

Saint Quentin, the day it was won in France; — the cave of the magician Fiton, in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth cantos, where he sees the battle of Lepanto, which happened long afterwards, fought by anticipation;⁹ — the romantic story of Tegualda in the twentieth, and that of Glaura in the twenty-fourth: so that, when we come to the end of the second part, — which concludes, again, with needless * 467 * abruptness, we find that we have enjoyed more poetry than we had in the first, if we have made less rapid progress in the history.

In the third part, which appeared in 1590, we have again a continuation of the events of the war, though with episodes such as that in the thirty-second and thirty-third cantos, — which the poet strangely devotes to a defence, after the manner of the old Spanish chronicles, of the character of Queen Dido from the imputations cast on it by Virgil, — and that in the thirty-sixth, in which he pleasantly gives us much of what little we know concerning his own personal history.¹⁰ In the thirty-seventh and last, he leaves all his previous subjects, and discusses the right of public and private war, and the claims of Philip the Second to the crown of Portugal; ending the whole poem, as far as he himself ended it, with touching complaints of his own miserable condition and disappointed hopes, and his determination to give the rest of his life to penitence and devotion.

This can hardly be called an epic. It is an historical

⁹ Such visions were, at the time, supposed to be common. Pedro Nicolas Factor, a painter who died in 1583, and who is remarkable for having been canonized, claimed to have had several such; — among the rest one of this same battle of Lepanto, which he saw at Valencia while it was fighting in Greece. Stirling's Artists, Vol. I. pp. 368-379.

¹⁰ The accounts of himself are chiefly in Cantos XIII., XXXVI., and XXXVII.; and besides the facts I have given in the text, I find it stated (Seman. Pintoresco, 1842, p. 195) that Ercilla in 1571 received the Order of Santiago, and in 1578 was employed by Philip II. on an inconsiderable mission to Saragossa.

poem, partly in the manner of Silius Italicus, yet seeking to imitate the sudden transitions and easy style of the Italian masters, and struggling awkwardly to incorporate with different parts of its structure some of the supernatural machinery of Homer and Virgil. But this is the unfortunate side of the work. In other respects Ercilla is more successful. His descriptive powers, except in relation to natural scenery, are remarkable, and, whether devoted to battles or to the wild manners of the unfortunate Indians, have not been exceeded by any other Spanish poet. His speeches, too, are often excellent, especially the remarkable one in the second canto, given to Colocólo, the eldest of the Caciques, where the poet has been willing to place himself in direct rivalry with the speech which Homer, under similar circumstances, has given to Ulysses in the first book of the Iliad.¹¹ * And his characters, so far as the * 468 Araucan chiefs are concerned, are drawn with force and distinctness, and lead us to sympathize with the cause of the Indians rather than with that of the invading Spaniards. Besides all this, his genius and sensibility often break through, where we should least expect it, and his Castilian feelings and character still oftener; the whole poem being pervaded with that deep sense of loyalty which was always a chief ingredient in Spanish honor and heroism, and which, in Ercilla, seems never to have been chilled by the ingratitude of the master to whom he devoted his life, and to whose glory he consecrated this poem.¹²

¹¹ The great praise of this speech by Voltaire, in the Essay prefixed to his "Henriade," 1726, first made the Araucana known beyond the Pyrenees; and if Voltaire had read the poem, he pretended to criticise, he might have done

something in earnest for its fame. (See his Works, ed. Beaumarchais, Paris, 1785, 8vo, Tom. X. pp. 394-401.) But his mistakes are so gross as to impair the value of his admiration.

¹² The best edition of the Araucana

The Araucana, though one third longer than the Iliad, is a fragment; but, as far as the war of Arauco is concerned, it was soon completed by the addition of two more parts, embracing thirty-three additional cantos,—the work of a poet by the name of Osorio, who published it in 1597. Of its author, a native of Leon, we know only that he describes himself to have been young when he wrote it, and that in 1598 he gave the world another poem, on the wars of the knights of Malta and the capture of Rhodes. His continuation of the Araucana was several times printed, but has long since ceased to be read. Its more interesting portions are those in which the poet relates, with apparent accuracy, many of the exploits of Ercilla among the Indians;—the more absurd are those in which, under the pretext of visions of Bellona, an account is given of the conquest of Oran by Cardinal

Ximenes, and that of Peru by the Pizarros, * 469 neither of which has anything to do with * the main subject of the poem. Taken as a whole, it is nearly as dull and chronicling as anything of its class that preceded it.¹³

is that of Sancha, Madrid, 1776, 2 tom. 12mo; and the most exact life of its author is in Alvarez y Baena, Tom. I. p. 32. Hayley published an abstract of the poem, with bad translations of some of its best passages, in the notes to his third epistle on Epic Poetry (London, 1782, 4to); but there is a better and more ample examination of it in the "Caraktere der vornehmsten Dichter aller Nationen," Leipzig, 1793, 8vo, Band II. Theil I. pp. 140 and 349. As to the ingratitude of Philip II. it is not remarkable. He had no poetical side to his character. Paton tells us he was "enemigo de la poesia." See his address "Al Letor" of the Proverbios Morales de Alonso de Varros, Baeza, 1615. Paton knew what he said.

¹³ The last edition of the continua-

tion of the Araucana, by Diego de Sanchisteban Osorio, of which I have any knowledge, was printed with the poem of Ercilla at Madrid, 1733, folio. Osorio also published "Primera y Segunda Parte de las Guerras de Malta y Toma de Rodas," Madrid, 1599, 8vo, ff. 297. But it is not better than the continuation of the Araucana. There is a copy in the Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, Paris.

In 1862 there was published a poem not unlike the Araucana; I mean the "Puren Indomito." It was contemporary with the invasion of Arauco and Puren, being a small part of that devoted country; it is, as was Ercilla's poem, an account of the Spanish attempt to conquer it. The author of the "Puren Indomito," was Alvarez de Toledo, a captain in the expedition he

But there is one difficulty about both parts of this poem, which must have been very obvious at the time. Neither shows any purpose of doing honor to the commander in the war of Arauco, who was yet a representative of the great Mendoza family, and a leading personage at the courts of Philip the Second and Philip the Third. Why Osorio should have passed him over so slightly is not apparent; but Ercilla was evidently offended by the punishment inflicted on him after the unfortunate tournament, and took this mode of expressing his displeasure.¹⁴ A poet of Chili,

describes, and his poem, extending to twenty-four cantos and eighteen hundred octave stanzas, is as purely dry narrative as a mere description of facts can make it. It ends abruptly in the middle of a stanza. Being apparently accurate in its dates, it has sometimes been cited as a trustworthy authority in the history of Chili, but it was never published until 1862, when it was printed from a manuscript in the National Library at Madrid, by the house of Frank, in Paris and Leipzig, as the first volume of a "Bibliotheca Americana, collection d'ouvrages inedits ou rares."—a series, which, if it is not opened brilliantly, may, it is hoped, be continued.

¹⁴ The injustice, as it was deemed by many courtly persons, of Ercilla to Garcia de Mendoza, fourth Marquis of Cañete, who commanded the Spaniards in the war of Arauco, may have been one of the reasons why the poet was neglected by his own government after his return to Spain, and was certainly a subject of remark in the reigns of Philip III. and IV. In 1613, Christóval Suarez de Figueroa, the well-known poet, published a life of the Marquis, and dedicated it to the profligate Duke of Lerma, then the reigning favorite. It is written with some elegance and some affectation in its style, but is full of flattery to the great family of which the Marquis was a member; and when its author reaches the point of time at which Ercilla was involved in the trouble at the tournament, already noticed, he says: "There arose a dif-

ference between Don Juan de Pineda and Don Alonso de Ercilla, which went so far, that they drew their swords. Instantly a vast number of weapons sprang from the scabbards of those on foot, who, without knowing what to do, rushed together and made a scene of great confusion. A rumor was spread, that it had been done in order to cause a revolt; and from some slight circumstances it was believed that the two pretended combatants had arranged it all beforehand. They were seized by command of the general, who ordered them to be beheaded, intending to infuse terror into the rest, and knowing that severity is the most effectual way of insuring military obedience. The tumult, however, was appeased; and as it was found, on inquiry, that the whole affair was accidental, the sentence was revoked. The becoming rigor with which Don Alonso was treated caused the silence in which he endeavored to bury the achievements of Don Garcia. He wrote the wars of Arauco, carrying them on by a body without a head;—that is, by an army, with no intimation that it had a general. Ungrateful for the many favors he had received from the same hand, he left his rude sketch without the living colors that belonged to it; as if it were possible to hide the valor, virtue, forecast, authority, and success of a nobleman whose words and deeds always went together and were alike admirable. But so far could passion prevail, that the account thus given remained in the minds of many as if it were an apocry-

* 470 therefore, Pedro de Oña, attempted, * so far as Ercilla was concerned, to repair the wrong, and, in 1596, published his "Arauco Subjugated," in nineteen cantos, which he devoted expressly to the honor of the neglected commander. Oña's success was inconsiderable, but was quite as much as he deserved. His poem was once reprinted; but, though it consists of sixteen thousand lines, it stops in the middle of the events it undertakes to record, and has never been finished. It contains consultations of the infernal powers, like those in Tasso, and a love-story, in imitation of the one in Ercilla; but it is mainly historical, and ends at last with an account of the capture of "that English pirate, Richerte Aquines,"—no doubt Sir Richard Hawkins, who was taken in the Pacific in 1594, under circumstances not more unlike those which Oña describes than might be expected in a poetical version of them by a Spaniard.¹⁵

phal one; whereas, had it been dutifully written, its truth would have stood authenticated to all. For, by the consent of all, the personage of whom the poet ought to have written was without fault, gentle, and of great humanity; and he who was silent in his praise strove in vain to dim his glory." *Hechos de Don Garcia de Mendoza*, por Chr. Suarez de Figueroa, Madrid, 1613, 4to, p. 103.

The theatre seemed especially anxious to make up for the deficiencies of the greatest narrative poet of the country. In 1622, a play appeared, entitled "Algunas Hazañas de las muchas de Don Garcia Hurtado de Mendoza"; a poor attempt at flattery, which, on its title-page, professes to be the work of Luis de Belmonte, but, in a sort of table of contents, is ascribed chiefly to eight other poets, among whom are Antonio Mira de Mesa, Luis Velez de Guevara, and Guillen de Castro. Of the "Arauco Domado" of Lope de Vega, printed in 1629, and the humble place assigned in it to Ercilla, I have spoken, *ante*, p. 207. To these should be added two others, namely, the "Governador

Prudente" of Gaspar de Avila, in Tom. XXI. of the *Comedias Escogidas*, printed in 1664, in which Don Garcia arrives first on the scene of action in Chili, and distinguishes his command by acts of wisdom and clemency; and in Tom. XXII., 1665, the "Españoles en Chili," by Francisco Gonzalez de Bustos, devoted in part to the glory of Don Garcia's father, and ending with the impalement of Caupolican and the baptism of another of the principal Indians; each as characteristic of the age as was the homage of all to the Mendozas.

¹⁵ "Arauco Domado, compuesto por el Licenciado Pedro de Oña, Natural de los Infantes de Engol en Chile, etc., impreso en la Ciudad de los Reyes," (Lima,) 1596, 12mo, and Madrid, 1605. Besides which, Oña wrote a poem on the earthquake at Lima in 1599. Antonio is wrong in suggesting that Oña was not a native of America.

Gayangos adds, that in 1639 there was printed at Seville a poem by Oña, entitled "Ignacio de la Cantabria," which is, in fact, a mere life of Saint

But as the marvellous discoveries of the conquerors of America continued to fill the world with their fame, and to claim at home no small part of the interest that had so long been given to the national achievements in * the Moorish wars, it was natural that * 471 the greatest of all the adventurers, Hernando Cortés, should come in for his share of the poetical honors that were lavishly scattered on all sides. In fact, as early as 1588, Gabriel Lasso de la Vega, a young cavalier of Madrid, stirred up by the example of Ercilla, published a poem, entitled "The Valiant Cortés," which six years later he enlarged and printed anew under the name of "La Mexicana"; and in 1599, Antonio de Saavedra, a native of Mexico, published his "Indian Pilgrim," which contains a regular life of Cortés in above sixteen thousand lines, written, as the author assures us, on the ocean, and in seventy days. Both are mere chronicling histories; but the last is not without freshness and truth, from the circumstance that it was the work of one familiar with the scenes he describes, and with the manners of the unhappy race of men whose disastrous fate he records.¹⁶

In the same year with the "Valiant Cortés" appeared the first volume of the lives of some of the early discoverers and adventurers in America, by Juan de Castellanos, an ecclesiastic of Tunja in the kingdom

Ignatius Loyola, that has no other merit than facile octave verses. The "Arauco Domado" is reprinted in the *Biblioteca de Rivadeneyra*, Tom. XXIX., and there is a notice of Oña in the Preface to that volume, 1854. He wrote his *Arauco* at Lima.

¹⁶ "Cortés Valeroso, por Gabriel Lasso de la Vega," Madrid, 1588, 4to, and "La Mexicana," Madrid, 1594, 8vo. Tragedies said to be much like those of Virues, and other works, which I have not seen, are also attributed to him.

(Hijos de Madrid, Tom. II. p. 264.) "El Peregrino Indiano, por Don Antonio de Saavedra Guzman, Viznieto del Conde del Castellar, nacido en Mexico," Madrid, 1599, 12mo. It is in twenty cantos of octave stanzas; and though we know nothing else of its author, we know, by the laudatory verses prefixed to his poem, that Lope de Vega and Vicente Espinel were among his friends. It brings the story of Cortés down to the death of Guatimozin.

of New Granada; but one who, like many others that entered the Church in their old age, had been a soldier in his youth, and had visited many of the countries, and shared in many of the battles, he describes. It begins with an account of Columbus, and ends, about 1560, with the expedition of Orsua and the crimes of Aguirre, which Humboldt has called the most dramatic episode in the history of the Spanish conquests, and of which Southey has made an interesting, though painful story. Why no more of the poem of Castellanos was published does not appear. More was * 472 known to exist; * and at last the second and third parts were found, and, with the testimony of Ercilla to the truth of their narratives, were published in 1847, bringing their broken accounts of the Spanish conquests in America, and especially in that part of it since known as Colombia, down to about 1588. The whole, except the conclusion, is written in the Italian octave stanza, and extends to nearly ninety thousand lines, in pure, fluent Castilian, which soon afterwards became rare; but in a chronicling spirit, which, though it adds to its value as history, takes from it all the best characteristics of poetry.¹⁷

Other poems of the same general character followed. One on the discovery and settlement of La Plata is by Centenera, who shared in the trials and sufferings of the original conquest, — a long, dull poem, in twenty-eight cantos, full of credulity, and yet not without value as a record of what its author saw and learned

¹⁷ The poem of Castellanos is singularly enough entitled "*Elegias de Varones Ilustres de Indias*," and we have some reason to suppose it originally consisted of four parts. (Antonio, Bib. Nov., Tom. I. p. 674.) The first was printed at Madrid, 1589, 4to; but the second and third, discovered, I believe,

in the National Library of that city, were not published till they appeared in the fourth volume of the Biblioteca of Aribau, Madrid, 1847, 8vo. *Elegias* seems to have been used by Castellanos in the sense of *eulogies*. Of their author the little we know is told by himself.

in his wild adventures. It contains, in the earlier parts, much irrelevant matter concerning Peru, and is throughout a strange mixture of history and geography, ending with three cantos devoted to "Captain Thomas Candis, captain-general of the queen of England," in other words, Thomas Cavendish, half gentleman, half pirate, whose overthrow in Brazil, in 1592, Centenera thinks a sufficiently glorious catastrophe for his long poem.¹⁸ Another similar work on an expedition into New * Mexico was written by * 473 Gaspar de Villagra, a captain of infantry, who served in the adventures he describes, and published his account in 1610, after his return to Spain. But both belong to the domain of history rather than to that of poetry.¹⁹

No less characteristic of the national temper and

¹⁸ "Argentina, Conquista del Rio de la Plata y Tucuman, y otros Sucesos del Peru," Lisboa, 1602, 4to. There is a love-story in Canto XII., and some talk about enchantments elsewhere; but, with a few such slight exceptions, the poem is evidently pretty good geography, and the best history the author could collect on the spot. I know it only in the reprint of Barcia, who takes it into his collection entirely for its historical claims. Figueroa (Plaza Universal, 1615, f. 345, b) calls Captain Cavendish "Candi," and puts him and "Ricarte Aquines" — Sir Richard Hawkins — with Dragot and other Barbary pirates, who were so much hated in Spain.

One thing has much struck me in this and all the poems written by Spaniards on their conquests in America, and especially by those who visited the countries they celebrate. It is, that there are no proper sketches of the peculiar scenery through which they passed, though much of it is among the most beautiful and grand that exists on the globe, and must have been filling them constantly with new wonder. The truth is, that, when they describe woods and rivers and mountains, their descrip-

tions, often eloquent, would as well fit the Pyrenees or the Guadalquivir as they do Mexico, the Andes, or the Amazon. Perhaps this deficiency is connected with the same causes that have prevented Spain from ever producing a great landscape painter. At any rate, it is a strong contrast to the state of English literature, where two of the most remarkable productions of modern times, resting in no small degree on descriptions of nature, are to be traced to the connection of England and America; — I mean the "Tempest" and "Robinson Crusoe." And yet neither Shakespeare nor Defoe ever visited the scenery their genius peopled with such marvellous creations. (See *post*, Chap. XXXI., near the end, on descriptive poetry.)

¹⁹ "La Conquista del Nuevo Mexico, por Gaspar de Villagra," was printed at Alcalá in 1610, 8vo. It is in thirty-four cantos of blank verse, with a coarse portrait of the author prefixed, giving his age as fifty-five. There must be more than thirteen thousand dull verses, in which history and pagan machinery are mixed up in the wildest way. I have seen it only in the Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, Paris.

genius than these historical and heroic poems were the long religious narratives in verse produced during the same period and later. To one of these — that of Coloma on "The Passion of Christ," printed in 1576 — we have already alluded. Another, "The Universal Redemption," by Blasco, first printed in 1584, should also be mentioned. It fills fifty-six cantos, and contains nearly thirty thousand lines, embracing the history of man from the creation to the descent of the Holy Spirit, and reading in many parts like one of the old Mysteries.²⁰ A third poem, by Mata, not unlike the last, extends through two volumes, and is devoted to the glories of Saint Francis and five of his followers; a collection of legends in octave stanzas, put together without order or effect, the first of which sets forth the meek Saint Francis in the disguise of a knight-errant.

None of the three has any value.²¹

* 474 * The next in the list, as we descend, is one of the best of its class, if not the very best. It is the "Monserrate" of Virues, the dramatic and lyric poet, so much praised by Lope de Vega and Cervantes. The subject is taken from the legends of the Spanish Church in the ninth century. Garin, a hermit living

²⁰ "Universal Redencion de Francisco Hernandez Blasco," Toledo, 1584, 1589, 4to; Madrid, 1609, 4to; Alcalá, 1612. He was of Toledo, and claims that a part of his poem was a revelation to a nun. A Second Part, by his brother Luis Hernandez Blasco, still longer, appeared in 1613, at Alcalá, which I have never seen. Gayangos says it is in twenty-five cantos, making five thousand eight hundred octave stanzas, or more than fifty thousand lines.

²¹ "El Cavallero Assisio, Vida de San Francisco y otros Cinco Santos, por Gabriel de Mata," Tom. I., Bilbao, 1587, with a woodcut of St. Francis on the title-page, as a knight on horseback

and in full armor; Tom. II., 1589, 4to. A third volume was promised, but it never appeared. The five saints are St. Anthony of Padua, Sta. Buenaventura, St. Luis the Bishop, Sta. Bernadina, and Sta. Clara, all Minorites. St. Anthony preaching to the fishes, whom he addresses (Canto XVII.) as *hermanos peces*, is very quaint.

Gayangos notices an allegorical poem of Mata, entitled "Cantos Morales," which was printed at Valladolid in 1594, and of which he gives extracts, that approach nearer to poetry than anything in the Life of St. Francis. It is in thirteen cantos, each of which has a long prose exposition of its moral meaning.

on the desolate mountain of Monserrate, in Catalonia, is guilty of one of the grossest and most atrocious crimes of which human nature is capable. Remorse seizes him. He goes to Rome for absolution, and obtains it only on the most degrading conditions. His penitence, however, is sincere and complete. In proof of it, the person he has murdered is restored to life, and the Madonna, appearing on the wild mountain where the unhappy man had committed his crime, consecrates its solitudes by founding there the magnificent sanctuary which has ever since made the Monserrate holy ground to all devout Spaniards.

That such a legend should be taken by a soldier and a man of the world as a subject for poetry would hardly have been possible in the sixteenth century in any country except Spain. But many a soldier there, even in our own times, has ended a life of excesses in a hermitage as rude and solitary as that of Garin;²² and in the time of Philip the Second, it seemed nothing marvellous that one who had fought at the battle of Lepanto, and who, by way of distinction, was commonly called "the Captain *Virues," should * 475 yet devote the leisure of his best years to a poem on Garin's deplorable life and revolting adventures. Such, at least, was the fact. The "Monserrate," from the moment of its appearance, was successful. Nor has its success been materially diminished at any

²² In a hermitage on a mountain near Córdoba, where about thirty hermits lived in stern silence and subjected to the most cruel penances, I once saw a person who had served with distinction as an officer at the battle of Trafalgar, and another who had been of the household of the first queen of Ferdinand VII. The Duke de Rivas and his brother, Don Angel, — now (1862) wearing the title himself, but more distinguished as a poet, and for his eminent merits in

the diplomatic and military service of his country, than for his high rank, — who led me up that rude mountain, and filled a long and beautiful morning with strange sights and adventures and stories, such as can be found in no country but Spain, assured me that cases like those of the Spanish officers who had become hermits were still of no infrequent occurrence in their country. This was in 1818.