

## THE OLD SPANISH BALLADS.\*

BY CHARLES J. PETERSON.

THE very name of Spain conjures up visions of romance. We think at once of the Alhambra, of the dark-eyed damsels of Seville, of Gil Blas, of Don Quixote, of the wild, Andalusian bulls, and of the hills around Granada, every foot of which almost has witnessed some combat between Moor and Christian. But the old Spanish ballads give us the additional element of ancient chivalry. We see, in fancy, the rout of Roncesvalles; we hear the Cid come thundering on Bavieca; and we listen to the shout of "Allah, Il Allah," as the Paynims sweep to battle. We are back in the old days, when every inch of Spanish territory was disputed with the infidel, and when every Spaniard was a hero.

No writer has re-produced the spirit of this ancient time so successfully as Lockhart in his translation of the Spanish ballads. These ballads form the oldest, as well as largest collection of popular poetry, properly so called, that is to be found in the literature of any European nation. Many of them have been written for centuries. Like the old English ballads, with which Percy, Ritson, Ellis and others have made us familiar, they were the instinctive utterance of a brave and poetical people, in times of turmoil, peril and heroism. Nothing, therefore, can be less artificial than they are. They speak right to the heart. Those devoted to war ring out like the blast of a trumpet. It is as refreshing, amid the conceits of modern poetry, to meet these old ballads, as to pass suddenly, from the *petit-maitre* fountain of a stiff, conventional garden, to some clear, cool spring, gushing out from under a mossy rock, in the heart of a forest.

The English volumes of Lockhart's Ballads are too costly for general circulation. We are glad, therefore, to see that a cheap, yet elegant edition has been issued by Whittemore, Niles & Hall, a firm of Boston booksellers, whose well-selected publications are rapidly winning for them a high reputation with persons of taste. It has been objected, we know, that Lockhart's translations are not always literal. But to be

always literal, in translating, is often to be unfaithful; and Lockhart, aware of this, has sought to re-produce the spirit of his originals, and has succeeded. His Spanish ballads are such, in fact, as their authors would have made them, had they written in English.

The bull-fight, that national pastime of Spain, was never better described, for example, than in the ballad entitled, "The Bull-Fight of Gazul." Mr. Lockhart is of opinion that this particular ballad is of Moorish origin. We have not space for the whole ballad, but give the concluding stanzas, premising that three cavaliers have already fallen in the ring, and that the bull Harpado has never been worsted.

"With the life-blood of the slaughtered lords all slippery is the sand,  
Yet proudly in the centre hath Gazul ta'en his stand;  
And ladies look with heaving breast, and lords with anxious eye,  
But he firmly extends his arm—his look is calm and high.

Three bulls against the knight are loosed, and two come roaring on,  
He rises high in stirrup, forth stretching his rejon;  
Each furious beast, upon the breast he deals him such a blow,  
He blindly totters and gives back across the sand to go.

'Turn, Gazul, turn!' the people cry—the third comes up behind,  
Low to the sand his head holds he, his nostrils snuff the wind;  
The mountaineers that lead the steers without stand whispering low,  
'How thinks this proud Alcaide to stun Harpado so?'

From Guadiana comes he not, he comes not from Xeni,  
From Guadalarif of the plain, or Barves of the hill;  
But where from out the forest burst Xarama's waters clear,  
Beneath the oak trees was he nursed—this proud and stately steer.

*Dark is his hide on either side, but the blood within doth boil,  
And the dun hide glows, as if on fire, as he paws to the turmoil.  
His eyes are jet, and they are set in crystal rings of snow;  
But now they stare with one red glare of brass upon the foe.*

*Upon the forehead of the bull the horns stand close and near,  
From out the broad and wrinkled skull like daggers they appear;*

\* Ancient Spanish Ballads; Historical and Romantic. Translated by J. G. Lockhart. A new revised edition, with a Biographical notice. 1 vol. Boston: Whittemore, Niles & Hall.

*His neck is massy, like the trunk of some old knotted tree,  
Whereon the monster's shagged mane, like billows curled, ye see.*

*His legs are short, his hams are thick, his hoofs are black as night,  
Like a strong flail he holds his tail in fierceness of his might;  
Like something molten out of iron, or hewn from forth the rock,  
Harpado of Xarama stands, to bide the Alcaÿde's shock.*

Now stops the drum; close, close they come; thrice meet, and thrice give back;  
The white foam of Harpado lies on the charger's breast of black—  
The white foam of the charger on Harpado's front of dun;  
Once more advance upon his lance—once more, thou fearless one!

Once more, once more!—in dust and gore to ruin must thou reel!—  
In vain, in vain thou tearest the sand with furious heel—  
In vain, in vain, thou noble beast!—I see, I see thee stagger,  
Now keen and cold thy neck must hold the stern Alcaÿde's dagger!

They have slipped a noose around his feet, six horses are brought in,  
And away they drag Harpado with a loud and joyful din.  
Now stoop thee, lady, from thy stand, and the ring of price bestow  
Upon Gazul of Algava, that hath laid Harpado low."

In a different vein is "The Lamentation for Celin." This ballad also evidently had a Moorish origin. We can suppose it sung, during the last days of Granada, by Andalusian maids, as the twilight came on, sad and silent, and the sound of the evening trumpets from the beleaguering hosts came wafted to the town.

#### THE LAMENTATION FOR CELIN.

"At the gate of old Granada, when all its bolts are barred,  
At twilight, at the Vega gate, there is a trampling heard;  
There is a trampling heard, as of horses treading slow,  
And a weeping voice of women, and a heavy sound of woe.  
What tower is fallen, what star is set, what chief come these bewailing?  
'A tower is fallen, a star is set? Alas! alas, for Celin!'

Three times they knock, three times they cry, and wide the doors they throw;  
Dejectedly they enter, and mournfully they go;  
In gloomy lines they mustering stand beneath the hollow porch,  
Each horseman grasping in his hand a black and flaming torch;  
Wet is each eye as they go by, and all around is wailing,  
For all have heard the misery. 'Alas! alas, for Celin!'

Him, yesterday, a Moor did slay, of Bencerraje's blood—  
'Twas at the solemn jousting—around the nobles stood:  
The nobles of the land were by, and ladies bright and fair  
Looked from their latticed windows, the haughty sights to share;  
But now the nobles all lament—the ladies are bewailing—  
For he was Granada's darling knight. 'Alas! alas, for Celin!'

Before him ride his vassals, in order two by two,  
With ashes on their turbans spread, most pitiful to view;  
Behind him his four sisters, each wrapped in sable veil,  
Between the tambour's dismal strokes take up their doleful tale;  
When stops the muffled drum, ye hear their brotherless bewailing,  
And all the people, far and near, cry, 'Alas! alas, for Celin!'

Oh! lovely lies he on the bier, above the purple pall,  
The flower of all Granada's youth, the loveliest of them all;  
His dark, dark eyes are closed, his rosy lip is pale,  
The crust of blood lies black and dim upon his burnished mail;  
And ever more the hoarse tambour breaks in upon their wailing—  
Its sound is like no earthly sound, 'Alas! alas, for Celin!'

The Moorish maid at the lattice stands—the Moor stands at his door;  
One maid is wringing of her hands, and one is weeping sore;  
Down to the dust men bow their heads, and ashes black they strew  
Upon their brodered garments, of crimson, green, and blue;  
Before each gate the bier stands still—then bursts the loud bewailing  
From door and lattice, high and low—'Alas! alas, for Celin!'

An old, old woman cometh forth, when she hears the people cry—  
Her hair is white as silver, like horn her glazed eye:  
'Twas she that nursed him at her breast—that nursed him long ago:  
She knows not whom they all lament, but soon she well shall know!  
With one deep shriek, she through doth break, when her ears receive their wailing:  
'Let me kiss my Celin ere I die! Alas! alas, for Celin!'

"The Cid's Wedding" gives us a glimpse of social manners centuries ago. No letter, from "Our Own Correspondent," could narrate, more graphically than this old ballad, the incidents of a nuptial ceremony in ancient Burgos. There is a spice of humor in the ballad, of which one example is the manner in which the poet describes the hiring "the horned fiend for twenty maravedis:" a person to play this character being as indispensable, in old Spanish processions, as the hobby-horse in English May-day games.

“The King had taken order that they should rear  
an arch,  
From house to house all over, in the way that they  
must march;  
They have hung it all with lances, and shields, and  
glittering helms,  
Brought by the Campeador from out the Moorish  
realms.

They have scattered olive-branches and rushes on  
the street,  
And the ladies fling down garlands at the Campea-  
dor's feet;  
With tapestry and broidery their balconies between,  
To do his bridal honor, their walls the burghers  
screen.

They lead the bulls before them all covered o'er with  
trappings;  
The little boys pursue them with hootings and with  
clappings;  
The fool, with cap and bladder, upon his ass goes  
prancing,  
Amidst troops of captive maidens with bells and  
cymbals dancing.

With antics and with fooleries, with shouting and  
with laughter,  
They fill the streets of Burgos—and the Devil he  
comes after;  
For the King has hired the horned fiend for twenty  
maravedis,  
And there he goes, with hoofs for toes, to terrify the  
ladies.

Then comes the bride Ximena—the king he holds  
her hand;  
And the Queen; and, all in fur and pall, the nobles  
of the land.  
All down the streef the ears of wheat are round  
Ximena flying,  
But the King lifts off her bosom sweet whatever  
there is lying.”

Bavieca, the steed of the Cid, is as famous, in  
the legendary lore of Spain, as his master him-  
self. Whoever is fond of a fine horse will appre-  
ciate the following ballad. No wonder that the  
Cid left this direction in his will:—“When ye  
bury Bavieca, dig deep, for shameful thing were  
it that he should be eaten by curs, who hath  
trampled down so much currish flesh of Moors.”  
No wonder, either, that these directions were  
followed, and Bavieca buried, by the side of his  
master, under the trees in front of the convent  
of San Pedro of Cardena.

“The King looked on him kindly, as on a vassal  
true;

Then to the King Ruy Diaz spake, after reverence  
due:

“Oh, King, the thing is shameful, that any man  
beside  
The liege lord of Castile himself should Bavieca ride

“For neither Spain nor Araby could another charger  
bring  
So good as he, and certes, the best befits my king.  
But that you may behold him, and know him to the  
core,  
I'll make him go as he was wont when his nostrils  
smolt the Moor.”

With that, the Cid, clad as he was in mantle furred  
and wide,  
On Bavieca vaulting, put the rowel in his side;  
And up and down, and round and round, so fierce  
was his career,  
Streamed like a pennon on the wind Ruy Diaz'  
minivere.

And all that saw them praised them—they lauded  
man and horse,  
As matched well, and rivalless for gallantry and  
force;  
Ne'er had they looked on horseman might to this  
knight come near,  
Nor on other charger worthy of such a cavalier.

Thus, to and fro a-rushing, the fierce and furious  
steed,  
He snapped in twain his hither rein; ‘God pity now  
the Cid!  
God pity Diaz!’ cried the lords; but when they looked  
again,  
They saw Ruy Diaz ruling him with the fragment  
of his rein;  
They saw him proudly ruling, with gesture firm and  
calm,  
Like a true lord commanding, and obeyed as by a  
lamb.

And so he led him foaming and panting to the King;  
But ‘No!’ said Don Alphonso, ‘it were a shameful  
thing  
That peerless Bavieca should ever be bestrid  
By any mortal but Bivar—mount, mount again, my  
Cid!’”

We regret, both that we have no more space  
to spare, and that it would be unjust to the pub-  
lishers, to continue these extracts. The speci-  
mens we have given of this delightful volume  
will prove, we trust, an incentive to buy the  
book. We are sure, if we found “Lockhart's  
Ballads” on a lady's boudoir table, we should  
mentally pronounce her superior, in culture,  
taste and refinement.

## LINES.

FROM THE GERMAN OF HEINE.

As the moon's reflection trembles  
In the wild and wavering deeps,  
While the moon herself in silence,  
O'er the arch of Heaven sweeps.

Even so I see thee—loved one,  
Calm and silent, and there moves  
But thine image in my bosom,  
For my heart is thrilled and loves.