speaking of the unreality of the numerous offspring of his imagination, says in the Introduction to his works, written in June, 1868: "It costs me labor to determine what things I have dreamed and what things have happened to me. My affections are divided between the phantasms of my imagination and real personalities. My memory confuses the names and dates, of women and days that have died or passed away with the days and women that have never existed save in my mind." [2]

[Footnote 1: *Florilegio de Poesías Castellanas del Siglo XIX*, con introducción y notas, por Juan Valera. Madrid, 1902, vol. I, pp. 186–188.]

[Footnote 2: *Obras*, vol. I, p. L.]

Whatever may be one's opinion of the personality of the muse or muses of his verse, the love that Becquer celebrates is not the love of oriental song, "nor yet the brutal deification of woman represented in the songs of the Provençal Troubadours, nor even the love that inspired Herrera and Garcilaso. It is the fantastic love of the northern ballads, timid and reposeful, full of melancholy tenderness, that occupies itself in weeping and in seeking out itself rather than in pouring itself forth on external objects." [1] In this matter of lyrical subjectivism Becquer is unique, for it cannot be found in any other of the Spanish poets except such mystic writers as San Juan de la Cruz or Fray Luis de León.

[Footnote 1: Blanco Garcia, *op. cit.*, p. 83.]

In one of Becquer's most beautiful writings in prose, in a *Proólogo* to a collection of *Cantares* by Augusto Ferran y Forniés, our author describes two kinds of poetry that present themselves to one's choice: "There is a poetry which is magnificent and sonorous, the offspring of meditation and art, which adorns itself with all the pomp of language, moves along with a cadenced majesty, speaks to the imagination, perfects its images, and leads it at will through unknown paths, beguiling with its harmony and beauty." "There is another poetry, natural, rapid, terse, which springs from the soul as an electric spark, which strikes our feelings with a word, and flees away. Bare of artificiality, free within a free form, it awakens by the aid of one kindred idea the thousand others that sleep in the bottomless ocean of fancy. The first has an acknowledged value; it is the poetry of everybody. The second lacks any absolute standard of measurement; it takes the proportions of the imagination that it impresses; it may be called the poetry of poets." [1]

[Footnote 1: *Obras*, vol. III, pp. 112–113.]

In this description of the short, terse, and striking compositions of his friend Ferran, Becquer has written likewise the apology for his own verse. His was a poetry of "rapid, elemental impressions." He strikes but one chord at a time on his lyre, but he leaves you thrilled. This extreme simplicity and naturalness of expression may be well illustrated by the refrain of the seventy-third poem:

¡Dios mío, qué solos
Se quedan los muertos!

His poetry has often been compared to that of Heine, whom he is said to have imitated. Becquer did not in fact read German; but in *El Museo Universal*, for which he was a collaborator, and in which he published his *Rimas*, there appeared one of the first versions of the *Intermezzo*, [1] and it is not unlikely that in imitation of the *Intermezzo* he was led to string his *Rimas* like beads upon the connecting thread of a common autobiographical theme. In the seventy-six short poems that compose his *Rimas*, Becquer tells "a swiftly-moving, passionate story of youth, love, treachery, despair, and final submission." "The introductory poems are meant to represent a stage of absorption in the beauty and complexity of the natural world, during which the poet, conscious of his own high, incommunicable gift, by which he sees into the life of things, is conscious of an aimless fever and restlessness which is forever turning delight into weariness." [2]

[Footnote 1: Blanco Garcia, *op. cit.*, p. 86.]

[Footnote 2: Mrs. Ward, *loc. cit.*, p. 316.]

Some of these poems are extremely beautiful, particularly the tenth. They form a sort of prelude to the love-story itself, which begins in our selections with the thirteenth. Not finding the realization of his ideal in art, the poet turns to love. This passion reaches its culminating point in the twenty-ninth selection, and with the thirtieth misunderstanding, dissatisfaction, and sadness begin. Despair assails him, interrupted with occasional notes of melancholy resignation, such as are so exquisitely expressed in the fifty-third poem, the best-known of all the poet's verse. With this poem the love-

story proper comes to a close, and "the melancholy, no doubt more than half imaginary and poetical, of his love poems seems to broaden out into a deeper sadness embracing life as a whole, and in which disappointed passion is but one of the many elements." [1] "And, lastly, regret and passion are alike hushed in the presence of that voiceless love which shines on the face of the dead and before the eternal and tranquil slumber of the grave." [2]

[Footnote 1: Mrs. Ward, *loc. cit.*, p.319.]

[Footnote 2: *Ibid.*, p. 316.]

Whatever Becquer may have owed to Heine, in form or substance, he was no servile imitator. In fact, with the exception of the thirtieth, no one of his *Rimas* seems to be inspired directly by Heine's *Intermezzo*. The distinguishing note in Heine's verse is sarcasm, while that of Becquer's is pathos. Heine is the greater poet, Becquer, the profounder artist. As Blanco Garcia well points out, [1] the moral inclinations of the two poets were distinct and different also. Becquer's instinct for the supernatural freed him from Heine's skepticism and irreligion; and, though he had suffered much, he never doubted Providence.

[Footnote 1: *op. cit.*, p.86.]

The influence of Alfred de Musset may be felt also in Becquer's *Rimas*, particularly in the forty-second and forty-third; but in general, the Spanish poet is "less worldly and less ardent" [1] than the French.

[Footnote 1: Corm, *op. cit.*, p. xl.]

The *Rimas* are written for the most part in assonanced verse. A harmonious rhythm seems to be substituted for the music of the rhyme. The meter, too, is very freely handled. Notwithstanding all this, the melody of Becquer's verse is very sweet, and soon catches and charms even the foreign ear. His *Rimas* created a school like that inspired by the *Doloras* of Campoamor. But the extreme simplicity and naturalness of Becquer's expression was difficult to reproduce without falling into the commonplace, and his imitators have for the most part failed.

**AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF THE POET
BECQUER, ONE OF THE FEW THAT HAVE
SURVIVED HIM, ADDRESSED TO SOR. C. FRANCO
DE LA IGLESIAS, MINISTERIO DE ULTRAMAR,
MADRID. DATED IN TOLEDO, JULY 18TH, 1869.[1]**

[Footnote 1: The accentuation and punctuation of the original are preserved. This letter is of particular interest, showing, as it does, the tender solicitude of Becquer for his children, his dire financial straits when a loan of three or four dollars is a godsend, and his hesitation to call upon friends for aid even when in such difficulties. The letter was presented to the writer of this sketch by Don Francisco de Laiglesia, a distinguished Spanish writer and man of public life and an intimate friend of Becquer. Señor de Laiglesia is the owner of the magnificent portrait of Gustavo by Valeriano Becquer, of the beauty of which but a faint idea can be had from the copy of the etching by Maura, which serves as a frontispiece to the present volume.]

Mi muy querido amigo:

Me volvi de esa con el cuidado de los chicos y en efecto parecia anunciarmelo apenas llegue cayó en cama el mas pequeño. Esto se prolonga mas de lo que pensamos y he escrito á Gaspar y á Valera que solo pagó la mitad del importe del cuadro Gaspar he sabido que salio ayer para Aguas Buenas y tardará en recibir mi carta Valera espero enviará ese pico pero suele gastar una calma desesperante en este apuro recurro una vez mas á vd. y aunque me duele abusar tanto de su amistad le ruego que si es posible me envíe tres ó cuatro duros para esperar el envio del dinero que aguardamos el cual es seguro pero no sabemos que dia vendrá y aqui tenemos al medico en casa y atenciones que no esperan un momento.

Adios estoy aburrido de ver que esto nunca cesa. Adios mande vd. á su amigo que le quiere

Gustavo Becquer

Expresiones á Pepe Marco S/c Calle de San Ildefonso Toledo. Si le es á vd. posible enviar eso hagalo si puede en el mismo dia que reciba esta carta por que el apuro es de momento.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

A list of the works consulted in the preparation of the sketch of Becquer's life.

WORKS BY BECQUER

Obras de Gustavo A. Becquer. *Quinta edición aumentada con varias poesías y leyendas.* Madrid, Librería de Fernando Fé, 1898. Three volumes.

Historia de los Templos de España, *publicada bajo la protección de SS. MM. AA. y muy reverendos señores arzobispos y obispos—dirigida por D. Juan de la Puerto Vizcaino y D. Gustavo Adolfo Becquer.* Tomo I, Madrid, 1857. *Imprenta y Estereotipia Española de los Señores Nieto y Campaña.* Becquer is the author of only a portion of this work—see Introduction, p. xx.

La Ilustración de Madrid, January 12–October 12, 1870, contains a large number of articles by Becquer that have never been published in book form. The same can be said of other periodicals for which Becquer collaborated.

TRANSLATIONS

Gustave Becquer—Légendes espagnoles. *Traduction de Achille Fouquier, dessins de S. Arcos.* Paris, Librairie de Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1885. French.

Terrible Tales—Spanish. W. W. Gibbings, London, W. C. In this collection the following seven out of the twelve tales that it contains are by Becquer,—"The Golden Bracelet," "The Green Eyes," "The Passion Flower," "The White Doe," "Maese Pérez, the Organist," "The Moonbeam," and "The Mountain of Spirits." The translation is often inaccurate.

WORKS OR ARTICLES ON BECQUER

P. Francisco Blanco Garcia. *La Literatura Española en el Siglo XIX, parte segunda,* Madrid, 1891, contains a good criticism of the literary work of Becquer, pp. 79–91, and pp. 274–277.

Narciso Campillo. *Gustavo Adolfo Becquer* is the title of an excellent article on the Seville poet, by one who knew him well, in *La Ilustración Artística*, Barcelona, December 27, 1886, pp. 358–360. This number (261—Año V) is dedicated to Becquer, and contains many prose articles and much verse relative to him.

Achille Fouquier. *Gustave Becquer, Légendes Espagnoles. Traduction de Achille Fouquier, dessins de S. Arcos.* Paris, Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1885,—*Avant-Propos*, pp. 1–19. An interesting sketch of Becquer's life and an excellent appreciation of his style.

José Gestoso y Pérez. *Carta á Mr. Achille Fouquier* is the title of a valuable article in *La Ilustración Artística*, Barcelona, December 27, 1886, pp. 363–366. This article contains important genealogical matter regarding Becquer, which had not until that time been published.

Eduardo de Lustono. Becquer is the title of a sketch by this writer, published in *Alrededor del Mundo*, No. 109, July 4, 1901, pp. 11–13, and No. 110, July 11, 1901, pp. 22–23. It is largely a copy of the article by Narciso Campillo, mentioned above, and of the following by Rodríguez Correa.

Ramón Rodríguez Correa. *Prólogo de las Obras de Gustavo A. Becquer. Quinta edición,* Madrid, Fernando Fé, 1898. Vol. I, pp. IX–XLV. This is the principal biography of Becquer and the source of all the others. Its author was Becquer's most intimate friend.

Juan Valera. In *Florilegio de Poesías Castellanas del Siglo XIX, Tomo I,* Madrid, Fernando Fé, 1902, pp. 182–191, may be found an excellent appreciation of the poet by one of the most capable of Spanish critics and a personal friend of Becquer.

P. Restituto del Valle Ruiz, Agustino. In his *Estudios Literarios*, pp. 104–116, there is a chapter devoted to Gustavo A. Becquer, which contains an interesting critique of his poetry.

Mrs. (Mary A.) Humphrey Ward, in *Macmillan's Magazine*, No. 280, February, 1883, pp. 305–320, has an article entitled "A Spanish Romanticist: Gustavo Becquer." This is one of the best articles on Becquer that have been published.

SPANISH PROSODY

The basis for the following remarks on Spanish prosody is, for the most part, E. Benot's *Prosodia Castellana y Versification*, 3 vols., Madrid, 1892. Other works which have been consulted are the *Ortologia y Arte Metrica* of A. Bello, published in his *Obras Completas*, vol. 4, Madrid, 1890; Rengifo's *Arte Poética Española*, Barcelona, 1759; J. D. M. Ford's "Notes on Spanish Prosody," in *A Spanish Anthology*, published by Silver, Burdett & Co., 1901; and a *Tratado de Literatura Preceptiva*, by D. Saturnino Milego é Inglada, published at Toledo in 1887.

Spanish versification has nothing to do with the quantity of vowels (whether long or short), which was the basis of Latin prosody.

There are four important elements in Spanish versification. Of these four elements two are essential, and the other two are usually present.

The essential elements, without which Spanish verse cannot exist, are—

- I. A determined number of syllables per line.
- II. A rhythmic distribution of the accents in the line.

The additional elements usually present in Spanish poetical compositions are—

- III. Caesural pauses.
- IV. Rhyme.

I. SYLLABIFICATION

Consonants.—In verse the same rules hold as in prose for the distribution of consonants in syllables.

Vowels.—If there were but one vowel in a syllable, Spanish syllabification would be easy; but sometimes two or more vowels are found either between consonants, or at the beginning or at the end of a word. When such is the case, intricacies arise, for sometimes the contiguous vowels are pronounced in a single syllable and sometimes they are divided into separate syllables.

The contiguous vowels may belong to a single word (see A); or they may be the final vowel or vowels of one word and the initial vowel or vowels of a following word or words (see B).

A. *Diphthongization*.—If two contiguous vowels of a single word are pronounced in but one syllable they form a diphthong, e.g. *hu^uesped*.

B. *Synalepha*.—If two or more contiguous vowels belonging to two or more words are pronounced in a single syllable, they form synalepha.

Ex. *Yo sé^un himno gigante y^uextraño*, p. 164, I, l. 1.

Since Spanish verse depends upon a determined number of syllables per line, *diphthongization* and *synalepha* are important factors in versification.

A. DIPHTHONGIZATION

Mute *h* between vowels is disregarded and does not prevent diphthongization, e.g. *a^hora*, *re^husar*.

The separation of two vowels that are usually united in one syllable is called *diaeresis*, e.g. *vil oleta*.

The union in one syllable of two vowels that are usually in separate syllables is called *synaeresis*, e.g. *ca^os*.

1. THE TWENTY-FIVE POSSIBLE COMBINATIONS OF VOWELS IN DIPHTHONGS

The vowels may be divided into strong vowels (a, e, o) and weak vowels (i, u). For purposes of versification y as a vowel may be treated as i. The five vowels (a, e, o, i, u) taken in pairs may form diphthongs in twenty-five possible combinations, as follows:

a. Pairs of two weak vowels: ui, iu, ii, uu.

b. Pairs of two strong vowels:

{ ae, ao, aa,

{ ea, eo, ee,

{ oa, oe, oo.

c. Pairs of a strong vowel plus a weak vowel

{ ai, au,

{ ei, eu,

{ oi, ou.

d. Pairs of a weak vowel plus a strong vowel

{ ua, ue, uo,

{ ia, ie, io.

NOTE: In diphthongs a dominates o and e; and o dominates e. Any strong vowel dominates a weak one.

Ex. In *Bo[^]abdíl*, if a were not dominant, the diphthong would be dissolved.

2. DIPHTHONGS AND WORD ACCENTUATION

There are with regard to accent three possible conditions under which two contiguous vowels may occur within a word.

a. The contiguous vowels may precede the accented syllable.

b. One of the contiguous vowels may be accented.

c. The contiguous vowels may come after the accented syllable.

a. Two contiguous vowels before the accent.

(1) Of the twenty-five possible combinations all are admissible in diphthongs in a syllable preceding the accented syllable.

Ex. *Habrá po[^]esta*, p. 165, IV, l. 4.

(a) Diaeresis may be employed to dissolve the diphthong.

Ex. *Sobre una viloleta*, p. 169, XIII, l. 8.

b. One of two contiguous vowels accented.

(1) *When two contiguous vowel's are strong.*

(a) There is no diphthong if one of two contiguous strong vowels receives the accent.

Ex. *Chispèlando el sol hiere*, p. 173, XXVI I, l. 17.

Ex. *Tú, sombra alérea que, cuantas veces*, p. 170, XV, l. 7.

By synaeresis, however, a diphthong may be formed, especially in the combinations *á[^]o*, *á[^]e*, *ó[^]e*—*c[^]a[^]o[^]s*, *c[^]a[^]e*, *ro[^]e*. But in order to diphthongize *oa*, *ea*, and *eo*, when the accent naturally falls on the first vowel, the accent must shift to the second, which is a dominant vowel. Such

diphthongization is harsh. For example, *loa* would shift the accent from *o* to *a* in order to form a diphthong. The accent would also shift in *cre^a*, *fe^o*.

(2) *When one of the contiguous vowels is weak and the other strong.*

(a) There is no diphthong if an accented weak vowel precedes a strong.

Ex. *Yo, que á tus ojos en mi agonía*, p. 171, XV, l. 18. Synaeresis is, however, sometimes employed to overcome this rule. The accent must then shift.

Ex. *Habi^a llegado una nave*. Calderón.

(b) There is no diphthong if an accented weak vowel follows a strong.

Ex. *¿Cómo puede relir?* p. 182, XLIX, l. 4.

Synaeresis serves sometimes to overcome this rule. The result is usually harsh.

Ex. *En re^{ir} á costa ajena, les prepara*.

(c) If an accented strong vowel precedes a weak, they form a diphthong. The diphthong is rarely dissolved, and is usually marked with a diaeresis, if dissolution takes place.

Ex. *Beso del aura, onda de luz*, p. 170, XV, l. 5.

(d) If an accented strong vowel follows a weak they may or may not form a diphthong.

Ex. *Por una sonrisa, un ci^{elo}*, p. 172, XXIII, l. 2. [Diphthong.]

Ex. *Domando el rebelde, mezuquino idi^{loma}*, p. 164, I, l. 6. [No diphthong.]

Diaeresis or synaeresis may usually be employed according to the case.

Thus, *fiel* becomes by diaeresis *fi^{el}*, and *brlioso* becomes by synaeresis *bri^o*.

It should be remembered that in some words the accentuation is variable, while in others it is fixed.

There are two classes of words that have a variable accentuation: first, those in which an unaccented weak vowel is followed by an accented strong vowel, e.g. *majestu^{oso}*, *majestuloso*; second, those in which an accented strong vowel is followed by an unaccented strong vowel, e.g. *tral^e*, *tra^e*.

Ex. *Cre^{es} que la afelan*. Becquer.

Creles que suspirando pasa el viento, p. 171, XVI, l. 3.

Etymological conditions often determine whether or not a diphthong is formed.

ie and *ue*, derived from the Latin *e* and *o* respectively, form indissoluble diphthongs.

The ending *-ión* for substantives is usually a diphthong and rarely suffers dissolution.

Synaeresis may be employed to unite in a single syllable two contiguous vowels (unaccented weak + accented strong) that are separated on account of etymology, or, in the case of derivatives, analogy with the original word; but diaeresis is employed very rarely to dissolve a proper diphthongal combination (unaccented weak + accented strong).

For example, *dilario* by analogy with *día*, and *filó* from the Latin *fidavit*, have ordinarily the *i* in separate syllables, but a diphthong may be formed by synaeresis.

(3) *When the two contiguous vowels are weak.*

(a) Two contiguous weak vowels with the accent on the first form an indissoluble diphthong, e.g. *mu^y*.

(b) Two contiguous weak vowels with the accent on the second may or may not form a diphthong.

Ex. *Si antes no juras que por ruⁱⁿ falsía*. Hermosilla. [Diphthong.]

Ex. *Con sus mil rüidos*, p. 188, LXXIII, l. 19, [No diphthong.]

c. Two contiguous vowels after the accented syllable.

(1) Two contiguous strong vowels after the accented syllable naturally form a diphthong.

Ex. *Tú, sombra aérea que, cuantas veces*, p. 170, XV, l. 7.

Diaeresis may be employed to dissolve the diphthong.

(2) If a strong vowel is followed by a weak vowel after the accented syllable, they form a diphthong, e.g. *hablabais, amaraís*.

This diphthong is easily dissolved.

(3) If a weak vowel is followed by a strong vowel after the accented syllable, they form a diphthong, e.g. *historia, ansia*.

Ex. *De la brisa nocturna al tenue soplo*, p. 192, LXXV, l. 6.

The diphthong may, however, be dissolved, e.g. *estatula, tenue, nadile*.

3. TRIPHTHONGS AND COMBINATIONS OF THREE OR MORE CONTIGUOUS VOWELS

If three vowels belonging to the same word are contiguous, one of them must be accented. There are then three possible arrangements.

(i) Three contiguous vowels of a word with the accent on the first, e.g. *tráeos*.

(ii) Three contiguous vowels of a word with the accent on the second, e.g. *creia, buey*.

(iii) Three contiguous vowels with the accent on the third, e.g. *rehuí*.

Each of the above arrangements has two combinations of accented and unaccented vowels to which the rules for diphthongs may be applied. In (i) there will be a combination of two vowels with the first accented, plus a combination of two vowels after the accent. In *tráeos*, for example, the *a* and *e* would probably be in separate syllables by b (1) (a), and *eo* would probably form a diphthong by c (1). *Tráeos* would, then, probably be a dissyllable.

In (ii) there will be a combination of two vowels with the accent on the second, and one of two vowels with the accent on the first. In *creia*, for example, the *e* and *í* would be in separate syllables by b (2) (b), and the *í* and *a* would probably be in separate syllables also by b (2)(a). Therefore, *creia* would probably be a trisyllable. In *cambiáos* the *i* and *á* might form one syllable or two by b (2) (d), and the *á* and *o* would probably be in separate syllables by b (1) (a). Therefore, in *cambiáos* the combination *íao* might form a dissyllable or a trisyllable.

In (iii) there will be a combination of two vowels before the accent, and one of two vowels with the second accented. In *rehuí*, for example, the *e* and *u* might be in the same syllable by a (1), or in separate syllables by diaeresis by a (1) (a), and the *u* and *í* might be in separate syllables or not by b (3) (b). Therefore, *rehuí* might be a monosyllable, a dissyllable, or a trisyllable.

Other combinations of three vowels may be analyzed in a similar way, as may also combinations of more than three vowels, e.g. *creíais*, etc.

B. SYNALEPHA

Between the contiguous vowels of separate words there may occur synalepha (which corresponds to diphthongization within a word), or hiatus (which is similar to diaeresis within a word).

Ex. *Abre una eternidad*, p. 178, XXXVII, l. 22. *¿Á qué me lo decís? lo sé es mudable*, p. 179, XXXIX, l. 1. [Synalepha.]

Ex. *Como la onda azul, en cuya cresta*, p. 173, XXVII, l. 16. [Hiatus.]

The vowels contracted by synalepha are each pronounced, except when the same vowel is repeated, when only a prolonged sound is heard, as in *onda azul* or *sé es* above.

Synalepha may join into a single syllable two, three, four, and even five vowels. The union of two vowels (diphthongal synalepha) and the union of three vowels (triphthongal synalepha) are the most common.

A pause due to a break in sense does not prevent synalepha. Mute h is disregarded in the verse and does not prevent synalepha.

Ex. *Capaz de encerrarlo, y apénas joh^hermosa!* p. 164, I, l. 10.

1. DIPHTHONGAL SYNALEPHA

a. Synalepha takes place between two contiguous unaccented vowels belonging to separate words.

Ex. *Abre^una^eternidad*, p. 178, XXXVII, l. 22.

b. Synalepha occurs when the final vowel of the first word is accented.

Ex. *Te ví^un punto, y, flotando ante mis ojos*, p. 169, XIV, l. 1.

c. Synalepha usually occurs when the initial vowel of the second word is accented, especially when the first word ends in a weak vowel, and also in the combinations *aá, oá, oa, eá, eó, eé*.

Ex. *Me parece^en el cielo de la tarde*, p. 169, XIII, l. 11.

NOTE: Synalepha is possible with the other combinations, but hiatus is preferable even with the above combinations, in a syllable on which the rhythmical accent falls (see under Rhythmic Accent).

Ex. *Despierta, hablas, y al hablar, vibrantes*, p. 174, XXVII, l. 23.

Ex. *Como la ola que á la playa viene*, p. 178, XXXVII, l. 19.

2. TRIPHTHONGAL SYNALEPHA

a. There is always triphthongal synalepha when *a* is the middle vowel; or when *o* or *e* is the middle vowel, except in the following combinations, *aoa, aoo, ooo, aea, aeo, oea, oeo*.

Ex. *Silenciosa á expirar*, p. 178, XXXVII, l. 20.

b. There is never triphthongal synalepha when an accented weak vowel stands between two strong vowels. Therefore the conjunctions *y* and *ú* prevent triphthongal synalepha.

Ex. *Y de purpura y oro la matiza*, p. 168, IX, l. 4.

c. There may be triphthongal synalepha when *í* (*y*) is the middle vowel, if *u* precedes it, or *i* follows it.

Ex. *Fuí diestro, fuí valiente, fuí arrogante*. Cervantes.

d. When *u* is the middle vowel there may be synalepha if *i* follows it. The construction is very rare.

e. There is no synalepha with a word beginning with *hue*.

Ex. *Mucho nuestro huesped tarda*. Tirso de Molina.

f. In the following cases the groups of vowels which would usually make triphthongal synalepha are pronounced in two syllables:

(1) When the first word of the group ends in two vowels which do not form a diphthong.

Ex. *Que aún tenía^abiertos*, p. 187, LXXIII, l. 2.

(2) When the two initial vowels of the second word do not form a diphthong.

Ex. *Tú, sombra^alérea que, cuantas veces*, p. 170, XV, l. 7.

(3) When the first word ends in a diphthong and the second begins with a vowel in a constituent syllable (i.e. a syllable on which the rhythmical accent falls).

Ex. *Tan gran designio honra tus audacias*.

If the accented vowel is not in a constituent syllable synalepha may occur.

Ex. *Mientras la cencia á descubrir no alcance*, p. 165, IV, l. 13.

(4) When the first word ends in a single vowel, and the second word begins with a diphthong in a constituent syllable.

Ex. *Tú, proceloso austro que derribas.*

(3) and (4) might well be considered as cases of hiatus.

3. SYNALEPHA BETWEEN FOUR OR MORE VOWELS

This is less common, yet it exists.

Ex. *No^ha^yamor donde no hay celos.* Lope de Vega.

4. HIATUS

Hiatus is most frequently found between words having a close syntactical relation, particularly if the initial vowel of the second word is in a constituent syllable. It may occur between the article and its substantive, the possessive adjective and its substantive, a preposition and its object, the negatives *no* and *ni* and a following vowel; and after the conjunctions *y*, *que*, *si*, and other words having a weak accent such as *desde*, *coma*, *todo*, *otro*, *cuando*, etc.

Hiatus is most likely to occur when the accented vowel is the initial vowel of the final word in a phrase or verse, or of a word that has a strongly accented position in the verse; as, for example, when the syllable is the next to the last syllable in a verse, or is the fourth or eighth syllable of a hendecasyllabic verse of the second class.

Ex. *Rumor de besos y batir de alas*, p. 168, X, l. 6.

Ex. *Como la ola que á la playa viene*, p. 178, XXXVII, l. 19.

In the above-mentioned case, the phrase *de^oro* is usually joined by synalepha.

Ex. *Mi frente es pálida, mis trenzas de^oro.* Becquer.

Hiatus is, however, sometimes observed in this phrase.

Ex. *De plumas y de oro*, p. 180, XL, l. 28.

When both vowels are accented hiatus is more common than synalepha, even though there is no close syntactical relation, although the vowels may be joined by synalepha if they do not come in a constituent syllable.

Ex. *¡Oh yá isla católica patente!* Herrera. [Hiatus.]

Ex. *¿Sabes tú^á dónde va?* p. 178, XXXVIII, l. 4. [Synalepha.]

II. RHYTHMIC ACCENT

The second essential element of Spanish verse is a rhythmic distribution of accents within a line. Words have an accent of their own and another stronger accent on account of their position in a verse.

This extraordinary accentual stress, which strengthens periodically certain naturally accented syllables of a verse, is known as *rhythmic accent*. It plays somewhat the same rôle as did quantity in Latin verse. All other accents and pauses in the verse are subservient to the rhythmic accent.

Spanish verse being accentual, however, and not quantitative, the terms used to determine the regular recurrence of long and short syllables in Latin verse are not very applicable to it, and few compositions are regular in the arrangement of the stress.

A. LATIN TERMS OF VERSIFICATION APPLIED TO SPANISH VERSE

As Latin terms of versification are sometimes applied to Spanish verse, the following rules may be helpful.

1. A *trochaic* octosyllabic line, for example, substituting stress for quantity, would be scanned

/ - | / - | / - | / —,

with the stress on the first, third, fifth, and seventh syllables.

2. *Iambic* verse would have a regular alternation of unaccented and accented syllables, - / - /, etc.

3. *Dactylic* verse would have a regular recurrence of an accented syllable followed by two unaccented syllables, etc.

/ — — | / — — |, etc.

4. *Amphibrachic* verse would be formed by a regular recurrence of three syllables of which the middle one would be stressed, - / —. This construction is sometimes followed in lines of twelve syllables (p. 164, I, 1. 2), and also in lines of six syllables (p. 167, VII, 1.-4).

5. *Anapestic* verse consists of a regular recurrence of two unstressed syllables preceding a stressed syllable, — — / . This is sometimes found in ten-syllable lines (p. 164, I, 1. i).

B. SPANISH VERSE ENDINGS

An accented word is called *aguda* when it has the accent on the last syllable, e.g. *verdad, luz, yo; llana* (or grave) when it has the accent on the penult, e.g. *trabajo, fruto; esdrújula* when it has the accent on the antepenult, e.g. *límpido, pájaro, pórtico*.

A verse is called *agudo, llano* (or grave), or *esdrújulo* according to whether its final word is *aguda, llana* (or grave), or *esdrújula*.

1. In a *verso agudo* the last syllable counts for two syllables. Therefore, *Ni tu ni yo jamás*, p. 177, XXXIII, 1. 2, is a heptasyllable.

2. In a *verso llano* (grave) the number of syllables does not change. Therefore, *Detrás del abanico*, p. 180, XL, 1. 27, is a heptasyllable.

3. In a *verso esdrújulo*, the intermediate syllable between the accented syllable and the final syllable does not count, either in enumerating the syllables in the verse or for the rhyme (assonance). Therefore, *Umbrales de su pórtico*, p. 180, XL, 1. 32, is a heptasyllable.

C. THE DISTRIBUTION OF RHYTHMIC ACCENTS

In verses of different length there are different rules with regard to the distribution of accents, but the following general rules should be observed.

1. Every verse must be accented upon the syllable nominally preceding the final syllable.

NOTE: It should be borne in mind that the actual final syllable in a *verso agudo* counts as two syllables, and that the next to the last actual syllable in a *verso esdrújulo* does not count.

2. Besides the necessary accent on the next to the last syllable, all verses of seven syllables or more must have other necessary accents, which are determined by the number of syllables in the line.

3. The syllable directly preceding the one that has the rhythmical accent should never be accented, for it obstructs the proper accentuation of the constituent syllable. A syllable so accented is called *obstruccionista*.

D. THE NUMBER OF SYLLABLES IN SPANISH VERSE

Spanish verse may consist of any number of syllables from two up to sixteen. All must have an accent on the next to the last syllable.

1. *Dissyllabic Verse*: A dissyllabic verse may be composed of a single word (either *aguda*, *llana*, or *esdrújula*).

Ex. *¡Duerme!* p. 173, XXVII, l. 13.

There can be no supernumerary accents.

2. *Trisyllabic Verse*: A verse of three syllables can have no supernumerary accent, for the accent would be *obstruccionista*.

Ex. *Suspira*.

3. *Tetrasyllabic Verse*: A verse of four syllables must have an accent on the third syllable. There may or may not be a supernumerary accent on the first.

Ex. *De ese brío*.

4. *Pentasyllabic Verse*: A verse of five syllables must have an accent on the fourth. It may or may not have a supernumerary accent on the first or second syllable.

Ex. *Rumor sonóro*, p. 170, XV, l. 3.

5. *Adonic verse* is a pentasyllable with necessary accents on the first and fourth syllables.

Ex. *Céfiro blando*. Villegas.

6. *Hexasyllabic Verse*: A verse of six syllables must have an accent on the fifth. There may or may not be supernumerary accents, but never on the fourth syllable.

5

Ex. *Y[^]entre[^]aquella sombra*

2 5

Veíase[^]á[^]intervalos

3 5

Dibujarse rígida

2 5

La forma del cuerpo, p. 188, LXXIII, ll. 13–16.

7. *Heptasyllabic Verse*: A verse of seven syllables must have an accent on the sixth, and at least one other necessary accent, which may be on any syllable except the fifth.

2 6

Ex. *Su mano[^]entre mis manos*,

2 6

Sus ojos en mis ojos, p. 179, XL, ll. 1–2.

8. *Octosyllabic Verse*: A verse of eight syllables must have an accent on the seventh, and at least one other accent, which may fall on any syllable except the sixth.

1 4 7
Ex. *Hojas del árbol caídas*
2 5 7
Juguetes al viento son. Espronceda.

9. *Hendecasyllabic verse*: There are two classes of hendecasyllables.

First Class: Verses of eleven syllables which have the sixth syllable and the tenth syllable stressed are hendecasyllables of the first class.

Ex. *Los invisibles 'átomos del 'aire*, p. 168, X, l. 1.

Hendecasyllables of the first class may have supernumerary accents on other syllables, provided they do not fall upon the fifth or ninth.

Ex. *Los sus'pires son 'aire, y van al 'aire.*

Las 'lágrimas son 'agua, y van al 'mar. p. 178, XXXVIII, ll. 1–2.

Second Class: Hendecasyllables of the second class are eleven-syllable verses with the accent on the fourth, eighth, and tenth syllables. There may be accents on other syllables, provided that they be not *obstruccionistas*.

Ex. *Olas gi'gantes qu'^e^os rom'péis bra'mando*, p. 183, LII, l. 1.

If it is difficult to classify a hendecasyllable because it has accents on the fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth syllables, one must decide on the prominence of the accents from pauses, or from emphasis. The hendecasyllable,

La vida es 'corta, 'sí; muy 'largo el 'arte,

would belong to the first class on account of the emphasis of *sí*, while the verse,

La vida es 'corta, 'corta; 'largo el 'arte,

would belong to the second class on account of the pause after the fourth and the emphasis on the eighth. The accent on the sixth is, then, not constituent, but supernumerary.

10. All meters thus far have

a. Obligatory (constituent) accents.

b. Facultative (supernumerary) accents.

c. A necessary termination in a combination of an unaccented plus an accented plus an unaccented syllable (– / —). The dissyllable is the only exception.

The facultative accent is opposed to the regular recurrence in each line of dissyllabic and trisyllabic elements, which elements caused the rhythm of Latin verse.

Spanish rhythm is a rhythm of series, of strophes, not a rhythm of regularly recurring accents within a verse.

Verses of ten or twelve syllables, however, lend themselves more readily to rhythm from regularly recurring stress.

11. *Decasyllabic Verse*: A verse of ten syllables may be formed by the triple repetition of the trisyllable – — / . One extra unaccented syllable is admissible when the verse is *llano*; and two when the verse is *esdrújulo*.

Scheme:

– — / – — / – — , agudo.

— / — — , — — , — llano.
 — — / — — / — — / — — esdrújulo.

12. *Dodecasyllable Verse*: A verse of twelve syllables, with the stress on the second, fifth, eighth, and eleventh syllables, makes a dodecasyllable of amphibrachs. This dodecasyllable has a short metrical pause after the sixth syllable, and a longer one after the twelfth.

Scheme:

- / - — / - || - / - — / agudo.
 - / - — / - || - / - — / - llano.
 - / - — / - / - — / - — esdrújulo.

13. Verses of different length do not readily intermingle. There are some measures, however, which are used much together.

- a. Verses of eleven syllables are used with those of seven or of five syllables.
- b. Verses of eight syllables are used with those of four syllables.
- c. Verses of ten syllables are used with those of twelve (p. 164, I); and also with those of six (p. 167, VII). These meters lend themselves to regularly recurring stress more readily than any others.

III. CAESURAL PAUSES

The caesura is an important, though not essential, element in Spanish verse. In verses of eleven or twelve syllables, however, the caesura is usually employed to give a break in a determined place. The caesura requires a strong accent on the syllable preceding it, and does not prevent synalepha.

Ex. *Si al resonar confuslo^á tus espaldas*, p. 171, XVI, l. 7.

Ex. *Sabe que, ocullo^entre las verdes hojas*, p. 171, XVI, l.5.

The disposition of the caesural pauses determines the harmony of the versification, and usually varies with the accents so as to avoid monotony in the verse.

IV. RHYME

N.B. For purposes of Rhyme, words may be divided into two classes:

First, words ending in a vowel.

Second, words ending in a consonant.

Rhymes are called feminine, if the rhyme words end in a vowel.

Rhymes are called masculine, if the rhyme words end in a consonant.

NOTE: Final s and final n, especially in the plural of nouns and in verbs, do not count. Therefore, *penas* and *arenas* would form a feminine rhyme.

There are two kinds of rhyme: Consonance and Assonance.

A. CONSONANCE

Consonantal rhyme is one in which all the letters, vowels and consonants, are the same from the accented syllable to the end of the word, e.g. *bruma—espuma; flor—amor*.

In consonantal rhyme both consonants and vowels should agree exactly (*sonante—errante*); b and v can, however, rhyme together, since they represent the same sound, e.g. *estaba—esclava; haba—clava*.

The following are a few general rules for consonantal rhyme.

1. A word should not rhyme with itself. Sometimes, however, a simple word rhymes with a derivative (*menor—pormenor*) or two derivatives with each other (*menosprecio—desprecio*).

2. The tenses of verbs which end in -aba, -ando, -áis, -éis; the present and past participles of regular verbs; adverbs with the termination -mente; verbal nouns ending in -miento, -ción, and other similar endings,—should not rhyme together.

3. Words similar in sound and form but distinct in meaning may rhyme.
son ('sound')—*son* ('are')

4. If an unaccented weak vowel (i, u) precedes or follows a strong vowel in the same syllable of a word, it is absorbed by the strong vowel, and does not count in the rhyme. Therefore, *vuelo* and *cielo* rhyme; also *muestra* and *diestra*.

B. ASSONANCE

When the vowels from the accented syllable to the end of the word are the same, but the consonants are different, the rhyme is called assonance. Therefore, *inflaman* and *pasa* assonate in á-a; *negros* and *creo* in e-o.

1. In words accented on the last syllable (*agudas*), the assonance is that of the last syllable only, e.g. *perdón—espiró; azul—tú*.

2. In words accented on the antepenult (*esdrújulas*) or on a preceding syllable, only the accented syllable and the final syllable count for purposes of assonance. Therefore, *fábula* and *lágrimas* assonate in á-a; *trémulo* and *vértigo* assonate in é-o.

3. Words accented on the last syllable (*agudas*) cannot assonate with words accented on the penult (*llanas*), or with those accented on the antepenult (*esdrújulas*) or upon any preceding syllable.

4. In words *llanas* or *esdrújulas* the assonance is of two vowels only. In diphthongs the accented vowel only is considered if the diphthong occur in an accented syllable. Therefore, *verte* and *duermes* assonate in e-e; *baile* and *parte* assonate in a-e.

5. Words *llanas* may assonate with words accented on the antepenult (*esdrújulas*). Therefore, *pórtico* and *olmos* assonate in ó-o.

6. For purposes of assonance little use is made of words accented on a syllable preceding the antepenult.

7. In a final accented or unaccented syllable u and i are absorbed, for purposes of assonance, by a preceding or following a, o, or e. Therefore, *sabia* and *gratia* assonate in á-a; *igual* and *mar* assonate in a, *pleita* and *pliega* assonate in é-a.

8. If in assonance a weak vowel is united in a diphthong with a strong vowel, the assonance is called *compound assonance*, e.g. *guarda—fatua*.

9. Assonance between two single vowels is called *simple assonance*, e.g. *sangre—trae*.

This distinction is of little value, however, for verses in simple and compound assonance alternate constantly.

10. In the case of two strong vowels forming a diphthong after an accented syllable, the following rules apply.

a. a in a final unaccented syllable predominates over a preceding or succeeding o in the same syllable. Therefore, *Astárloa* and *Dánao* assonate in á-a.

b. a in a final unaccented syllable predominates over a preceding or following e in the same syllable. Therefore, *corpórea* and *rósea* assonate in ó-a.

c. o in a final unaccented syllable predominates over a preceding e in the same syllable. Therefore, *óleo* and *erróneo* assonate in ó-o; but o in a final unaccented syllable is dominated by a following e in the same syllable, and the e counts in the assonance. Therefore, *héroe* and *vecés* assonate in é-e.

11. When two weak vowels (i, u) are united in a diphthong, the second predominates. Thus *triunfo* and *chulo* assonate in ú-o; *cuido* and *bendito* assonate in i-o.

12. There are twenty possible assonances in Spanish: á, ó, é, i, ú, á-a, á-e, á-o, é-a, é-e, é-o, ó-a, ó-e, ó-o, i-a, i-e, i-o, ú-a, ú-e, ú-o.

13. Words that have in the final unaccented syllable i or u, not in diphthongs, are considered for purposes of assonance as if ending in e or o respectively. Therefore, *fácil* and *nave* assonate in á-e; *espíritu* and *líquido*, in i-o.

14. If ai occurs in a syllable after an a in the accented syllable, the i rather than the a of the diphthong counts in the assonance. Therefore, *cantares* and *trocabais* assonate in á-e. If the accented vowel is not a, the a of ai counts in the assonance. Therefore, *Vicenta* and *quisierais* assonate in é-a.

15. Consonantal rhyme should not be introduced in compositions written in assonance. This rule is not always observed (see pp. 183–184, LIII).

16. The assonance of alternate lines (the even numbers) is the rule in modern Spanish. If the composition is short the same assonance may be kept throughout.

Blank Verse.—Verses which lack both consonantal rhyme and assonance occur in Spanish, and are called *versos sueltos* (or *libres*). Compositions in blank verse are, however, extremely difficult to write in Spanish, and are therefore comparatively rare.

STROPHES

The strophe is frequently of arbitrary length, yet when the poet has once fixed the measure of his strophe he is supposed to preserve the same measure throughout. The following are some of the strophic arrangements in Spanish.

1. *Pareados* are pairs of contiguous verses of the same number of syllables, which rhyme[1] together in pairs.

[Footnote 1: By *rhyme* hereafter shall be understood *consonantal* rhyme, unless otherwise indicated.]

2. *Tercetos* are a series of strophes, in the first of which the first verse rhymes with the third, and, from the second strophe on, the first and third verse of each successive strophe rhyme with the middle verse of the preceding strophe. This form of verse is known in Italian as *terza rima*. The composition ends with a *serventesio* (see below), of which the first and third verses rhyme with the middle verse of the preceding strophe. The rhyme-scheme, then, would be a b a, b c b, c d c, etc., d e d e.

3. *Cuartetas*, properly so called, are strophes of four eight-syllable verses, of which the second verse rhymes (or is in assonance) with the fourth. *Cuarteta* is likewise a general name given to strophes of four verses.

Serventesios are strophes of four hendecasyllables, of which the first rhymes or assonates with the third, and the second with the fourth.

4. *Redondillas* are strophes of four eight-syllable (or sometimes six-syllable) verses which rhyme as follows: a b b a.

5. *Cuartetos* are strophes of four hendecasyllables with the rhyme-scheme a b b a. It is not customary to put a final word that is *aguda* in the uneven verses of compositions written in hendecasyllables, or in verses that rhyme with them. Sometimes the four verses are esdrújulos.

6. *Romances*, which are the most used of all forms, need not be written in *cuartetas*. It is sufficient that the even verses be in assonance and the uneven verses free. Romances, properly so called, are composed of octosyllabic verses.

7. *Romancillos* are romances composed of verses with less than eight syllables.

Romances heróicos are romances composed of hendecasyllabic verses, all of which are *llanos*.

8. *Quintillas* are combinations of five verses that have but two rhymes, of which one occurs three times and the other twice. These verses may rhyme at the will of the poet, provided that three verses having the same rhyme do not follow each other successively. Of the possible arrangements the following occur most frequently: a a b b a, a b b a a, a b a b a, a b a b b.

9. *Sextinas* are usually composed of six hendecasyllabic verses in which a *serventesio* is followed by a *pareado*.

The first, third, and fifth verses, however, may rhyme together, and the second, fourth, and sixth.

There are also *sextinas* which have the third and sixth verses with a consonantal rhyme in words that are *agudas*, while the first and second, and the fourth and fifth, form *pareados*.

In compositions written in *sextinas* the succeeding strophes have the same arrangement as the first.

10. Octavas:

a. *Octavas de Arte mayor* are composed of eight dodecasyllables divided into two equal hemistichs, with the accents on the second, fifth, seventh, and eleventh syllables. The first verse rhymes with the fourth, fifth, and eighth; the second with the third; and the sixth with the seventh. Sometimes the second rhymes with the fourth, the fifth with the eighth, the first with the third, the sixth with the seventh.

b. *Octavas reales* are strophes of eight hendecasyllabic verses (*llanos*), of which the first six rhyme alternately and the last two form a *pareado*.

When *octavas* of this form have eight-syllable verses or less, they are called *octavillas*.

c. *Octavas and Octavillas Italianas*:

There are four variants, but all must have the fourth and eighth verses *agudos*.

First variant: There is no *verso libre*, and the rhyme-scheme is a b b c a d d c.

Second variant: The first and fifth verses are *libres* and the others rhyme 1 b b c 5 d d c. This form is the most used of all.

Third variant: All the verses are *libres* except the fourth and eighth.

Fourth variant: The rhymes have some other arrangement than those mentioned in the three preceding cases.

11. *Décimas* are strophes of ten octosyllabic verses with the rhyme-scheme a b b a a c c d d c.

Thus far all the compositions treated have been strophes, of which all the lines have the same number of syllables.

The most common strophes having an unequal number of syllables in the component verses are as follows:

12. *Endechas reales* are *cuartetas* in which three heptasyllables are followed by a hendecasyllable. The even verses are usually in assonance, although the verses may have the rhyme-scheme a b a b.

13. The *Lira* is a strophe of five verses, of which the first, third, and fourth are heptasyllables, and the second and fifth are hendecasyllables. The rhyme-scheme is a b a b b.

14. *Seguidillas* are strophes composed of seven verses, three of which are heptasyllables and four pentasyllables. The first, third, and sixth verses are *libres*, the second and fourth have the same assonance, and the fifth and seventh another distinct assonance.

15. *Silvas* are series of strophes composed of hendecasyllables and heptasyllables of unequal number and unevenly distributed with a free arrangement of rhymes. Every verse should rhyme with another, yet sometimes a verse is left unrhymed in long compositions.

16. The *Sonnet* is taken from the Italian and has the same general forms. It is written in hendecasyllables, and is always divided into four parts—two quatrains and two tercets.

17. *Versos sueltos* (blank verse) are verses which do not assonate with the other contiguous verses, or with the nearest words in which the sense demands a pause.

There are many other and very artificial forms that exist, but their treatment would be irrelevant here. During the nineteenth century the caprice of the poet invented many new forms of which the arrangement is evident at a glance.

In closing, it should be said that this study of Spanish prosody, which is primarily intended as an aid to the reading of Becquer's poetry contained in this volume, is necessarily too brief to be exhaustive, and many things are purposely omitted, as, for example, certain unusual forms of verse such as the nine-syllable verse or that of more than twelve syllables. Wherever it has been found convenient, references have been made to Becquer's poems to illustrate points of versification.

**LEGENDS, TALES, AND POEMS
BY BECQUER
DESDE MI CELDA**

(Cartas Literarias)

CARTA SEXTA

Queridos amigos: Hará cosa de dos à tres años, tal vez leerían[1] ustedes en los periódicos de Zaragoza[2] la relación de un crimen que tuvo lugar en uno de los pueblecillos de estos contornos. Tratábase del asesinato de una pobre vieja á quien sus convecinos acusaban de bruja. Últimamente, y por una coincidencia extraña, he tenido ocasión de conocer los detalles y la historia circunstanciada de un hecho que se comprende apenas en mitad de un siglo tan despreocupado como el nuestro.[3]

[Footnote 1: leerían ustedes = 'you may have read.']

[Footnote 2: Zaragoza = 'Saragossa.' A Spanish city of some 99,000 inhabitants, capital of the province of the same name, situated on the Ebro river at its junction with the Huerva. It is famous for its two cathedrals, *El Pilar* and *La Seo*, and for its obstinate and heroic resistance at the time of the siege by the French in 1808.]

[Footnote 3: The belief in witchcraft is still prevalent in some quarters, and as late as 1863 a man was drowned at Hedingham, in Essex, Eng., for being a wizard, his accusers and persecutors being village tradesmen. See Brewer, *Dictionary of Miracles*, Phila., Lippincott & Co., 1884, p. 345.]

Ya estaba para acabar el día. El cielo, que desde el amanecer se mantuvo cubierto y nebuloso, comenzaba á obscurecerse á medida que el sol, que antes transparentaba su luz á través de las nieblas, iba debilitándose, cuando, con la esperanza de ver su famoso castillo como término y remate de mi artística expedición, dejé á Litago[1] para encaminarme á Trasmoz,[2] pueblo del que me separaba una distancia de tres cuartos de hora por el camino más corto. Como de costumbre, y exponiéndome, á trueque de examinar á mi gusto los parajes más ásperos y accidentados, á las fatigas y la incomodidad de perder el camino por entre aquellas zarzas y peñascales, tomé el más difícil, el más dudoso y más largo, y lo perdí en efecto, á pesar de las minuciosas instrucciones de que me pertreché á la salida del lugar.

[Footnote 1: Litago. A small village of some 600 inhabitants, situated in the province of Saragossa on the northern slope of the Moncayo (see p. 8, note 1) to the west of the river Huecha, not far from Alcalá de Moncayo.]

[Footnote 2: Trasmoz. A small village of some 300 inhabitants, situated in the province of Saragossa near the Moncayo and not far from the river Huecha. It contains an ancient castle. See p. 13, note 1.]

Ya enzarzado en lo más espeso y fragoso del monte, llevando del diestro la caballería por entre sendas casi impracticables, ora por las cumbres para descubrir la salida del laberinto, ora por las honduras con la idea de cortar terreno, anduve vagando al azar un buen espacio de tarde hasta que por último, en el fondo de una cortadura tropecé con un pastor, el cual abrevaba su ganado en el riachuelo que, después de deslizarse sobre un cauce de piedras de mil colores, salta y se retuerce allí con un ruido particular que se oye á gran distancia, en medio del profundo silencio de la naturaleza que en aquel punto y á aquella hora parece muda ó dormida.

Pregunté al pastor el camino del pueblo, el cual según mis cuentas no debía distar mucho del sitio en que nos encontrábamos, pues aunque sin senda fija, yo había procurado adelantar siempre en la dirección que me habían indicado. Satisfizo el buen hombre mi pregunta lo mejor que pudo, y ya me disponía á proseguir mi azarosa jornada, subiendo con pies y manos y tirando de la caballería como Dios me daba á entender, por entre unos pedruscos erizados de matorrales y puntas, cuando el pastor que me veía subir desde lejos, me dió una gran voz advirtiéndome que no tomara la *senda de la tía Casca*, si quería llegar sano y salvo á la cumbre. La verdad era que el camino, que equivocadamente había tornado, se hacía cada vez más áspero y difícil y que por una parte la sombra que ya arrojaban las altísimas rocas, que parecían suspendidas sobre mi cabeza, y por otro el ruido vertiginoso del agua

que corría profunda á mis pies, y de la que comenzaba á elevarse una niebla inquieta y azul, que se extendía por la cortadura borrando los objetos y los colores, parecían contribuir á turbar la vista y conmover el ánimo con una sensación de penoso malestar que vulgarmente podría llamarse preludio de miedo. Volví pies atrás, bajé de nuevo hasta donde se encontraba el pastor, y mientras seguíamos juntos por una trocha que se dirigía al pueblo, adonde también iba á pasar la noche mi improvisado guía, no pude menos de preguntarle con alguna insistencia, por qué, aparte de las dificultades que ofrecía el ascenso, era tan peligroso subir á la cumbre por la senda que llamo de la tía Casca.

—Porque antes de terminar la senda, me dijo con el tono más natural del mundo, tendríais que costear el precipicio á que cayó la maldita bruja que le da su nombre, y en el cual se cuenta que anda penando el alma que, después de dejar el cuerpo, ni Dios ni el diablo han querido para suya.

—¡Hola! exclamé entonces como sorprendido, aunque, á decir verdad, ya me esperaba una contestación de esta ó parecida clase. Y ¿en qué diantres se entretiene el alma de esa pobre vieja por estos andurriales?

—En acosar y perseguir á los infelices pastores que se arriesgan por esa parte de monte, ya haciendo ruido entre las matas, como si fuese un lobo, ya dando quejidos lastimeros como de criatura, ó acurrucándose en las quebras de las rocas que están en el fondo del precipicio, desde donde llama con su mano amarilla y seca á los que van por el borde, les clava la mirada de sus ojos de buho, y cuando el vértigo comienza á desvanecer su cabeza, da un gran salto, se les agarra á los pies y pugna hasta despeñarlos en la sima.... ¡Ah, maldita bruja! exclamó después de un momento el pastor tendiendo el puño crispado hacia las rocas como amenazándola; ¡ah! maldita bruja, muchas hiciste en vida, y ni aun muerta hemos logrado que nos dejes en paz; pero, no haya cuidado, que á tí y tu endiablada raza de hechiceras os hemos de aplastar una á una como á víboras.

—Por lo que veo, insistí, después que hubo concluído su extravagante imprecación, está usted muy al corriente de las fechorías de esa mujer. Por ventura, ¿alcanzó usted á conocerla? Porque no me parece de tanta edad como para haber vivido en el tiempo en que las brujas andaban todavía por el mundo.

Al oír estas palabras el pastor, que caminaba delante de mí para mostrarme la senda, se detuvo un poco, y fijando en los míos sus asombrados ojos, como para conocer si me burlaba, exclamó con un acento de buena fe pasmosa:—¡Que no le parezco á usted de edad bastante para haberla conocido! Pues ¿y si yo le dijera que no hace aún tres años cabales que con estos mismos ojos que se ha de comer la tierra, la ví caer por lo alto de ese derrumbadero, dejando en cada uno de los peñascos y de las zarzas un jirón de vestido ó de carne, hasta que llegó al fondo donde se quedó aplastada como un sapo que se coge debajo del pie?

—Entonces, respondí asombrado á mi vez de la credulidad de aquel pobre hombre, daré crédito á lo que usted dice, sin objetar palabra; aunque á mí se me había figurado, añadí recalcando estas últimas frases para ver el efecto que le hacían, que todo eso de las brujas y los hechizos no eran sino antiguas y absurdas patrañas de las aldeas.

—Eso dicen los señores de la ciudad, porque á ellos no les molestan; y fundados en que todo es puro cuento, echaron á presidio á algunos infelices que nos hicieron un bien de caridad á la gente del Somontano,[1] despeñando á esa mala mujer.

[Footnote 1: la gente del Somontano = 'the people of the Slope,' those living near the foot of the Moncayo mountain.]

—¿Conque no cayó casualmente ella, sino que la hicieron rodar, que quieras que no? ¡Á ver á ver! Cuénteme usted como pasó eso, porque debe ser curioso, añadí, mostrando toda la credulidad y el asombro suficiente, para que el buen hombre no maliciase que sólo quería distraerme un rato, oyendo sus sandeces; pues es de advertir que hasta que no me refirió los pormenores del suceso, no hice memoria de que, en efecto, yo había leído en los periódicos de provincia una cosa semejante. El pastor, convencido por las muestras de interés con que me disponía á escuchar su relate, de que yo

no era uno de esos señores *de la ciudad*, dispuesto á tratar de majaderías su historia, levantó la mano en dirección á uno de los picachos de la cumbre, y comenzó así, señalándome una de las rocas que se destacaba obscura é imponente sobre el fondo gris del cielo, que el sol, al ponerse tras las nubes, teñía de algunos cambiantes rojizos.

—¿Ve usted aquel cabezo alto, alto, que parece cortado á pico, y por entre cuyas penas crecen las aliagas y los zarzales? Me parece que sucedió ayer. Yo estaba algunos doscientos pasos camino atrás de donde nos encontramos en este momento: próximamente sería[1] la misma hora, cuando creí escuchar unos alaridos distantes, y llantos é imprecaciones que se entremezclaban con voces varoniles y coléricas que ya se oían por un lado, ya por otro, como de pastores que persiguen un lobo por entre los zarzales. El sol, según digo, estaba al ponerse, y por detrás de la altura se descubría un jirón del cielo, rojo y encendido como la grana, sobre el que ví aparecer alta, seca y haraposa, semejante á un esqueleto que se escapa de su fosa, envuelto aún en los jirones del sudario, una vieja horrible, en la que conocí á la tía Casca. La tía Casca era famosa en todos estos contornos, y me bastó distinguir sus greñas blancuzcas que se enredaban alrededor de su frente como culebras, sus formas extravagantes, su cuerpo encorvado y sus brazos disformes, que se destacaban angulosos y oscuros sobre el fondo de fuego del horizonte, para reconocer en ella á la bruja de Trasmoz. Al llegar ésta al borde del precipicio, se detuvo un instante sin saber qué partido tomar. Las voces de los que parecían perseguirla sonaban cada vez más cerca, y de cuando en cuando la veía hacer una contorsión, encogerse ó dar un brinco para evitar los cantazos que le arrojaban. Sin duda no traía el bote de sus endiablados untos, porque, á traerlo, seguro que habría atravesado al vuelo la cortadura, dejando á sus perseguidores burlados y jadeantes como lebreles que pierden la pista. ¡Dios no lo quiso así, permitiendo que de una vez pagará todas sus maldades!... Llegaron los mozos que venían en su seguimiento, y la cumbre se coronó de gentes, éstos con piedras en las manos, aquellos con garrotes, los de más allá con cuchillos. Entonces comenzó una cosa horrible. La vieja, ¡maldita hipocritona! viéndose sin huida, se arrojó al suelo, se arrastró por la tierra besando los pies de los unos, abrazándose á las rodillas de los otros, implorando en su ayuda á la Virgen y á los Santos, cuyos nombres sonaban en su condenada boca como una blasfemia. Pero los mozos, así hacían caso de sus lamentos como yo de la lluvia cuando estoy bajo techado.—Yo soy una pobre vieja que no he hecho daño á nadie: no tengo hijos ni parientes que me vengan á amparar; ¡perdonadme, tened compasión de mí! aullaba la bruja; y uno de los mozos, que con la una mano la había asido de las greñas, mientras tenía en la otra la navaja que procuraba abrir con los dientes, la contestaba rugiendo de cólera: ¡Ah, bruja de Lucifer, ya es tarde para lamentaciones, ya te conocemos todos! —¡Tú hiciste un mal á mi mulo, que desde entonces no quiso probar bocado, y murió de hambre dejándome en la miseria! decía uno.—¡Tú has hecho mal de ojo á mi hijo, y lo sacas de la cuna y lo azotas por las noches! añadía el otro; y cada cual exclamaba por su lado: ¡Tú has echado una suerte á mi hermana! ¡Tú has ligado á mi novia! ¡Tú has emponzoñado la hierba! ¡Tú has embrujado al pueblo entero![2]

[Footnote 1: sería = ' it must have been,']

[Footnote 2: Accusations commonly made against those deemed guilty of witchcraft.]

Yo permanecía inmóvil en el mismo punto en que me había sorprendido aquel clamoreo infernal, y no acertaba á mover pie ni mano, pendiente del resultado de aquella lucha.

La voz de la tía Casca, aguda y estridente, dominaba el tumulto de todas las otras voces que se reunían para acusarla, dándole en el rostro con sus delitos, y siempre gimiendo, siempre sollozando, seguía poniendo á Dios y á los santos Patronos del lugar por testigos de su inocencia.

Por último, viendo perdida toda esperanza, pidió como última merced que la dejasen un instante implorar del cielo, antes de morir, el perdón de sus culpas, y de rodillas al borde de la cortadura como estaba, la vieja inclinó la cabeza, juntó las manos y comenzó á murmurar entre dientes qué sé yo qué imprecaciones ininteligibles: palabras que yo no podía oír por la distancia que me separaba de ella,

pero que ni los mismos que estaban á su lado lograron entender; Unos aseguran que hablaba en latín, otros que en una lengua salvaje y desconocida, no faltando quien pudo comprender que en efecto rezaba, aunque diciendo las oraciones al revés, como es costumbre de estas malas mujeres.

En este punto se detuvo el pastor un momento, tendió á su alrededor una mirada, y prosiguió así:

—¿Siente usted este profundo silencio que reina en todo el monte, que no suena un guijarro, que no se mueve una hoja, que el aire está inmóvil y pesa sobre los hombros y parece que aplasta? ¿Ve usted esos jirones de niebla oscura que se deslizan poco á poco á lo largo de la inmensa pendiente del Moncayo,[1] como si sus cavidades no bastaran á contenerlos? ¿Los ve usted como se adelantan mudos y con lentitud, como una legión aérea que se mueve por un impulse invisible? El mismo silencio de muerte había entonces, el mismo aspecto extraño y temeroso ofrecía la niebla de la tarde, arremolinada en las lejanas cumbres, todo el tiempo que duró aquella suspensión angustiada. Yo lo confieso con toda franqueza: llegué á tener miedo. ¿Quién sabía si la bruja aprovechaba aquellos instantes para hacer uno de esos terribles conjuros que sacan á los muertos de sus sepulturas, estremecen el fondo de los abismos y traen á la superficie de la tierra, obedientes á sus imprecaciones, hasta á los más rebeldes espíritus infernales? La vieja rezaba; rezaba sin parar; los mozos permanecían en tanto inmóviles cual si estuviesen encadenados por un sortilegio, y las nieblas oscuras seguían avanzando y envolviendo las peñas, en derredor de las cuales fingían mil figuras extrañas como de mónstruos deformes, cocodrilos rojos y negros, bultos colosales de mujeres envueltas en paños blancos, y listas largas de vapor que, heridas por la última luz del crepúsculo, semejabán inmensas serpientes de colores.

[Footnote 1: El Moncayo. A mountain of some 7600 feet in height situated near the boundaries of the provinces of Soria and Saragossa, to the west of the town of Borja and to the south of Tarazona. The panorama presented to the view from its summit is most extensive. To the south can be seen vaguely the Sierra de Guadarrama, to the southeast the mountains of Teruel, to the east the plain of the Ebro, to the north and northeast the Pyrenees and to the west the summits of the Cantabrian range. The rivers Queiles, Huecha, and others of less importance have their source in the Moncayo. It is the ancient Mons *Caunus*, celebrated in history for the defeat of the Celtiberians in the time of the consul Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (governor of Hither Spain from 181 to 178 B.C.).]

Fija la mirada en aquel fantástico ejercito de nubes que parecían correr al asalto de la peña sobre cuyo pico iba á morir la bruja, yo estaba esperando por instantes cuando se abrían sus senos para abortar á la diabólica multitud de espíritus malignos, comenzando una lucha horrible al borde del derrumbadero, entre los que estaban allí para hacer justicia en la bruja y los demonios que, en pago de sus muchos servicios, vinieran á ayudarla en aquel amargo trance.

—Y por fin, exclamé interrumpiendo el animado cuento de mi interlocutor, é impaciente ya por conocer el desenlace, ¿en qué acabó todo ello? ¿Mataron á la vieja? Porque yo creo que por muchos conjures que recitara la bruja y muchas señales que usted viese en las nubes, y en cuanto le rodeaba, los espíritus malignos se mantendrían[1] quietecitos cada cual en su agujero; sin mezclarse para nada en las cosas de la tierra. ¿No fué así?

[Footnote 1: se mantendrían = 'must have remained,' 'probably remained.']

—Así fué, en efecto. Bien porque en su turbación la bruja no acertara con la fórmula, ó, lo que yo más creo, por ser viernes, día en que murió Nuestro Señor Jesucristo, y no haber acabado aún las vísperas, durante las que los malos no tienen poder alguno, ello es que, viendo que no concluía nunca con su endiablada monserga, un mozo la dijo que acabase y levantando en alto el cuchillo, se dispuso á herirla. La vieja entonces, tan humilde, tan hipocritona, hasta aquel punto, se puso de pie con un movimiento tan rápido como el de una culebra enroscada á la que se pisa y despliega[1] sus anillos irguiéndose llena de cólera.—¡Oh! no; ¡no quiero morir, no quiero morir! decía; ¡dejadme,

ú os morderé las manos con que me sujetáis!... Pero aún no había pronunciado estas palabras, abalanzándose á sus perseguidores, fuera de sí, con las greñas sueltas, los ojos inyectados en sangre, y la hedionda boca entreabierta y llena de espuma, cuando la oí arrojar un alarido espantoso, llevarse por dos ó tres veces las manos al costado con grande precipitación, mirárselas y volvérselas á mirar maquinalmente, y por último, dando tres ó cuatro pasos vacilantes como si estuviese borracha, la ví caer al derrumbadero. Uno de los mozos á quien la bruja hechizó una hermana, la más hermosa, la más buena del lugar, la había herido de muerte en el momento en que sintió que le clavaba en el brazo sus dientes negros y puntiagudos. ¿Pero cree usted que acabó ahí la cosa? Nada menos que eso: la vieja de Lucifer tenía siete vidas como los gatos.[2] Cayó por un derrumbadero donde cualquiera otro á quien se le resbalase un pie no pararía hasta lo más hondo, y ella, sin embargo, tal vez porque el diablo le quitó el golpe ó porque los harapos de las sayas la enredaron en los zarzales, quedó suspendida de uno de los picos que erizan la cortadura, barajándose y retorciéndose allí como un reptil colgado por la cola, ¡Dios, como blasfemaba! ¡Qué imprecaciones tan horribles salían de su boca! Se estremecían las carnes y se ponían de punta los cabellos sólo de oírlos.... Los mozos seguían desde lo alto todas sus grotescas evoluciones, esperando el instante en que se desgarraría el último jirón de la saya á que estaba sujeta, y rodaría dando tumbos, de pico en pico, hasta el fondo del barranco; pero ella con el ansia de la muerte y sin cesar de proferir, ora horribles blasfemias, ora palabras santas mezcladas de maldiciones, se enroscaba en derredor de los matorrales; sus dedos largos, huesosos y sangrientos, se agarraban como tenazas á las hendiduras de las rocas, de modo que ayudándose de las rodillas, de los dientes, de los pies y de las manos, quizás hubiese conseguido subir hasta el horde, si algunos de los que la contemplaban y que llegaron á temerlo así, no hubiesen levantado en alto una piedra gruesa, con la que le dieron tal cantazo en el pecho, que piedra y bruja bajaron á la vez saltando de escalón en escalón por entre aquellas puntas calcáreas, afiladas como cuchillos, hasta dar, por último, en ese arroyo que se ve en lo más profundo del valle.... Una vez allí, la bruja permaneció un largo rato inmóvil, con la cara hundida entre el légamo y el fango del arroyo que corría enrojecido con la sangre; después, poco á poco, comenzó como á volver en sí y á agitarse convulsivamente. El agua cenagosa y sangrienta saltaba en derredor batida por sus manos, que de vez en cuando se levantaban en el aire crispadas y horribles, no sé si implorando piedad, ó amenazando aún en las últimas ansias.... Así estuvo algún tiempo removiéndose y queriendo inútilmente sacar la cabeza fuera de la corriente buscando un poco de aire, hasta que al fin se desplomó muerta; muerta del todo, pues los que la habíamos visto caer y conocíamos de lo que es capaz una hechicera tan astuta como la tía Casca, no apartamos de ella los ojos hasta que completamente entrada la noche, la obscuridad nos impidió distinguirla, y en todo este tiempo no movió pie ni mano; de modo que si la herida y los golpes no fueron bastantes á acabarla, es seguro que se ahoga en el riachuelo cuyas aguas tantas veces había embrujado en vida para hacer morir nuestras reses. ¡Quien en mal anda, en mal acaba! exclamamos después de mirar una última vez al fondo oscuro del despeñadero; y santiguándonos santamente y pidiendo á Dios nos ayudase en todas las ocasiones, como en aquélla, contra el diablo y los suyos, emprendimos con bastante despacio la vuelta al pueblo, en cuya desvencijada torre las campanas llamaban á la oración á los vecinos devotos.

[Footnote 1: á la que se pisa y despliega. Loose construction, in which the relative pronoun object of the first verb is understood as subject of the second.]

[Footnote 2: The cat is credited in our colloquial English expression with two more lives.]

Cuando el pastor terminó su relato, llegábamos precisamente á la cumbre más cercana al pueblo, desde donde se ofreció á mi vista el castillo obscuro é imponente con su alta torre del homenaje, de la que sólo queda en pie un lienzo de muro con dos saeteras, que transparentaban la luz y parecían los ojos de un fantasma. En aquel castillo, que tiene por cimero la pizarra negra de

que está formado el monte, y cuyas vetustas murallas, hechas de pedruscos enormes, parecen obras de titanes, es fama que las brujas de los contornos tienen sus nocturnes conciliábulos.

La noche había cerrado ya, sombría y nebulosa. La luna se dejaba ver á intervalos por entre los jirones de las nubes que volaban en derredor nuestro, rozando casi con la tierra, y las campanas de Trasmoz[1] dejaban oír lentamente el toque de oraciones, como el final de la horrible historia que me acababan de referir.

[Footnote 1: Trasmoz. See p. 2, note 2.]

Ahora que estoy en mi celda tranquilo, escribiendo para ustedes la relación de estas impresiones extrañas, no puedo menos de maravillarme y dolerme de que las viejas supersticiones tengan todavía tan hondas raíces entre las gentes de las aldeas, que den lugar á sucesos semejantes; pero, ¿por qué no he de confesarlo? sonándome aún las últimas palabras de aquella temerosa relación, teniendo junto á mi á aquel hombre que tan de buena fe imploraba la protección divina para llevar á cabo crímenes espantosos, viendo á mis pies el abismo negro y profundo en donde se revolvía el agua entre las tinieblas, imitando gemidos y lamentos, y en lontananza el castillo tradicional,[1] coronado de almenas oscuras, que parecían fantasmas asomadas á los muros, sentí una impresión angustiosa, mis cabellos se erizaron involuntariamente, y la razón, dominada por la fantasía, á la que todo ayudaba, el sitio, la hora y el silencio de la noche, vaciló un punto, y casi creí que las absurdas consejas de las brujerías y los maleficios pudieran ser posibles.

[Footnote 1: tradicional = 'legendary.' Legend says that this castle was built in a night by a magician to satisfy the whim of one of the early kings. Becquer tells the story of its construction in *Carta séptima*.]

LOS OJOS VERDES

Hace mucho tiempo que tenía ganas de escribir cualquier cosa con este título.

Hoy, que se me ha presentado ocasión, lo he puesto con letras grandes en la primera cuartilla de papel, y luego he dejado á capriclio volar la pluma.

Yo creo que he visto unos ojos como los que he pintado en esta leyenda. No sé si en sueños, pero yo los he visto. De seguro no los podré describir tales cuales ellos eran, luminosos, transparentes como las gotas de la lluvia que se resbalan sobre las hojas de los árboles después de una tempestad de verano. De todos modos, cuento con la imaginación de mis lectores para hacerme comprender en este que pudiéramos llamar boceto de un cuadro que pintaré algún día.

I

—Herido va el ciervo, herido va; no hay duda. Se ve el rastro de la sangre entre las zarzas del monte, y al saltar uno de esos lentiscos han flaqueado sus piernas.... Nuestro joven señor comienza por donde otros acaban ... en cuarenta años de montero no he visto mejor golpe.... ¡Pero por San Saturio,[1] patrón de Soria![2] cortadle el paso por esas carrascas, azuzad los perros, soplad en esas trompas hasta echar los hígados, y hundidle á los corceles una cuarta de hierro en los ijares: ¿no véis que se dirige hacia la fuente de los Álamos,[3] y si la salva antes de morir podemos darle por perdido?

[Footnote 1: San Saturio. Saint Saturius was born, according to Tamayo, in 493. In 532 he withdrew from the world into a cave at the foot of a mountain bathed by the river Duero, near where now stands the town of Soria. There he lived about thirty-six years, or until 568, when he died and was buried by his faithful disciple St. Prudentius, later bishop of Tarazona, who had been a companion of the hermit during the last seven years of his life. His cave is still an object of pilgrimage, and a church has been built on the spot to the memory of the saint. See Florez, *España Sagrada*, Madrid, 1766, tomo vii, pp. 293–294.]

[Footnote 2: Soria. A mediaeval-looking town of 7296 inhabitants situated on a bleak plateau on the right bank of the Duero. It is the capital of a province of the same name. The old town of Numantia (captured by the Romans under P. Cornelius Scipio AEmilianus, 133 B.C.) lay about three miles to the north of the present site of Soria.]

[Footnote 3: Álamos. The choice of a grove of poplars as setting to the enchanted fount is peculiarly appropriate, as this tree belongs to the large list of those believed to have magical properties. In the south of Europe the poplar seems to have held sometimes the mythological place reserved in the north for the birch, and the people of Andalusia believe that the poplar is the most ancient of trees. (See de Gubernatis, *Za Mythologie des plantes*, Paris, Reinwald, 1882, p. 285.) In classical superstition the black poplar was consecrated to the goddess Proserpine, and the white poplar to Hercules. "The White Poplar was also dedicated to Time, because its leaves were constantly in motion, and, being dark on one side and light on the other, they were emblematic of night and day.... There is a tradition that the Cross of Christ was made of the wood of the White Poplar, and throughout Christendom there is a belief that the tree trembles and shivers mystically in sympathy with the ancestral tree which became accursed.... Mrs. Hemans, in her 'Wood Walk,' thus alludes to one of these old traditions:

FATHER.—Hast thou heard, my boy,
The peasant's legend of that quivering tree?

CHILD.—No, father; doth he say the fairies dance
Amidst its branches?

FATHER.—Oh! a cause more deep,
More solemn far, the rustic doth assign
To the strange restlessness of those wan leaves.
The Cross he deems—the blessed Cross, whereon
The meek Redeemer bow'd His head to death—

Was formed of Aspen wood; and since that hour
Through all its race the pale tree hath sent down
A thrilling consciousness, a secret awe
Making them tremulous, when not a breeze
Disturbs the airy Thistle-down, or shakes
The light lines from the shining gossamer."

Richard Folkard, *Plant Lore*, London, 1892, p. 503.]

Las cuencas del Moncayo[1] repitieron de eco en eco el bramido de las trompas, el latir de la jauría desencadenada y las voces de los pajes resonaron con nueva furia, y el confuso tropel de hombres, caballos y perros se dirigió al punto que Iñigo, el montero mayor de los marqueses de Almenar,[2] señalara,[3] como el más á propósito para cortarle el paso á la res.

[Footnote 1: El Moncayo. See p. 8, note 1.]

[Footnote 2: Marqueses de Almenar. A title taken doubtless from the little town of Almenar (650 inhabitants) situated in the province of Soria near the right bank of the Rituerto river, southwest of the Moncayo, and not far from that mountain.]

[Footnote 3: señalara. A relic of the Latin pluperfect (in *-aram*, *-eram*), popularly confounded with the imperfect subjunctive. Its use is now somewhat archaic, and is restricted to relative clauses. See Ramsey's *Spanish Grammar*, H. Holt & Co., 1902, § 944.]

Pero todo fué inútil. Cuando el más ágil de los lebreles llegó á las carrascas jadeante y cubiertas las fauces de espuma, ya el ciervo, rápido como una saeta, las había salvado de un solo brinco, perdiéndose entre los matorrales de una trocha, que conducía á la fuente.

—¡Alto!... ¡Alto todo el mundo! gritó Iñigo entonces; estaba de Dios que había de marcharse.

Y la cabalgata se detuvo, y enmudecieron las trompas, y los lebreles dejaron refunfuñando la pista á la voz de los cazadores.

En aquel momento se reunía á la comitiva el héroe de la fiesta, Fernando de Argensola,[1] el primogénito de Almenar.

[Footnote 1: Argensola. A name familiar to students of Spanish literature from the writings of the illustrious brothers Bartolomé and Lupercio Leonardo de Argensola (sixteenth century). It is also the name of a small town of some 560 inhabitants in the province of Barcelona.]

—¿Qué haces? exclamó dirigiéndose á su montero, y en tanto, ya se pintaba el asombro en sus facciones, ya ardía la cólera en sus ojos. ¿Qué haces, imbécil? ¡Ves que la pieza está herida, que es la primera que cae por mi mano, y abandonas el rastro y la dejas perder para que vaya á morir en el fondo del bosque! ¿Crees acaso que he venido á matar ciervos para festines de lobos?

—Señor, murmuró, Iñigo entre dientes, es imposible pasar de este punto.

—¡Imposible! ¿y por qué?

—Porque esa trocha, prosiguió el montero, conduce á la fuente de los Alamos; la fuente de los Álamos, en cuyas aguas habita un espíritu del mal. El que osa enturbiar su corriente, paga caro su atrevimiento. Ya la res habrá salvado sus márgenes; ¿como la salvaréis vos sin atraer sobre vuestra cabeza alguna calamidad horrible? Los cazadores somos reyes del Moncayo, pero reyes que pagan un tributo. Pieza que se refugia en esa fuente misteriosa, pieza perdida.

—¡Pieza perdida! Primero perderé yo el señorío de mis padres, y primero perderé el ánima en manos de Satanás, que permitir que se me escape ese ciervo, el único que ha herido mi venablo, la primicia de mis excursiones de cazador.... ¿Lo ves?... ¿lo ves?... Aún se distingue á intervalos desde

aquí ... las piernas le faltan, su carrera se acorta; déjame... déjame... suelta esa brida, o te revuelco en el polvo.... ¿Quién sabe si no le daré lugar para que llegue á la fuente? y si llegase, al diablo ella, su limpidez y sus habitantes. ¡Sus! ¡*Relámpago!* sus, caballo mío! si lo alcanzas, mando engarzar los diamantes de mi joyel en tu serreta de oro.

Caballo y jinete partieron como un huracán.

Iñigo los siguió con la vista hasta que se perdieron en la maleza; después volvió los ojos en derredor suyo; todos, como el, permanecían inmóviles y consternados.

El montero exclamó al fin:

—Señores, vosotros lo habéis visto; me he expuesto á morir entre los pies de su caballo por detenerle. Yo he cumplido con mi deber. Con el diablo no sirven valentías. Hasta aquí llega el montero con su ballesta; de aquí adelante, que pruebe á pasar el capellán con su hisopo.[1]

[Footnote 1: hisopo = 'aspergillum.' A brash or metallic instrument for the sprinkling of holy water. As to the efficacy of holy water against evil spirits St. Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) speaks as follows:

I have learned from frequent experience that there is nothing better (than holy water) to drive them away and to prevent them from returning: they flee at the sight of the Cross, but return. The virtue of holy water must be great indeed.

See *Escritos de Santa Teresa*, "Libro de su vida," capítulo 31, in the *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, Madrid, Rivadeneyra, 1861, p. 94.

L'Abbé Jean Joseph Gaume has written a work, entitled *l'Eau lénite au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1866), in which he also advocates the use of holy water to-day for similar purposes.]

II

—Tenéis la color quebrada; andáis mustio, y sombrío; ¿qué os sucede? Desde el día, que yo siempre tendré por funesto, en que llegásteis á la fuente de los Álamos en pos de la res herida, diríase que una mala bruja os ha encanijado con sus hechizos.

Ya no vais á los montes precedido de la ruidosa jauría, ni el clamor de vuestras trompas despierta sus ecos. Sólo con esas cavilaciones que os persiguen, todas las mañanas tomáis la ballesta para enderezaros á la espesura y permanecer en ella hasta que el sol se esconde. Y cuando la noche obscurece y voivéis pálido y fatigado al castillo, en balde busco en la bandolera los despojos de la caza. ¿Qué os ocupa tan largas horas lejos de los que más os quieren?

Mientras Iñigo hablaba, Fernando, absorto en sus ideas, sacaba maquinalmente astillas de su escaño de ébano con el cuchillo de monte.

Después de un largo silencio, que solo interrumpia el chirrido de la hoja al resbalarse sobre la pulimentada madera, el joven exclamó dirigiéndose á su servidor, como si no hubiera escuchado una sola de sus palabras:

—Iñigo, tú que eres viejo, tú que conoces todas las guaridas del Moncayo, que has vivido en sus faldas persiguiendo á las fieras, y en tus errantes excursiones de cazador subiste más de una vez á su cumbre, dime, ¿has encontrado por acaso una mujer que vive entre sus rocas?

—¡Una mujer! exclamó el montero con asombro y mirándole de hito en hito.

—Sí, dijo el joven; es una cosa extraña lo que me sucede, muy extraña.... Creí poder guardar ese secreto eternamente, pero no es ya posible; rebosa en mi corazón y asoma á mi semblante. Voy, pues, á revelártelo.... Tú me ayudarás á desvanecer el misterio que envuelve á esa criatura, que al parecer solo para mí existe, pues nadie la conoce, ni la ha visto, ni puede darme razón de ella.

El montero, sin despegar los labios, arrastró su banquillo hasta colocarlo junto al escaño de su señor, del que no apartaba un punto los espantados ojos. Éste, después de coordinar sus ideas, prosiguió así:

—Desde el día en que á pesar de tus funestas predicciones llegué á la fuente de los Álamos, y atravesando sus aguas recobré el ciervo que vuestra superstición hubiera dejado huir, se llenó mi alma del deseo de la soledad.

Tú no conoces aquel sitio. Mira, la fuente brota escondida en el seno de una peña, y cae resbalándose gota á gota por entre las verdes y flotantes hojas de las plantas que crecen al borde de su cuna. Aquellas gotas que al desprenderse brillan como puntos de oro y suenan como las notas de un instrumento, se reúnen entre los céspedes, y susurrando, susurrando con un ruido semejante al de las abejas que zumban en torno de las flores, se alejan por entre las arenas, y forman un cauce, y luchan con los obstáculos que se oponen á su camino, y se repliegan sobre sí mismas, y saltan, y huyen, y corren, unas veces con risa, otras con suspiros, hasta caer en un lago. En el lago caen con un rumor indescriptible. Lamentos, palabras, nombres, cantares, yo no sé lo que he oído en aquel rumor cuando me he sentado solo y febril sobre el peñasco, á cuyos pies saltan las aguas de la fuente misteriosa para estancarse en una balsa profunda, cuya inmóvil superficie apenas riza el viento de la tarde.

Todo es allí grande. La soledad con sus mil rumores desconocidos, vive en aquellos lugares y embriaga el espíritu en su inefable melancolía. En las plateadas hojas de los álamos, en los huecos de las peñas, en las ondas del agua, parece que nos hablan los invisibles espíritus de la naturaleza, que reconocen un hermano en el inmortal espíritu del hombre.

Cuando al despuntar la mañana me veías tomar la ballesta y dirigirme al monte, no fué nunca para perderme entre sus matorrales en pos de la caza, no; iba á sentarme al borde de la fuente, á buscar en sus ondas ... no sé qué, ¡una locura! El día en que salté sobre ella con mi *Relámpago*[1] creí haber visto brillar en su fondo una cosa extraña ... muy extraña ... los ojos de una mujer.

[Footnote 1: Relámpago. The name of his horse, mentioned p. 17.]

Tal vez sería un rayo de sol que serpeó fugitive entre su espuma; tal vez una de esas flores que flotan entre las algas de su seno, y cuyos cálices parecen esmeraldas ... no sé: yo creí ver una mirada que se clavó en la mía; una mirada que encendió en mi pecho un deseo absurdo, irrealizable: el de encontrar una persona con unos ojos como aquellos.

En su busca fuí un día y otro á aquel sitio:

Por último, una tarde ... yo me creí juguete de un sueño ... pero no, es verdad, la[1] he hablado ya muchas veces, como te hablo á tí ahora ... una tarde encontré sentada en mi puesto, y vestida con unas ropas que llegaban hasta las aguas y flotaban sobre su haz, una mujer hermosa sobre toda ponderación. Sus cabellos eran como el oro; sus pestañas brillaban como hilos de luz, y entre las pestañas volteaban inquietas unas pupilas que yo había visto... sí; porque los ojos de aquella mujer eran los ojos que yo tenía clavados en la mente; unos ojos de un color imposible; unos ojos ...

[Footnote 1: la. The Spanish Academy condemns the use of *la* instead of *le* as a feminine dative. Spanish writers, however, frequently so employ it.]

—¡Verdes! exclamó Iñigo con un acento de profundo terror, é incorporándose de un salto en su asiento.

Fernando le miró á su vez como asombrado de que concluyese lo que iba á decir, y le pregunto con una mezcla de ansiedad y de alegría:

—¿La conoces?

—¡Oh, no! dijo el montero. ¡Líbreme Dios de conocerla! Pero mis padres, al prohibirme llegar hasta esos lugares, me dijeron mil veces que el espíritu, trasgo, demonio ó mujer que habita en sus aguas, tiene los ojos de ese color. Yo os conjuro, por lo que más améis en la tierra, á no volver á la fuente de los Álamos. Un día ú otro-os alcanzará su venganza, y expiaréis, muriendo, el delito de haber encenagado sus ondas.

—¡Por los que más amo!... murmuró el joven con una triste sonrisa.

—¡Sí!, prosiguió el anciano; por vuestros padres, por vuestros deudos, por las lágrimas de la que el cielo destina para vuestra esposa, por las de un servidor que os ha visto nacer ...

—¿Sabes tú lo que más amo en este mundo? Sabes tú por qué daría yo el amor de mi padre, los besos de la que me dió la vida, y todo el cariño que pueden atesorar todas las mujeres de la tierra? Por una mirada, por una sola mirada de esos ojos ... ¡Cómo podré yo dejar de buscarlos!

Dijo Fernando estas palabras con tal acento, que la lágrima que temblaba en los párpados de Iñigo se resbaló silenciosa por su mejilla, mientras exclamó con acento sombrío: ¡Cúmplase la voluntad del cielo!

III

—¿Quién eres tú? ¿Cuál es tu patria? ¿En dónde habitas? Yo vengo un día y otro en tu busca, y ni veo el corcel que te trae á estos lugares, ni á los servidores que conducen tu litera. Rompe de una vez el misterioso velo en que te envuelves como en una noche profunda, yo te amo, y, noble ó villana, seré tuyo, tuyo siempre....

El sol había traspuesto la cumbre del monte; las sombras bajaban á grandes pasos, por su falda; la brisa gemía entre los álamos de la fuente, y la niebla, elevándose poco á poco de la superficie del lago, comenzaba á envolver las rocas de su margen.

Sobre una de estas rocas, sobre una que parecía próxima á desplomarse en el fondo de las aguas, en cuya superficie se retrataba temblando el primogénito de Almenar, de rodillas á los pies de su misteriosa amante, procuraba en vano arrancarle el secreto de su existencia.

Ella era hermosa, hermosa y pálida, como una estatua de alabastro. Uno de sus rizos caía sobre sus hombros, deslizándose entre los pliegues del velo como un rayo de sol que atraviesa las nubes, y en el cerco de sus pestañas rubias brillaban sus pupilas como dos esmeraldas sujetas en una joya de oro.

Cuando el joven acabó de hablarle, sus labios se removieron como para pronunciar algunas palabras, pero sólo exhalaban un suspiro, un suspiro débil, doliente, como el de la ligera onda que empuja una brisa al morir entre los juncos.

—¡No me respondes! exclamó Fernando al ver burlada su esperanza; ¿querrás que dé crédito á lo que de tí me han dicho? ¡Oh! No.... Háblame: yo quiero saber si me amas; yo quiero saber si puedo amarte, si eres una mujer...

—Ó un demonio.... ¿Y si lo fuese?

El joven vaciló un instante; un sudor frío corrió por sus miembros; sus pupilas se dilataron al fijarse con más intensidad en las de aquella mujer, y fascinado por su brillo fosfórico, demente casi, exclamó en un arrebato de amor:

—Si lo fueses ... fe amaría ... te amaría como te amo ahora, como es mi destino amarte, hasta más allá de esta vida, si hay algo más allá de ella.

—Fernando, dijo la hermosa entonces con una voz semejante á una música: yo te amo más aún que tu me amas; yo, que descendo hasta un mortal, siendo un espíritu puro. No soy una mujer como las que existen en la tierra; soy una mujer digna de tí, que eres superior á los demás hombres. Yo vivo en el fondo de estas aguas; incorpórea como ellas, fugaz y trasparente, hablo con sus rumores y ondulo con sus pliegues. Yo no castigo al que osa turbar la fuente donde moro; antes le premio con mi amor ... como á un mortal superior á las supersticiones del vulgo, como á un amante capaz de comprender mi cariño extraño y misterioso.

Mientras ella hablaba así, el joven, absorto en la contemplación de su fantástica hermosura, atraído como por una fuerza desconocida, se aproximaba más y más al borde de la roca. La mujer de los ojos verdes prosiguió así:

—¿Ves, ves el limpido fondo de ese lago, ves esas plantas de largas y verdes hojas que se agitan en su fondo?... Ellas nos darán un lecho de esmeraldas y corales ... y yo ... yo te daré una felicidad sin nombre, esa felicidad que has soñado en tus horas de delirio, y que no puede ofrecerte nadie.... Ven, la niebla del lago flota sobre nuestras frentes como un pabellón de lino ... las ondas nos llaman con sus voces incomprensibles, el viento empieza entre los álamos sus himnos de amor; ven ... ven ...

La noche comenzaba á extender sus sombras, la luna rielaba en la superficie del lago, la niebla se arremolinaba al soplo del aire, y los ojos verdes brillaban en la obscuridad como los fuegos fatuos que corren sobre el haz de las aguas infectas.... Ven ... ven ... estas palabras zumbaban en los oídos de Fernando como un conjuro. Ven ... y la mujer misteriosa le llamaba al borde del abismo, donde estaba suspendida, y parecía ofrecerle un beso ... un beso ...

Fernando dió un paso hacia ella ... otro ... y sintió unos brazos delgados y flexibles que se liaban á su cuello, y una sensación fría en sus labios ardorosos, un beso de nieve ... y vaciló ... y perdió pie, y cayó al agua con un rumor sordo y lúgubre.

Las aguas saltaron en chispas de luz, y se cerraron sobre su cuerpo, y sus círculos de plata fueron ensanchándose, ensanchándose hasta expirar[1] en las orillas.[2]

[Footnote 1: expirar. Becquer uses incorrectly the form *espirar*.]

[Footnote 2: "It was a maxim both in ancient India and ancient Greece not to look at one's reflection in water.... They feared that the water-spirits would drag the person's reflection or soul under water, leaving him soulless to die. This was probably the origin of the classical story of Narcissus.... The same ancient belief lingers, in a faded form, in the English superstition that whoever sees a water-fairy must pine and die.

'Alas, the moon should ever beam
To show what man should never see!—
I saw a maiden on a stream,
And fair was she!

I staid to watch, a little space,
Her parted lips if she would sing;
The waters closed above her face
With many a ring.

I know my life will fade away,
I know that I must vainly pine,
For I am made of mortal clay.
But she's divine!"

Fraser, *The Golden Bough*, London, Macmillan & Co., 1900, vol. i, pp. 293–294. The object of Fernando's love was evidently an undine (see p. 43, note 1, and p. 47, note 1).]

LA CORZA BLANCA

I

En un pequeño lugar[1] de Aragón,[1] y allá por los años de mil trescientos y pico, vivía retirado en su torre señorial un famoso caballero llamado don Dionís, el cual, después de haber servido á su rey[3] en la guerra contra infieles, descansaba á la sazón, entregado al alegre ejercicio de la caza, de las rudas fatigas de los combates.

[Footnote 1: un pequeño lugar. Veratón, a feudal town in the neighborhood of the Moncayo (see p. 8, note 1). Population (1900), 484.]

[Footnote 2: Aragón. "An ancient kingdom, now a captaincy-general of Spain, capital Saragossa, bounded by France on the north, by Catalonia on the east, by Valencia on the south, and by New Castile, Old Castile, and Navarre on the west, comprising the provinces of Huesca, Saragossa, and Teruel. It is traversed by mountains and intersected by the Ebro. During the middle ages it was one of the two chief Christian powers in the peninsula. In 1035 it became a kingdom; was united to Catalonia in 1137; rose to great influence through its acquisitions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of Valencia, the Balearic Islands, Sardinia, and the Sicilies; and was united with Castile in 1479 through the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon with Isabella of Castile." *Century Dict.*]

[Footnote 3: The kings who reigned in Aragon during the fourteenth century were as follows: Jaime II *el Justo* (1291–1327), Alfonso IV *el Benigno* (1327–1336), Pedro IV *el Ceremonioso* (1336–1387), Juan I *el Cazador* (1387–1395), and Martín (1395–1410).]

Aconteció una vez á este caballero, hallándose en su favorita diversión acompañado de su hija, cuya belleza singular y extraordinaria blancura le habían granjeado el sobrenombre de la Azucena, que como se les entrase á más andar el día engolfados en perseguir á una res en el monte de su feudo, tuvo que acogerse, durante las horas de la siesta, á una cañada por donde corría un riachuelo, saltando de roca en roca con un ruido manso y agradable.

Haría[1] cosa de unas dos horas que don Dionís se encontraba en aquel delicioso lugar, recostado sobre la menuda grama á la sombra de una chopera, departiendo amigablemente con sus monteros sobre las peripecias del día, y refiriéndose unos á otros las aventuras más ó menos curiosas que en su vida de cazador les habían acontecido, cuando por lo alto de la más empinada ladera y á través de los alternados murmullos del viento que agitaba las hojas de los árboles, comenzó á percibirse, cada vez más cerca, el sonido de una esquililla semejante á la del guión de un rebano.

[Footnote 1: Haría = 'it must have been.' See p. 5, note 2, and p. 42, note 1.]

En efecto, era así, pues á poco de haberse oído la esquililla, empezaron á saltar por entre las apiñadas matas de cantueso y tomillo, y á descender á la orilla opuesta del riachuelo, hasta unos cien corderos, blancos como la nieve, detrás de los cuales, con su caperuza calada para libertarse la cabeza de los perpendiculares rayos del sol, y su atillo al hombro en la punta de un palo, apareció el zagal que los conducía.

—Á propósito de aventuras extraordinarias, exclamó al verle uno de los monteros de don Dionís, dirigiéndose á su señor: ahí tenéis á Esteban el zagal, que de algún tiempo á esta parte anda más tonto que lo que naturalmente lo hizo Dios, que no es poco, y el cual puede haceros pasar un rato divertido refiriendo la causa de sus continuos sustos.

—¿Pues qué le acontece á ese pobre diablo? exclamó don Dionís con aire de curiosidad picada.

—¡Friolera! añadió el montero en tono de zumba: es el caso, que sin haber nacido en Viernes Santo[1] ni estar señalado con la cruz,[2] ni hallarse en relaciones con el demonio, á lo que se puede colegir de sus hábitos de cristiano viejo, se encuentra sin saber cómo ni por dónde, dotado de la facultad más maravillosa que ha poseído hombre alguno, á no ser Salomón,[3] de quien se dice que sabía hasta el lenguaje de los pájaros.

[Footnote 1: Viernes Santo = 'Good Friday,' the Friday of Holy Week, anniversary of the death of Jesus Christ. Friday has long been considered an unlucky day, and Good Friday, in spite of its name, has been regarded by popular superstition as a fatal day. One born on that day might have particular aptitude for witchcraft.]

[Footnote 2: señalado con la cruz = 'marked with the cross.' The reference here is doubtless to a birth-mark in the form of a cross, which would indicate a special aptitude for thaumaturgy or occultism. This might take the form of Christian mysticism, as in the case of St. Leo, who is said to have been "marked all over with red crosses" at birth (see Brewer, *Dictionary of Miracles*, Phila., 1884, p. 425), or the less orthodox form of magic, as is suggested here.]

[Footnote 3: Salomón = 'Solomon.' "A famous king of Israel, 993–953 B.C. (Duncker), son of David and Bathsheba.... The name of Solomon, who was supposed to have possessed extraordinary magical powers, plays an important part in Eastern and thence in European legends," *Century Dict.* "His wisdom enabled him (as legend informs us) to interpret the speech of beasts and birds, a gift shared afterwards, it was said, by his descendant Hillel (Koran, sura 37, Ewald, *Gesch. Isr.*, iii, 407)." M'Clintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, N.Y., 1880, vol. ix, p. 871.]

—¿Y á qué se refiere esa facultad maravillosa?

—Se refiere, prosiguió el montero, á que, según él afirma, y lo jura y perjura por todo lo más sagrado del mundo, los ciervos que discurren por estos montes, se han dado de ojo para no dejarle en paz, siendo lo más gracioso del caso, que en más de una ocasión les ha sorprendido concertando entre sí las burlas que han de hacerle, y después que estas burlas se han llevado á término, ha oído las ruidosas carcajadas con que las celebran.

Mientras esto decía el montero, Constanza, que así se llamaba la hermosa hija de don Dionís, se había aproximado al grupo de los cazadores, y como demostrase su curiosidad por conocer la extraordinaria historia de Esteban, uno de éstos se adelantó hasta el sitio en donde el zagal daba de beber á su ganado, y le condujo á presencia de su señor, que para disipar la turbación y el visible encogimiento del pobre mozo, se apresuro á saludarle por su nombre, acompañando el saludo con una bondadosa sonrisa.

Era Esteban un muchacho de diecinueve á veinte años, fornido, con la cabeza pequeña y hundida entre los hombros, los ojos pequeños y azules, la mirada incierta y torpe como la de los albinos, la nariz roma, los labios gruesos y entreabiertos, la frente calzada, la tez blanca pero ennegrecida por el sol, y el cabello que le caía en parte sobre los ojos y parte alrededor de la cara, en guedejas ásperas y rojas semejantes á las crines de un rocín colorado.

Esto, sobre poco mas ó menos, era Esteban en cuanto al físico; respecto á su moral, podía asegurarse sin temor de ser desmentido ni por él ni por ninguna de las personas que le conocían, que era perfectamente simple, aunque un tanto suspicaz y malicioso como buen rústico.

Una vez el zagal repuesto de su turbación, le dirigió de nuevo la palabra don Dionís, y con el tono más serio del mundo, y fingiendo un extraordinario interés por conocer los detalles del suceso á que su montero se había referido, le hizo una multitud de preguntas, á las que Esteban comenzó á contestar de una manera evasiva, como deseando evitar explicaciones sobre el asunto.

Estrechado, sin embargo, por las interrogaciones de su señor y por los ruegos de Constanza, que parecía la más curiosa é interesada en que el pastor refiriese sus estupendas aventuras, decidióse éste á hablar, mas no sin que antes dirigiese á su alrededor una mirada de desconfianza, como temiendo ser oído por otras personas que las que allí estaban presentes, y de rascarse tres ó cuatro veces la cabeza tratando de reunir sus recuerdos ó hilvanar su discurso, que al fin comenzo dó esta manera:

—Es el caso, señor, que según me dijo un preste de Tarazona,[1] al que acudí no ha mucho, para consultar mis dudas, con el diablo no sirven juegos, sino punto en boca, buenas y muchas oraciones á San Bartolomé,[2] que es quien le conoce las cosquillas, y dejarle andar; que Dios, que es justo y está allá arriba, proveerá á todo. Firme en esta idea, había decidido no volver á decir palabra sobre el asunto á nadie, ni por nada; pero lo haré hoy por satisfacer vuestra curiosidad, y á fe á fe que después de todo, si el diablo me lo toma en cuenta, y torna á molestarme en castigo de mi indiscreción, buenos Evangelios llevo cosidos á la pellica, y con su ayuda creo que, como otras veces no me será inútil el garrote.

[Footnote 1: Tarazona. A venerable town of some 8800 inhabitants situated on the river Queiles, northeast of the Moncayo (see p. 8, note 1) and northwest of the town of Borja.]

[Footnote 2: San Bartolomé—'St. Bartholomew,' one of the twelve apostles, deemed by some to be identical with Nathanael. "Little is known of his work. According to tradition he preached in various parts of Asia, and was flayed alive and then crucified, head downward, at Albanopolis in Armenia. His memory is celebrated in the Roman Catholic church on August 24." *Century Dict.* In popular superstition St. Bartholomew is supposed to have had particular power over the devil, and prayers to this saint are thought to be specially efficacious against the wiles of the evil one. For a detailed account of St. Bartholomew's power over the devil, see Jacobi a Voragine, *Legenda Aurea* (Th. Graesse), Lipsiae, MDCCCL, cap. cxxiii, pp. 540–544.]

—Pero, vamos, exclamó don Dionís, impaciente al escuchar las digresiones del zagal, que amenazaban no concluir nunca; déjate de rodeos y ve derecho al asunto.

—Á él voy, contestó con calma Esteban, que después de dar una gran voz acompañada de un silbido para que se agruparan los corderos, que no perdía de vista y comenzaban[1] á desparramarse por el monte, torno á rascarse la cabeza y prosiguió así:

[Footnote 1: que no perdía de vista y comenzaban. Compare the use of the relative in this phrase with that to which attention has been called on p. 10, note 1.]

—Por una parte vuestras continuas excursiones, y por otra el dale que le das de los cazadores furtivos, que ya con trampa ó con ballesta no dejan res á vida en veinte jornadas al contorno, habían no hace mucho agotado la caza en estos montes, hasta el extremo de no encontrarse un venado en ellos ni por un ojo de la cara.

Hablaba yo de esto mismo en el lugar, sentado en el porche de la iglesia, donde después de acabada la misa del domingo solía reunirme con algunos peones de los que labran la tierra de Veratón, [1] cuando algunos de ellos me dijeron:

[Footnote 1: Veratón. See p. 25, note 1.]

—Pues, hombre, no sé en qué consista el que tú no los topes, pues de nosotros podemos asegurarte que no bajamos una vez á las hazas que no nos encontremos rastro, y hace tres ó cuatro días, sin ir más lejos, una manada, que á juzgar por las huellas debía componerse de más de veinte, le segaron antes de tiempo una pieza de trigo al santero de la Virgen del Romeral.[1]

[Footnote 1: la Virgen del Romeral. A hermitage in the locality.]

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