

however unpopular, I have religion on my side against armies in particular – they are alike incompatible with our independence and our population. If ever we are enslaved it will not be by a foreign invader, but a domestic army, and should our navy fall I see little reason to augur more favourably of a Land Contest.

34.

But ere the mingling bounds have far been passed,
 Dark Guadiana rolls his power along
 In sullen billows, murmuring and vast, 380
 So noted ancient roundelays among.
 Whilome upon his banks did legions throng
 Of Moor and Knight, in mailed splendour drest:
 Here ceased the swift their race, here sunk the strong;
 The Paynim turban and the Christian crest 385
 Mixed on the bleeding stream, by floating hosts oppressed.

35.

Oh, lovely Spain! renowned, romantic land!
 Where is that standard which Pelagio bore,
 When Cava's traitor-sire first called the band
 That dyed thy mountain streams with Gothic gore?⁹⁶ * 390
 Where are those bloody banners which of yore
 Waved o'er thy son's, victorious to the gale,
 And drove at last the spoilers to their shore?
 Red gleamed the cross, and waned the crescent pale,
 While Afric's echoes thrilled with Moorish matrons' wail. 395

* Count Julian's daughter, the Helen of Spain. Pelagius preserved his independence in the fastnesses of the Asturias, and the descendants of his followers, after some centuries, completed their struggle by the conquest of Granada.

36.

Teems not each ditty with the glorious tale?
 Ah! such, alas! the hero's amplest fate!
 When granite moulders, and when records fail,
 A peasant's plaint prolongs his dubious date.
 Pride! bend thine eye from heaven to thine estate, 400
 See how the Mighty shrink into a song!
 Can Volume, Pillar, Pile preserve thee great?
 Or must thou trust Tradition's simple tongue,
 When Flattery sleeps with thee, and History does thee wrong?

96: The story of Count Roderick's seduction of Pelayo's daughter ("the Helen of Spain"), and of how Pelayo, in revenge, facilitated the Moorish invasion of Spain, is told in Southey's 1814 epic *Roderick, Last of the Goths* – a poem B. admired. Scott and Landor also wrote about it, and it was recently made into a West End musical, *La Cava* (excellent book and designs – pity about the music).

37.

Awake, ye sons of Spain! awake! advance! 405
 Lo! Chivalry, your ancient goddess, cries,
 But wields not, as of old, her thirsty lance,
 Nor shakes her crimson plumage in the skies:
 Now on the smoke of blazing bolts she flies,
 And speaks in thunder through yon engine's roar: 410
 In every peal she calls – "Awake! arise!"
 Say, is her voice more feeble than of yore,
 When her war-song was heard on Andalusia's shore?

38.

Hark! – heard you not those hoofs of dreadful note?
 Sounds not the clang of conflict on the heath? 415
 Saw ye not whom the reeking sabre smote;
 Nor saved your brethren ere they sank beneath
 Tyrants and tyrants' slaves? – the fires of death,
 The bale-fires flash on high: – from rock to rock
 Each volley tells that thousands cease to breathe; 420
 Death rides upon the sulphury Siroc, *
 Red Battle stamps his foot, and nations feel the shock.

*** The Siroc is the violent hot wind that for weeks together blows down the Mediterranean from the Archipelago. – Its effects are well-known to all who have passed the Straits of Gibraltar. – –**