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Regionalism as Exemplified in the Work of Jose Maria De Pereda

Mary Ludmilla Valdez
Loyola University Chicago

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REGIONALISM AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE WORK
OF JOSE MARIA DE PEREDA

BY

SISTER MARY LUDMILLA VALDEZ

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

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Jose' Maria de Pereda is one of the greatest and most prominent regional novelists of the nineteenth century. By personal inclination -- one might almost say by instinct -- he passionately loved the old ways in politics, religion and language. His favorite city within his beloved native region, was the remote and primitive village of Tablancia, which he aptly describes in Peñas Arriba.

The purpose of the present study is to present Jose' Maria de Pereda as an exemplary exponent of regionalism, as well as a valuable contributor to contemporary literature.

A chronological limitation was imperative in the consideration of this work, likewise the translations have been confined to only those themes which best exemplify regionalism. For this purpose the study includes translations of his various regional novels. Frequent quotations are given in the original Spanish in order that neither the flavor nor contemporary interpretations of ideas may be lost.

It will be further shown that Pereda is the model exponent of his own native province of Santander, which he chose as a basis and framework of the northern Spanish highlands in which his novels have their setting; and he has contributed notably to the pre-eminence of the nineteenth century regional novel, by works of rare merit.
INTRODUCTION

In the latter half of the nineteenth century when the first fervor of Romanticism had passed, the Spanish novel revived the same qualities for which it was distinguished in the sixteenth century. It assumed a foremost position in Spanish literature because it concerned itself not with ideas, thoughts, and science but with life, with the individual, with humanity. The novel, therefore, became the most important type in Spanish literature, attaining greater artistic merit than was manifested in either poetry or the drama.

The costumbristas of the earlier half of the nineteenth century presented sketches depicting the particular atmosphere of the country and time. These sketches, although not reaching the people, paved the way for the later form of novel wherein sympathy with the people came into evidence. Regionalism was not inherent in costumbrismo; but the costumbristas and the regionalists worked hand in hand.

It was the romanticists who gave regionalism more power than it had before. It was they who prepared the way for that harvest of regional literature which characterized the last third of the nineteenth century. The romanticists contributed something to the regional novel which was more important than mere description. Regionalism, as they interpreted it, may be compared with the cosmopolitanism of the romanticists of other lands. But the Spanish romanticists availed themselves of the liberty to describe only the spots in their country.
As a result of the topography of Spain, "it was inevitable that the modern novel of Spain should be regional."\(^1\) The regional novel with its description of the patria chica, or region, attained supereminence in the period from 1850 onward. It was Pereda who succeeded in giving this new-old sympathy an epic form, such as it had in the work of Cervantes. Though not strictly a writer of fiction, Pereda is included in the group of novelists, and "belongs to that generation which flourished between the decline of romanticism after 1850, and the arrival of naturalism about 1880, and is noted for the qualities native to Spanish literature unaffected and undiluted by European influence."\(^2\)

Before an attempt is made to show the influence of country upon literature, an explanation of region and regionalism in literature is in order. George T. Henner defines a region as follows: "Regions are genuine entities, each of which expresses both natural and cultural differentiation from its neighbors."\(^3\) The inter-relation existing between features of the country and people are set forth in the following definition of P. Vidal de la Blache: "Every region is a domain where dissimilar beings, artificially brought together, have subsequently adapted themselves to a common existence."\(^4\) V. E. Stanbery expresses this relatively as: "The regional concept is based on natural or unrestricted relationships between places and people,

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4 Ibid., 2.
as distinguished from political or governmental relationships."\(^5\) It follows, therefore, that the uniqueness of a distinctive area arises from the particular forces present or the way in which the forces are interwoven or interchanged.

What, then is regionalism? Regionalism in literary production is the factor that presents the human spirit correlated with environment. In literature regionalism concerns itself with man, language, landscape, and the cultured riches of any particular region as the result of the reactions of the individual who has inherited certain peculiarities of race and tradition. It has as its subject matter the physical and cultural landscape, local customs, character, speech; as its technique, folk and native modes of expression, style, symbolism; as its point of view, the social idea of a planned society and the cultural values derived from traditions.

It is only natural that regionalism would be quite pronounced in Spain due to the wide variety of features in its physical environment. This country stands in isolation from Europe and is divided within itself. It consists of the verdant mountains of Asturia; the lofty, but arid, Castilian plateau; the semi-tropical gardens of Andalusia; the richly-watered rice swamps of Valencia; and the rugged Pyrenees, acting not only as natural barriers to communication, but also as buffers in time of invasion.\(^6\) Entirely surrounded by the Atlantic and Mediterranean waters, except where the Pyrenees separate it from France, the Spanish is also divided by mountain

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\(^5\) Ibid., 2.

ranges into four regions. Thus, the very topography of the country accounts in some measure for the differences among the peoples of various localities.

The old Spanish regions, each adhering to its traditional customs and manners, resulted from comparative isolation from Europe, together with the divisions caused by topography. Each province expressed a life, a culture, a feeling, and a being of its own with its local peculiarities. These peculiarities crept into the literature of the respective regions.

In the northern part of Spain and east of the province of Asturias is the Montaña district, which Pereda used as a background for most of his novels. It is a beautiful and varied country with a grand coast, high mountains, green tree-clad slopes, and rushing rivers. The climate is bracing with varied cold airs from the snowy mountains. The Montaña is a rough and broken region having the features both of seashore and mountain.

Some of the villages in this district are surrounded entirely by meadows and maize fields, interlaced with many paths and streams. Many habitations are half hidden in groves of fruit trees. Oak and chestnut trees also thrive abundantly. The villages are so closely set within the mountains that frequently the sun shines upon them for a single hour daily, especially during the winter season. In the village of Tresnigores, of which Pereda gives us a glimpse, snow begins to fall in September and continues until June. In most of the villages, however, there is a less severe climate, and life is pleasant and healthful.

From the villages the land slowly begins to rise from grass-covered hills to wooded mountain slopes, to still higher hills, and finally to the sombre rugged mountains. Along the horizon are huge towers of granite; and
along the eastern border of Asturias the snow-covered Picos de Europa rise to majestic heights.

Pereda's native province of Santander is one of those parts of the Spanish Peninsula that has been shut out from the rest of the world for the longest time, admitting modern intrusion only reluctantly. Even now many of its secluded corners maintain local customs and manners. This is the locality that has been depicted for us by José María Pereda,

...province inhabited by a race singularly austere and undemonstrative, scant of speech, and with hard, unemotional natures little given to gallantry; but truthful, simple, and capable of fine quiet heroism in peril and suffering.

This is the region that lives for all times in the pages of Pereda with;

...its mountains, its mountain peaks and snow blizzards and furious storms of the south-west wind, its self-sacrificing priest, hidalgos, the splendidly enduring peasantry, the fisher folk, the sea and storms along the coast, the pilgrimages in honor of St. John, the haymaking...

The patriarchal life that Pereda describes is the life he live in constant intercourse with the peasants whom he intimately knew, whose defects he never disguised and whom he loved.

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CHAPTER 1

JOSE MARIA DE PEREDA

José María de Pereda was born in the village of Palonco near the city of Santander, the leading town and seaport of northern Spain. He spent the first years of his boyhood amid the peaceful rustic surroundings of the Cantabrian villages. Later, in order to provide him with better educational opportunities, his parents moved to Santander, "where he was reared in a simple old-fashioned circle where everybody stood fast in the ancient ways, and where there was no literary chatter." Here he was allowed to mingle freely with the street urchins, whose traits he closely observed. This democratic spirit, which had scarcely been heard of, accompanied the most aristocratic Pereda during his whole life.

In the fall of 1850 he traveled from Santander to Madrid, studied there a short while, joyfully returned home and till his health failed, scarcely ever left Palonco again except during the short period when he was sent as deputy to the Cortes. Disillusioned by his experiences with the politicians of subtle manners and principles, the high-minded sensitive Alcalgo withdrew from public life and devoted himself entirely to letters.

José María Pereda dedicated his life and his talents to the service of

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2 Ibid., 237.
3 George Tyler Nortnup, 372.
his native province. As the sympathetic historian of the Santander fishermen and the primitive farmers of the hilly hinterland, he served his own province well. Moreover, he lived his books, for the patriarchal virtues, so nobly set forth in the best hidalgo creations of his pen, were his in the fullest measure. To all he was accessible with open heart and open purse. He was lavish in his expenditure of time and effort whenever there was a misfortune to be mended or an injustice to be repaired. His charity was always seasoned by a generous capacity for appreciating the humorous in the apparent tragic happenings of life.

The "relationship of this humanistic activity to his literary work is a vital one." It brought him into close contact with the scenery and types of people of his northland and, in turn, set before him his literary specialty for which all the circumstances of his life, taste, talent, and training qualified him. Consequently, he has in his works pictures of life in the mountains and along the seashore in northern Spain that cannot be excelled for detail and charm.

Pereda was "in appearance and manners a gentleman of the old stock the highest type of Castilian dignity and urbanity, and arrested attention as a striking example of the courtly don of yore." Jose Montero y Vidal has given his portrait in the following description:

Por su aspecto exterior, lo mismo que por la recia contextura de su espíritu, fue en la vida mortal el arquetipo de una casta de hidalgos ya desaparecía. Era de noble y grave

5 Obras Completas, XIII, xiv.
6 Ibid., xiii.
continente, mediano de talla, enjuto de
carneros, recio de bronce y hemoño de cabeza.
Tenía la color de avellana, correcta la
nariz, alta la frente, veludos los ojos,
digote bien poblado y de altas guias,
perilla larga y ancha, entrecana como el
mostacón... La melena rebelde, se encrespaba
bajo el crombergo derribado airosamente
sobre la sien.7

He was an aristocrat with no enthusiasm for novelties, no liking for theor-
ies which involved a rupture with the past. He was, however, receptive, and
what he saw he depicted with a mirror-like lucidity. He stood aloof from
the dubious and petty, from all acts that sin against true midalgua, in a
manner reflecting an austere dignity of character which in ordinary rela-
tions of life was mellowed into one of unassuming kindness distinguished for
its sincerity. Thus his austerity was relieved and kept in balance by a
sound judgment that preserved him from the eccentricities of an overwrought
temperament. On the other hand, "his personality was suffused by an ideal-
ism -- considered here as the impulse that in its outward course elects to
itch its wagon to a star."8

This picturesque personality appealed to the elite of heart and mind,
its genuineness being marked by the enduring friendships that it inspired.
A remarkable example is his life-long attachment to the eminent novelist,
Perez Galdos. Benita Perez Galdos and Pereda were radically opposed in
political views. Galdos favoring liberalism, Pereda extreme conservatism.

Pereda was not in sympathy with modern ideas which discriminated
between class and class, rich and poor. "His admiration was for the virtu-

7 José Augustín Balseiro. Novelistas Españoles modernos. Macmillan Co.,
New York, 1933, 54.
8 Obras Completas, XIII, xiii.
ous poor and those few nobles with a sense of noblesse oblige." He considered human society as composed of harmonious groups. The prevailing harmony of society was disturbed when anyone went outside his own natural sphere or group. In a word, he felt one should be content with one's lot and surroundings. His satire was directed chiefly against modern civilization with its class distinctions, because he believed that in this particular civilization lay the destruction of the very soul of man. He dreamed of a patriarchal system of government under which docile peasants would be ruled by virtuous and unselfish overlords.

The literary ideas of Pereda may be summarized in a speech which he delivered on the occasion of his admittance to the Spanish Academy on February 21, 1877. In this speech he defended the novela regional, as he called it, or the novel that deals with the district familiar to an author through constant association with it from childhood. He finally defined the novela regional in general as one "whose substance is developed in a district or place that has special and distinctive life, character, and colors." He maintained that the novela regional could not deal with any city that conformed to modern civilization and modern ideas; that the novela regional was more than appropriate in Spain; that it did not diminish love of country by the substitution of a love of a province, but that it fostered patriotism and loyalty. He further explained that only one who has lived in a region is able to understand and reproduce it in certain detail. He also maintained

9 George Tyler Northup, 374.
10 Ibid., 373.
that while the inhabitants of a city can adapt themselves to the life of another city quite readily, while a resident of a small district will never be contented in any other place. Pereda was stubbornly regional and fanatically orthodox.

In all his work Pereda attempted to convey his ideals regarding life. He firmly believed that the value of all activity should be measured by eternal standards. Thus he directed our gaze and our efforts upwards to the shining mountain-tops clothed with the rays of the planet that leads all men straight through every path -- if they but watch it. He fully explained and exemplified that it is only man's load of caprices that binds him to a burdensome life. He further severely arraigned all who neglect their opportunities for human service, also those who, endowed with intellect and moral sense, do not comprehend that every privilege entails a duty.

The twentieth-century individual undoubtedly looks upon Pereda as an old-fashioned fogy, for Pereda did not believe that woman should thrust herself forward into public view, but rather that she should reign as queen in her home, always conducting herself with becoming decorum. In his opinion, woman should always be the head of the home. His Arcadian ideal he set forth in the following passage:

...cierto, ciertísimo, que (don Fulana de Tal) tenía mucho talento, y evidente y comprobado que no le mostró jamás elevándose a las cumbres de la filosofía, ni a otras alturas en que las

12 Obras Completas, XIII, xxxvii.
mujeres se hacen ridículas y se marean muy a menudo los hombres, sino bajándose a los prosaicos pormenores de la vida domestica.12

Although we must admit that Pereda's ideas are old-fashioned, we cannot deny that they are, for the most part, wholesome. He did not merely refuse to float with the current of the times, but turned wistful eyes to the past when the King was the sole temporal power in the land and the Catholic Church the universal undisputed spiritual authority. This longing gaze toward the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is due to his fervent Catholic belief and his dislike for a representative government, at least, as practiced in Spain of his respective days. To him his ideals were so vital and so sacred that he refuses even to contemplate any departure from them, or to condone anything that is at variance with them. Thus the artistic productions of Pereda are an index to his unswerving beliefs.13

13 George Tyler Northup, 374.
CHAPTER II

LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS

Pereda, the most provincial of modern Spanish novelists, has been pronounced as the greatest in the matter of style by the eminent critic, Señor Menéndez Pelayo, who is well equipped for the exercise of his profession. He accords Pereda direct descent from Cervantes in consideration of his style, which never loses its purity and finish however eloquent may be the mood. A penetrating faculty of observation is an outstanding characteristic of Pereda's literary personality, as well as an essentially Spanish or Cervantesque humor, dry and quaint, ranging over the whole scale of expression from gentle irony to biting satire. Throughout his work prevails a certain geniality of temper which endears him to the reader as by the bonds of friendship, and the same time convinces the reader of the author's literary honesty and simplicity. In no way whatever does he make sacrifices for effect at the expense of self-respect or of the wholesomeness of his source of inspiration.

In his literary expression Pereda is a true representative of the purest academic standards molded by the most classical traditions. In other words "Pereda ha sido uno de los literatos que mejor han escrito el castellano en el siglo XIX."¹ His style is characterized by elegance, a quality it never ceases to have however realistic the mood. Pereda's style may be said

¹ Obras Completas, XIII, xvii.
to resemble that of Cervantes, not so much with respect to the vocabulary or the sentence structure as in the way that it seems to reveal the author's character. This Cervantine quality in Pereda is unconscious, fundamental, and spontaneous, arising out of qualities of mind and soul. It is, "expressivo, vigoroso, pero poco transparente, poco ligero, demasiado solida, se armoniza con esa naturaleza salvaje, cuya majestad y grandeza canta." It is a treasury of idiomatic language, and excels in representing the racy talk of the common people.

Moreover, "ne has taken a long step towards realizing the ideal of many writers of our own day -- that of uniting the language of daily life with that of literary expression." This union of the two conflicting and almost irreconcilable languages constitutes an inestimable service to his country. He seeks his effects by natural means with the result that he is able to find the appropriate word without any apparent effort. His expressions yield to delicate shades, while at the same time they are forceful and idiomatic.

A high literary technique is the secret of Pereda's style. "No hay faltas de construcción en Pereda. Por el contrario, es uno de los escritores

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3 Ibid., 365.
más perfectos que tenemos. Lo que hay es que emplea muchos giros y términos regionales de la Montaña (Santander) y esto nace difícil su inteligencia, no sólo para los extranjeros, sino también para bastantes Españoles."

Pereda excels in his descriptions of the fisher-folk and the mountain-ner, for "in every line that he wrote the reader can sniff the salt breeze from the Cantabrian snore or the fortifying odors of the mountains. The dialogue has a singular savor, the descriptions are so rich and varied that they bring into play all the resources of the Spanish language, and especially of the speech, for the idiom of the indalgo napado a la antigua exnales a certain archaic perfume."

In particular he possesses the difficult art of reproducing the primitive, picturesque speech of his peasant and fisher-folk. His superb workmanship enables him to depict very honestly these simple people in their simple and most ordinary conversation. Because of this trait Pereda's work is very difficult to translate; furthermore, the richness of his vocabulary nearly baffles the translator who is well equipped with the best of dictionaries. Since the literary beauty of his work is not always apparent a little special initiation is required before the reader feels himself repaid for his efforts.

His work concerns itself chiefly with the influences of hills and waves and is therefore steeped in their color and atmosphere. Pereda understands, feels and sees with the eye and heart and brain of the fisherman and the mountaineer. It is this deep understanding of the poor, his sympathy with

5 Obras Completas, Xll, xvii.
thehillsidefolks,hiswholesomeinterpretationofnature,andalikewise the
imperturbarablegenialityofhistemperthategivePereda'swritingstheirin-
trinsicvalue.hedrewhiscreationsthroughhisoverflowingnoblerpassion,
fromhisunusualpowersofobservationandnaturaltalentforexpression.
heusesforinstance,meaningfulexpressionssuchasdroopedlidsandalso
unexpectedeyesnot.helikewiseportraysanentirecharacterbyamere"sign
orgesturethatenablesto
detecttheconqueringassumptionofafellow
bythetwistofhissash,thecockofhismat
overalerteyes,hisstrutanagirl's
balcony,andtheflourishofhiscane.you
canreadthemaiden'sheartbytheconscious
foldofhersmantillaandsideflashofdark
eyesonhere waytochurchormarket.hemakes
usfeethefricesunraysthatwhitenthe
hairintheintervalsofstorm,therushing
thickshadowsofthewoods,andonewear
contentthatthestoryshouldbeanunobtrusive
melody,recurrent,interrupted,oozingout
throughpleasantscorners;nowinachurch
porch,againunderadrippingumbrella,ora
gloriousoak,alongachillyroad,ordown
thesunnytree.7

heisasauthorwhostatesverylittle,yethisreaderisabletounderstand
muchandevenrecognizesvividlyafacemeregly glancedat,notdescribed.
byasinglephraseofhissplendidproseheisabletoilluminateawhole
mountainside:"losverdesremendosdesubranasyelrojomatedesusres-
secosnelecholes."8 Justaseffectivelydoshempainttheseainthemost
profoundandimmeasurablesilenceofitsleep."Algunasvecesseóun
ligerospasquixado no lejos de la barquía, como el que producirí una pedre-

7HannanLynch."Pereda, theSpanishNovelist."ContemporaryReview,LXIX,
1896, 22b.
zuela arrojada al agua. he does not create brilliant scenes, except those that may be suggested by a glimpse through a rifted cloud of inarticulate life. There is no other writer who is able to outdo him as a landscape painter in rendering the fertile valleys in their calmness or the vexed and tempestuous Cantabrian sea in all its fury. Pereda's principal delight was in character, seen against the mountain country from which it naturally sprang.

Escede según ya indicamos, en el trazado de los caracteres energicos del pueblo, de la montaña y del mar. AQUÍ hay que hacer otra aclaración. Empezando por admitir la realidad de estos caracteres populares, hay que muchas de ellos están idealizados, si no fantasfeados. Desde luego cabe reunir la mayor parte de los que el novelista nos presenta en dos grupos: el de los buenos y el de los malos.

**REALISM**

Pereda was one of Spain's best and most typical of realists. He not only possessed a realism noted for vigor, sincerity, vital force but also a dignity which contrasted with the weary cynicism of his contemporaries. Pereda has not only linked the best literary traditions of his age with all their natural sources, but he has also succeeded in adapting them to our more modern conceptions. His type of realism is one which has the true ethical ring and which springs from a sound optimism of faith. It is a

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9 ibid., 44.
10 César Barja, 335.
a realism as much in advance of the older realism as our ideals and our mode of life are in advance of those of centuries past. The keynote to Pereda's realism comes from a fundamental Castilian trait of sympathetic and a friendly observation of his fellow-men, blended with a great consideration for human dignity. Although he gives us pictures that are faithful to reality in every coarse detail, yet the worst that can be said of those scenes is that they smack strongly of the soil. As an understanding and sympathetic genius he is able to penetrate to the heart of everyday existence and to ennoble the most common-place. "His characters are real human beings, which he impartially studied in all the crude bareness of actual life, without elegant attenuating conventional idealism on the one hand, or brutal cynicism on the other."11

Thus Pereda with his realism gives an impression quite different from the one which modern writers display when lingering over revolting details or analyzing the insignificant. He is content in ennobling the vulgar and in penetrating to the core of common-place existence.

El realismo artístico de Pereda sube tanto más en grado, y tanto más se eleva en naturalidad y en belleza, cuanto más el novelista desciende hasta el pueblo. Entre todos los tipos que aparecen en sus quadros novelescos, son sin duda los más mejores.12

Pereda drew the village and country folk as he saw them. The change was so radical that he had to educate his audience. This task of education

11 Obras Completas, XIII, XXI.
12 César Barja, 359.
accomplished through the medium of his novels. He declined to accept the characterization of realists if it ranked him under the French banner of naturalism. He himself does not wish to be classed with these literary decadents as is evident from his own words:

Si por realismo se entiende la arición a presentar en el libro pasiones y caracteres humanos y cuadros de la naturaleza, dentro del decoro del arte, realista soy, y a mucha honra lo tengo; pero si con tal calificativo se me quiere llenar, como ya se ha hecho, y hasta en son de alabanza, bajo las banderas, triunfantes la muy ultramontes, de un naturalismo medándole que pinte al desnudo los estragos del alcohol y las obscenidades de las mancebías, protesto contra la injuria que de tal modo se me infiere... Desde luego renuncio a la gloria de ser poeta de semejante linaje. En cambio, quiero reivindicar para mi la muy escasa que me pertenezca por haber venido al campo del arte mucho antes que todo eso, tal como ahora soy y sin otra filiación ni otra escuela que mi peculiarismo compleción literaria.13

His humble types do not in any way alienate our interest; so that we gradually and unconsciously begin to share the author's strong allegiance to the poor. Despite their lack of worldly embellishments his characters have a moral clarity. He succeeds in manifesting the very depths of the soul, the living core of human feelings, of moral scruples, of self-sacrifice, and of heroism. He is a realist in the broadest sense of the term; and as a faithful painter of manners of one corner of Spain, he may be said "to be without a rival at home, and with no master abroad."14 He has been properly named

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14 haman Lynch, 219.
the pioneer and standard-bearer of the best modern realism in Spain.

No es difícil advertir que mucho de su realismo artístico se inspira directamente en la realidad material, y más de uno de sus héroes, incluso el fray Apolinar de Sotileza, ha vivido una vida corporal. En casi todos sus personajes se descubre lo mismo: un rostro de vida material y de realidad vivida, un ser de cuerpo y alma.16

Pereda was the realist of the old Spanish traditionalists, frank, dignified, noble and sincere. Realidad idealizada is the phrase employed by Menendez y Pelayo to sum up his manner.16

ESPAÑOLISMO

It is the chief merit and distinction of Pereda to be the most brilliant exponent within modern times of those ideas and feelings that are distinctive ly Castilian. By his religion and standard of character he is a representative of the Spain of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He typifies the conceptions of Spanish peninsularity, its independence in living its own life with an utter disregard for and indifference to foreign opinion. Pereda is distrustful of modern progress that sacrifices every consideration of soul culture in the mad race for worldly success. His work reveals little or no sympathy with outside influences, and though he was well acquainted with the best in French, English, and Italian letters, these did not influence his own ways of thinking, but rather served as agents for crystallizing the more clearly his native individuality. "For Pereda believed that to go outside of

15 César Barja, 358.
one's natural sphere or group meant pretentiousness."Españolismo may be defined as an intense love of the Spaniard for the culture, the traditions, and everything that pertains to the mother country, Spain. Pereda's mind was saturated with a profound consciousness of españolismo, and he bent every effort to oppose by his literary contributions those who sought to break from regional bonds.

Rarely does Pereda mention in his work any country except the United States, and this last in terms that betoken his impression of awe for the immense material and boundless opportunities and of his fear of the evils which he associated with this vastness. He immediately cautions his people to be satisfied with that which they have within reach, in the following words:

Que se acostumbre el hombre a vivir con lo que tiene a sus alcances, y verás cómo no se le da una nigita por toda esa batatola de conquistas científicas con que tanto se pavonea el presente siglo.  

LOVE OF NATURE

As an artist Pereda finds an endless series of picturesque moods in nature. He is in admiration of those whose lives are the closest to nature, those whose desires are farthest from the artificiality of the civilized being. To his native valleys and mountains he opens up his heart as a lover

18 Obras Completas, XIll,xxv.
and admiring disciple; his devotion and loyalty to Cantabrian nature are unbounded. The slightest change in the sky, the splash of the waves, the smell of plowed ground, the murmur of a brook, the rustle of a leaf, the chirp of a bird, all these are accurately photographed on his mind. To him the summer in the montaña is "el suave y continuo rumor de todo lo que se mueve en la naturaleza, como un interminable arrullo de amor, con sus esasquidos de besos." 19

He is the artistic soul of his province, saturated with the influence of the hills and waves; steeped in their colour and atmosphere; understanding feeling, seeing with the eye and heart and brain the tidal movements of the waves and impenetrable steadiness of the Sierras. From the Escenas montañesas onwards, his seascapes, his pictures of ancient buildings, narrow streets, humble interiors, his portraits of individuals, not types, which represent every grade of society, from village urchin to feudal lord, receive in equal measure his sympathy and attention. 20

In his hands the elements are instruments for making contrasts more vivid, for setting forth the antithesis between God and man. If man made the town, God made the country. The presence of the former suggests only a work of human greed; the streets of the town conceal the majesty of God toward which the peaks of his montaña solemnly point. In the presence of a beautiful picture of sea or mountain, he finds the turbid stream of human life clarified as by the Divine breath; doubts are dispelled, trials are

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19 Obras Completas, XVII, 142.
are forgotten. In all the moods of nature in the montaña ne finds, every
minute of the day

   el mismo sublime, el poema, el cuadro, la
armonía insuperables, que no se han escrito,
ni pintado, ni compuesto, no soñado todavía
por los nombres, porque no alcanza ni alcanza-
rá jamás a tanto, la pequeñez del ingenio humano;
el arte supremo.21

his books are cut off from the highways of civilization, just as the
Cantabrian coast is cut from the rest of the Peninsula by a mountain range.
"If it is a mountain sketch like his quaint, Sabor de la Tierrucha, you can
breathe the clear air of the Sierras through every page. If it is a risner
novel, like, Sotileza, the pages taste salt like the air of the coast."22
To him, "dice mucho menos la ciudad con sus estruendos que la agreste natur-
aleza con su meditabunda tranquilidad."23 Pereda's picture of a country
lack living in the city, overcome by the turmoil, made homesick by the rows
of houses, seems always to express the hope that the orlorn will return to
the light and shade of the montaña, where he will find a "Iragancia tan ex-
quisita y igualada por los artificios orientales."24 He is in fine a lover
of good cheer and a fervent admirer of nature in its beauty and grandeur.25

21 José María de Pereda. Peñas Arriba, XV, Imprenta Lopez, Buenos Aires,
1938, lib.
22 Woman Lynch, 219.
23 Obras Completas IV, 121.
24 Obras Completas XXV, 583.
Supplement, 65.
MORAL VALUE

The work of Pereda is of rare honesty, breathing a high moral purpose. He successfully develops the theory of a perfect fusion of morality and true art. In his mission as a literary interpreter of his Santander waves and mountains, he produces studies of provincial life which are universal in application and makes them the expression of wholesome morals, without striving or making efforts to teach a lesson. The dominant note is a protest against all the corrupting moral tendencies that arise in the progress of modernism. The indictment of the author against modern times is based on the passion for luxurious self-indulgence and on the desire for riches as the means of acquiring power.

In attempting to remedy these evils, he reverts to an idealism which derives its inspirations from the old patriarchal simplicity that had few wants and few temptations. Since he is an ardent disciple of the simple life his moral principles stand out clearly in his consideration of town and country, which he contrasts throughout his work. In the splendor of the city the author sees the penalty of departing from the more basic values of life. He judges with strict impartiality the different conditions of men, but discerns the promise of the future only in those whose lives are closest to nature:

Donde quiera que hay nombres, cultos o incultos, hay debilidades, roñas y grandes fraquezas; pero

26 Romera-Mavarro, 573.
roña por roña, fraqueza y debilidad por
debilidad es preferable la de los aldeanos,
que muy a menudo hacen reír, a la de los
hombres ilustrados cuyos causas y cuyos
rines, por su abominable naturaleza y sus
alcances, casi siempre ponen a punto de
llorar. 27

As a lighthouse, high on a point of solid rock, is unaffected by the
surf that roars against the cliffs, so Pereda, enthroned upon his granite
faith in Church and State, regards the religious and political upheaval
around, but far below him, Pereda looks upon Science and Progress as empty
names to him. The end of man being to learn and to labor in that particular
state of life unto which it pleased God to call his forefathers, and for
that end, what need has he of Science or of Progress?

Pereda's heroes religiously perform their duty to God, but they also
fulfill their obligations to their fellow men. There is not the slightest
tinge of mysticism in the aldegos of his regional novels, for the peasants
are content to do their duty towards God. Their loyalty is shown by leaving
him in heaven with perfect confidence that he will do his duty toward them.

27 Obras Completas, XV, 163.
CHAPTER III

ESCENAS MONTANESAS

Escenas montañesas contains the essence of Pereda's art, and though later he writes longer novels, his delight is still in the description of fast-vanishing customs. He is more interested in studying carefully characters than in meticulously drawing out the thread of the action. We have the sketch of the raquero, who lives by petty larceny from ships along the quays; of the old-fashioned household in a mountain village -- by a pointed hereditary privilege Saint John is considered as one of the family, and the saint's wardrobe of garments figures in the washing list. The wake at a village funeral, heightened and intensified by the frequent toast, "to the glory of the dead," Niscla's bidding farewell to her son on a snip bound for the Indies, and her reproaching of the unfruitful soil that causes its sons to emigrate are for the most part descriptive of popular customs, or usages, and are truly representative of the author, who describes himself as "pintor escrupuloso de costumbres montañesas." The noble figure of Tremontorio, dying quietly in his house, although he had nearly perished in the storm because of his intrepid bravery and his unwillingness to lose his scapular, is the first and foremost of Pereda's long line of masterly portraits in numble life.

Escenas Montañesas is considered not only the forerunner of the author's work, but also the epitome of his characteristic qualities displayed in the most noteworthy of his Santander novels. They are pictures which disclose the heroic qualities of an unspoiled race, with external blemishes, it is true, but sound at heart. So true and complete is the delineation of most of the characteristic types in this volume that one can say that perfection of method is for Pereda an accomplished fact.

LA LEVA

La Leva (Weighing Anchor) is a semi-pathetic, semi-humorous, and human study of a poor fisherman, Tuerto by name, and his wife. It is the earliest of a long series of wonderfully lifelike studies or sketches of the men and women who live by the sea and are often devoured by it. Regarding the La Leva, this tribute may be adequately applied:

En La Leva es donde por primera vez hacemos conocimiento con Tremontorio, esa soberbia figura artística que hubiera envidiao Shakespeare, tan asido al terruno la mar como la ostra a la peña, y en cuyo entre­ cortado, energico y peculiarísimo lenguaje se advina toda una raza.

Writing of La Leva, Menéndez y Pelayo does not scruple to assert that, "there is nothing in all ancient and modern literature so deep, so moving; nothing

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5 Francisco Blanco García. La Literatura Española en el Siglo XIX. Saenz de Jubera Hnos., Madrid, 1903, 516.
that leaves an impression so ineffaceable as the last pages of this tragic sketch. ⁶ He likewise considered La Leva the best short story since the time of Cervantes. ⁷

It is said that from time immemorial there has existed between the seagoing folk of High Street (the street along the heights) and those living by the water-side an inextinguishable feud. Each quarter forms a separate fishing guild, since the two corporations are unwilling to adopt the same patron saint. The High Street folks, or those belonging to the Upper Guild, choose Saint Peter, while those of the Lower Guild commend themselves to those illustrious saints of whom it has been said that they arrived miraculously at the port in a bark made of stone. They have built as a demonstration of their faith a picturesque chapel in the Miranda quarter, overlooking a wide expanse of the ocean.

Tuerto "Cross-Eyes" enters his house, tosses off his serviceable tarpaulin hat, throws aside his duck waterproof coat, which he has carried on his shoulders, and hangs up on a nail a basket with an oilskin covering, for it was full of fishing tackle. ⁸ He immediately proceeds to partake of the badly cooked meal prepared by his wife, and not yet satiated, he remains at the table expecting something else, which does not come; he looks at the empty stew-pan, then finally upbraids his wife for not being able to provide his family with a better meal with the money that he has furnished.

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The wretched woman laments and groans; the children weep; and the irate mariner sallies forth to the balcony, where he finds Tremontorio to whom he bewails the deplorable situation of his home. 9

Uncle Tremontorio, who has arrived from the sea along with his mates Billy Bowline and Tuerto, has stayed in his balcony, knitting away at his fishing-nets. Although he is perfectly aware of the dispute that has just transpired across the narrow street, it is not his custom to concern himself with the domestic affairs of others. The furious husband, who is in great need of an outlet for his venomous rage, draws near to his neighbor and gives him a detailed account of his troubles.

In the meantime, the neighbors who had been watching suspect something unusual and decide to watch the entrance of Tuerto's home more closely. At last their curiosity is satisfied when the door opens and Tuerto emerges with all his children and proceeds to his parent's home, without paying the least attention to the entreaties of his wife. The latter vehemently objects and pleads with her husband for the custody of their children. But he, undaunted by her entreaties, proceeds to place the children in better hands. This having been done, he immediately leaves for the port, where a boat awaits him.

In this boat there are about a dozen men dressed in the same fashion as Tuerto, and like him each carried a small bundle of clothes on the arm... They had taken leave of their parents, wives and children,

9 Hamilton Wright Mabie. "José María de Pereda." Outlook, LXXXIX. June, 1908, 484.
who from the land continue to address words of love and hope to them.  

Gradually the last few finally make their way into the boat amidst the agitation of the multitude. Tuerto is the last one to enter the boat, for he hesitates in leaving his father and neighbor, who have accompanied him to the boat. The embarking is a pathetic scene, as those who thus leave will be obliged to be in the service of the country for the space of at least four years. To perform their duties in this service, they must break the intimate ties of family and friendship.

The oars have already touched the water, but the boat remains at a standstill, for Tuerto is still holding the cable in his hands as if unwilling to depart from his beloved land. He is brought to a realization that the departure must be made by the gruff command of the captain, who orders him to loosen his hold on the cable. Tuerto then obeys reluctantly, the cable drops into the water, and the oars begin to creak, while an infinite "adios" is heard to resound from the multitude on the shore. The boat disappears toward San Martin, in whose waters a steamer awaits in order to receive the members of the crew.

When the boat reached the side of the vessel, the multitude on land who by now could not discern more than a small black speck on the surface of the water, withdrew from the scene, until there remained only a single group. This group consisted of the close relatives of the absent sailors. The former clung to one another, as it were; the men consoling the women, and they in turn comforting the children.

10 José Maria Pereda. Obras Completas, V, 160.
11 Ibid., 164.
Among the sad group is the kind and unselfish figure of Tremontorio, and what a pathetic figure of grim maganimity, of taciturn sacrifice, of squalid heroism is Uncle Tremontorio, who has sailed in warships and has visited many strange lands, but who remains ashore to comfort the womenfolk and look after his friend's wife and neglected children. 

Because of the fact that he has no family of his own and also because of his deep-seated sympathy for others, he becomes a tender foster-father to many; and he refuses to leave the scene until each has gone to his respective home.

THE FOURTH OF OCTOBER

By the time that the month of May arrives the grain supply has so dwindled that there is not a single kernel to be seen throughout the entire province. Therefore, there must be another source of subsistence for their cattle until the month of August when the empty granaries will again be replenished with sufficient grain for the following winter. Fortunately for the animals there are in the province a few pasture-lands in Lodar, as also in Palombera, and other sections where the cattle from the various villages are taken from June until October. These privileged villages are entitled to send their cattle to these selected grasslands, as arranged in the deliberations of the council.

12 Hannah Lynch, 223.
In order the better to administer these affairs there is in every village a selected board, called alcalde de cabana, whose responsibility it is to decide all matters pertaining to the business of grazing.

Eight or ten days before the thirteenth of June, or on the feast of Saint Anthony, the shepherds or herdsmen proceed from farm to farm with two iron markers, in one of which is the complete name of the village in small letters; and in the other marker the initials of the same in large size. They then proceed to estimate the head of cattle to be taken, also to ascertain the number found to be without markings. If the latter is the case, they are applied to the hot iron brand.\textsuperscript{13}

In the meantime, the men discuss which of the cattle is regarded worthy of leading the herd, the honor of leadership being conferred on the one judged to be the strongest. To have his animal selected as the leader is considered the highest compliment that can be bestowed on its owner.

On the dawn of the feast of Saint Anthony, the headmen meet at a designated place, to help one another with the herd that is to be sent to graze; and then they officially begin the march in search of Penalabra or Palombra, which they do not always find until after three days. Here the animals are left until the fourth of October.\textsuperscript{14}

The fourth of October is awaited with tense anxiety by the entire village, for the dawning of that day means the return of their beloved cattle. In order to manifest their joy in meeting their cattle, they attire in their gaily-colored costumes as if preparing to interview a personage of great note. They assemble to hear in the distance the faint tinkle of the cow-bell.

\textsuperscript{13} Obras Completas, V, 356.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 357.
dolon, dolen, dolon, which becomes more audible as the cattle approach, until they are so close that the people are able to distinguish even the very color of the leading ones.

The breathless spectators rush to a certain location where they form in two rows in order to be near enough to see their beloved cattle more at closer range. Each headman in the meantime minutely and anxiously scrutinize and counts the cattle as they parade before him. After the lapse of an hour, the officials of the municipal government of the village assemble at the gathering place of the villagers, the entire village participating in the proceedings.

One of the headmen who has rendered disinterested services to the village by assuming the responsibility of the cattle, presents himself before the mayor and gives a detailed account of the happenings that occurred during the grazing period, and if necessary, the reason for the failure of the return of the animals. The headman substantiates the death of animals by taking from an almost empty sack two horns of different sizes, which are to be identified by the owners. The mayor then orders the owners of the dead cattle to come forward and officially identify the animals. The entire multitude is then asked for any complaints to be brought before the board. Several of the owners respond by protesting that their cattle are leaner than they were when first taken to pasture. Sometimes other protests similar to this one are also made. The headman explains all happenings and the conditions transpiring during his time of watching over the herd to the satisfaction of all the villagers concerned.
One hour later each neighbor gathers the cattle which belong to him in a field, and then journeys home with them, lovingly viewing them now and then with such a delight... as that which a proud father feels in the presence of his only son who has returned from the University in order to spend his vacations with him.

LOS BAILES CAMPESTRES

The success of country dances and the enthusiasm with which the country folk adopt them have made the dance a prime necessity in all the principal celebrations of Spain. For this very reason the principal ones of the village, after giving the matter some consideration and enumerating all the cultural features, determine to improve the conditions of the site of these amusements. The first improvement is the construction of a wall, sufficiently strong and durable to keep out the curious crowd, who tend to dampen the enthusiasm and enjoyment of the dancers. Since the surface of the place is quite rough and not appropriate, and also out of due consideration for the ladies, better locations are secured so that the gatherings are then held in the land of Atalava for the feasts of Saint John and Saint Peter; while for the feasts of Saint James and the Martyrs the crowds assemble in the land of Miranda.

This entertainment is sponsored by a commission of at least four members who have duly chosen by the out-going one and who have been judged worthy of such dignity. A list of names is presented to each member-elect

15 Obras Completas, V, 368.
of the commission, who acquieses to this duty by his signature on the margin of the list. This list contains also the names of the names of selected young people who are privileged to attend. The honor of being selected for these dances is a distinction held in the highest esteem, for such an award is bestowed only upon the youth of irreproachable standing in the village. On the eve of the dance the appointed member of the commission, presents those selected with the credentials of a partner and also with no more than three invitation tickets, printed in gold letters on bristol-board and endorsed by the entire commission. These invitations are distributed with the greatest precaution.

The occasion of a dance is a solemn one, for the selections generally fall to the elite of the village. Every measure is taken to insure a most delightful evening for the participants. At times when rain threatens to stop the enjoyment, the commission, who is present to handle every detail, give orders to the musicians to cease. The lanterns which until now adorned the space are removed to some sheltered place so that the entire affair may be completed without any great disruption.

Some of the elders of the village who often accompany, but who do not take an active part in the diversion, consider this practice of their young people a very laudable one and proceed to make more improvements, which in their opinion tends to raise the social status of the village to a much higher level.

The initiative and responsibility for this worthy project is taken by one of the commission who immediately proceeds to acquire a site where a
beautiful and spacious hall is built. Here are held the customary dances during the entire summer, particularly those associated with a religious solemnity. At the outset only persons who neglect to subscribe to this excellent cause are prohibited from participating in it, but later there are no restrictions placed on those wishing to take part. As a matter of fact, nearly three-fourths of the village are occupied with some detail or relating to the dance:

The one part of the village participating in the dancing; while the other will either watch it or promenade on the lawns, or assist with the luncheon; and the other one of which you will be the judge; the other fourth must be subdivided into three groups: the first place themselves in the Vargas Street, opposite the dance hall, where they will spend delightful hours in listening to the music; while at the same time they enjoy the illumination of the hall. The second group, in the meantime, prefers to assemble in the Alameda in order to view at closer range the costumes of the young ladies who are going to dance; then the third group barricade themselves in their own homes, to excuse their absence from the dance with a feigned headache, which absence, to be more precise, is caused by a lack of a suitable costume.16

Thus the country dances have developed notwithstanding the concern of many who consider them a detriment to the social culture of their people. They have become so much a dominant tendency of the Spanish character that they are considered a vital necessity. The people of the various regions are able to live without schools and theatres, but never without bailes campstres. Dancing to the Spanish is not merely an amusement, but it is

16 Obras Completas, V, 402.
a vital expression of his deepest religious sentiments.

THE LAST OF THE RACE

The story now moves back to the scene following the departure of Tuerto. There was Tremontorio walking down the wharf, lifting his figure above the crowd of fishermen's wives and vagabonds who surround him.

Some of the women were groaning, others sighing, and wiping their eyes frequently with the hem of their aprons or with the back of the hand, while the street-boys swarmed in and out among them like ants, with the liveliest curiosity.\(^{17}\)

Tremontorio is talking to everybody without looking at any one, pouring out his hoarse speech, gesticulating wildly and accentuating his words by the pounding and clenched of his fists. Any one merely observing his actions without hearing anything that he is saying would consider him to be the fierce master of a drove of slaves and not the most sympathetic comforter of that afflicted band.

Meanwhile near the headland of San Martin, a man-of-war was straining at her anchor. A thick column of smoke was blown from her funnel by the brisk northeast wind, as if to wave farewell to the city of Santander. Grouped on board were the valiant fishermen whom the latest conscription had torn from their homes, for some it was the last glimpses of land. It was to see the last of them that Tremontorio, the rough Hercules of a sailor bronzed by all the climates and buffeted by all the seas of the world, had come down with the sailor's wives and children.\(^{18}\)

\(^{17}\) Rollo Ogden, 485.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 485.
On his return home Tremontorio is met by Tuerto's wife, who at sight of him begins to moan and lets loose a torrent of cries and accusations. But Tremontorio, still deeply stirred with the sad scene that he has just witnessed, stalks away to his own den, flings himself upon his mattress, and sleeps away his forebodings in regard to his nephew, Tuerto.

The brave veteran thinks that, despite the revolution, he can make his living by his persistent daily labor, if not in peace, at least honestly by spending his few remaining years by taking from the depths of the sea, enough for his subsistence. But the abolition of the Society of Registered Sailor, decreed by the Central Government, is a cruel blow, which even the broad and firm shoulders of Tremontorio can scarcely support.

When he is no longer able to deny the truth of the report of the recent abolishment of the society, he wanders restlessly up and down the wharf, discharging his rage upon the very first comrades that he encounters. The fishermen explain to him that they had labored and petitioned for the abolition of the Registered Sailors' Society, hoping thereby to abolish merely the conscriptions, without realizing at the time that thereby they would be deprived of their exclusive rights in the waters of that harbor.

But after awhile when time had proved that the sea, despite the new law, was not being profaned by landlubbers, and when Tremontorio is no longer able to endure the tedium of his inactive life on shore, he returns to his launch, but with much grumbling.

It was the evening of that same day when the terrible storm engulfed three hundred and
eight fisherman between Fuenterrabia and Cabo Mayor. Eighty of them belonged to Santander... Tremontorio was one of the few who had been saved, almost miraculously; and that, on account of the fearful hardships he had gone through at his age, he had been brought to death's door.19

Tremontorio has been cast ashore from the shipwreck in time to die in his own bed. A sailor sitting by his bedside watches the ghastly figure and wishing to encourage him, inquires, "How are you feeling?" to which he answers in a sailor's figure of speech:

My hull is worn out, my masts have gone by the board, the harbor is a different one, and the bar is narrow; when do you need a pilot if not at such a time?20

The bystanders continue to question the dying sailor in regard to the many symptoms, the preliminary movements, or the slightest indications of a coming tempest. But it was only after a prolonged silence that Tremontorio answers with a bitter smile:

That kind never gives any. There you are, in your boat as peaceful as a leaf on a tree. Land is in sight, and the sea is like a cup of broth. You'd think that it might stay that way for a month...But then suddenly a little breeze strikes you in the face. You then look off to the nor'-east, and there you see a yellow-gray mist covering the sea and coming on with leaps like a wild beast, with a rushing noise as if torrents of water were flowing down all the cliffs on the coast. When you see and hear that, your blood stops; but you seize the oars and run up a rag of a sail to try to scud before the wind.

19 Ibid., 487.
20 Ibid., 487.
But the storm is upon you before you can make a single stroke. The waves lurch at you, first in herds, and then in a huge heap it hurries forward.21

The dying sailor persists in explaining how the great flood of foam flings the launch about as if it were a nutshell, carrying it up and down; and also describes how the tide cleaved past him in a wedge of fizzing white. But to him the most shocking misery was that of opening his eyes and not being able to see a man in sight, not a boat, an oar, a coast, a sky, nor anything that can give you the least hope of deliverance. As he is further importuned to recount what had actually happened that he was saved. Tremontorio, with a veritable expression of surprise, resorts to brusque evasions, until Tuerto, who has till now been a silent listener, stands as if to emphasize his words more clearly:

I will tell you about, Señor, for we two were saved together. The hurricane carried us before we knew it, within two of the cables of San Pedro del Mar; and just as we thought we should not stop before being slooshed into the sand, a tremendous wave, the like of which I had never seen before, turned us bottom up. When I came to the surface, of all my fourteen comrades, only this one was in sight, about six yards away...An oar was thrown his way by a wave, and he grasped that and rested a bit. But I then noticed that he caught hold with only one of his arms, and that he did not help himself in the slightest with the other. "Swim

21 Ibid., 488.
this way," I shouted, "till I can reach you a hand, and then you can get hold of the boat."

Tremontorio, clutching at the oar with one arm, was on the verge of even losing his breeches, in the pockets of which was the scapular of the virgin of Carmen. He was more than determined not to lose the blessed scapular, and while he was still speaking, he was violently dashed against Tuerto by a sudden mountain of a wave and was then enabled to grasp the launch.

At the same time a wave with a solid back rose above us off to the windward, such as no mortal man ever saw the equal of. I thought that was the end, not only of our lives, but of the whole world... But it seems the wave must have driven us to the shore when it broke, for we found ourselves there when we came to life again, grasping pieces of the shattered boat.

After listening attentively to the deliberate words of Tremontorio, the visiting sailor bids farewell to him saying, "I shall hope to see you again," to which he answers in slow and expressive words:

Why not? We are all sailors on the same sea and have set out for the same port. If Satan does not separate and shut us out of it, we shall both anchor in it -- I tomorrow and you some other day. 24

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22 Ibid., 488.
23 Ibid., 489.
24 Ibid., 489.
SOTILEZA

Sotileza "Fine Spun" is a prose epic of the Santander sea-folk; indeed, it may well be considered a bible of sea-folk, with their sufferings, all their vices and virtues, and above all their hardships and perils. Although it is classed as a sea story, the reader does not see much beyond the harbor, but the author paints the shore existence in strokes that have the entire breadth, the color, and the meaning of life itself. All these are but forms of varied life combined in one harmonic entity to create pictures upon a vast canvas, drawn in the free strokes of a master whose favorites are the "heroes anonimos, los valientes, que pagan de su oficio las temper­
tades del Cantabrico." Appropriately described are the notable features of Sotileza:

Los personajes en Sotileza, el ambiente de marieneros, y sobre todo el mar, con sus borrascas y sus calmas, mar para marineros, mar caminando galopado por las barcazas de pesca, constituyen un poderoso cuadro de costumbre, cuya resultante es un brioso paisaje oceanico, y cuyo espíritu parece encarnarse, esencialmente, en agil muchacha que da nombre a la novela.

Silda, the heroine, who gives the book its title, is the most notable of Pereda's characters. Because of her remarkable personal qualities of

26 José María de Pereda. Obras Completas, XI. Editorial Sopena, Buenos Aires, 1940, 8.
neatness and charm, she is given the nickname of Sotileza, which in local parlance is a term applied to fishing tackle and is often used to designate the finely woven texture of pendant or ligature to which the hook is attached. She has been adopted by a cruel fisher-family who stand for the nadir of brutality. The oppression becomes so intolerable that the girl finally takes refuge with an honest and prosperous fisher-couple with whom her filial relations are exemplary and happy. Some idea of Sotileza's worth and character, can be gleaned from this tribute paid to her by her guardian Mechelin:

... Si vos digo que, a no saber quién fue su madre, por hija se la tomará de alguna en infant de Inglaterra... cuando es de una señora de comerciante del Muelle... Y lo que yo le digo a Sidora cuando me empondera la finura de su cuerpo y la finura de obra del angeluco de Dios: "esta Sidora no es mujer, es una pura Sotileza..."

Scant of speech, stainlessly pure in person and mind, she traverses a shore existence with three lads of her own age, each manifesting his love for her in a different way. One is her social superior, a young gentleman in the fullest sense of the word; another is the son of her enemies, a shy fisher-lad; the third, the lowest harbour-loafer with the most primitive instincts. The nobility of her character will be quite evident from the further developments of her influence upon her associates.

28 Hannah Lynch, 229.
30 Hannah Lynch, 229.
One of the finest characters in Sotileza is Padre Apolinar, the real sailor's priest. He is one of them, with a sailor's rough dialect, consistently human, often concealing his virtues under a brusque exterior. Pereda seems to shield the apparent shortcomings of the parish priest, perhaps because of his priestly garb.31

The return of ships always stirs the admiration of the youngsters who have an insatiable ambition to explore some hidden treasure in the distant future. This is the desire that the Maruca, that mysterious cavern located near the wharf, instilled in Silda and her three companions as saunter on their way to San Martin. The Maruca is situated near the place the water flowed out like a river, leaving whorls and wrinkles where it raced over submerged rocks.

The water was gushing out through a wide opening from the rear of the wharf, and on the opposite side were the rills of foam marking the water-mark of the sea on the wall of the Canadio causeway. This was surrounded by the facade of a dockyard that still exists, and a high thick wall that joins it on the eastern side... This was the former Maruca which joined to the bay by a small bridge, and which possessed a frightful cavern which a few brave ones dared to explore.32

True, Cuco had often assured others that he had succeeded in going through the cavern of Maruca and had come out through that of the Muelle, which was in the middle of the sea; but he altered his account of the mysterious

31 Ibid., 228-229.
32 José María de Pereda. Obras Completas, IX. Victoriano Suárez, Madrid, 1900, 36.
noises so often that his undertaking was frequently disputed.

The majestic entrance of a ship into the harbor is, indeed, a deeply impressive scene, and to witness the grandeur of the event the majority of the people in the village always assemble. Their first thought, however, is directed to the Virgin of Latas. Sometime before the scheduled arrival of the ship a candle is placed in a prominent place to honor the Virgin and to thank her for the protection and safe landing of the vessel. The quiet beauty of the occasion is tersely portrayed in simple, yet majestic language:

How beautiful the sea seemed that day! The sea is verdant and phosphorescent, ruffled by the breeze; and the sun shedding its joyful light, which sparkled between the folds of the bay and in the traitorous sandy beach of the Quebrantes.33

Despite the great concourse of people who gather to see the arrival of the boat, few words are exchanged. This inability to voice their sentiments is due either to the heightened suspense and restrained impatience to hear from a loved one or to the enthralling scene that holds them speechless.

Yonder in the background are the bluish peaks of the Matienzo and Arrendonodo, and nearer, the elevated curves and the shady recesses of the mountain ranges, which were outlining the view from the hills of Galizano, as far as the ports of Alisas and Cavada showing through a luminous mist as a veil woven by fairies, with impalpable fibre of dew; and at a hand's distance the rugged hills of Hontal, whose sandy foundations were receiving the bitter kisses of the flood-tide.34

33 Ibid., 50.
34 Ibid., 51.
All seem to be petrified by the view which nature at this moment is unfolding, all except Andres, who seems to be deeply concerned about the return of his father, than he is about the aesthetic beauty of his surroundings. At last the spell is broken by the joyful cry, "There it is!"

And there it was, the Montañesa... loaded with sails even to the brim and the national colors waving in the breeze. Hardly had it put into the harbour of Punta, when it was already seen to be scraping the south of the small island, and immediately take the direction of the canal. The breeze would gently impel it forward and its most powerful beams seemed to sway on bundles of soft cotton.35

Thus the ship gradually approaches with the sureness of one who well knows his destination, until its nearness enables those on shore to hear the "sound of the track of the ship, and the creak of its riggings, the clink of the chains upon being taken from their place; while near to the prow are sufficient braces for the opportune moment."36 In the meantime those on shore listen to the gentle purl of the water and the rattle it makes as it fights its way towards them. By this time the anxious ones on shore are able to distinguish one or the other of those on deck. Andres immediately recognizes his father on the prow. Those on shore manifest their intense pleasure by waving and tossing their caps wildly in the air. The boat itself, as if stirred by the same sentiments as those on shore, gallantly returns the salute by the sharp creaking of its riggings and the splashing of its anchors.

35 Obras Completas, IX, 53.
36 Ibid., 54.
Thus it remains in this gallant position, playfully swinging in the bed of fiery foam, which she herself stirs and produces; but after a strong movement, the fiery sloop remains fixed over the tranquil waters of the anchoring ground of the Osaa, like horse of mettle, held firmly inactive by its rider at the height of its course.37

An ideal day for fishing having been selected, Andres, Silda, Muergo, Cole, and tio Mechelin make all necessary preparations for the excursion. On the morning of the eventful day, they arise early in order to attend the Mass that is said at an early hour at Saint Francis, for the convenience of the fishermen. They embark just as nature is garbed in a cloak of immutable serenity and when the brilliant sun is beginning to adorn the beautiful panorama of the bay, whilst abundant rays sparkle on the smooth crystal of the waters. So serene are the elements that the hoisted sails remain motionless. Since there is no breeze, the oarsmen are required to use the oars. Silda, who is seated in the boat, presents an entrancing picture, "with a red silk kerchief over the jet black jacket; her dark blue skirt...and the half of her head hidden by the graceful kerchief a la cofia."38

At last finding an ideal place for fishing, they lower the useless sail and set about to throw their first bait beneath the Castillo, because close to the rocks and the deep is where the valuable fish are to be found.

37 Ibid., 56.
38 Ibid., 331.
Then they placidly sail to the island of the Torre, and then towards the opposite beach, because boats prefer the sandy bottom; and later to the Peña Horadada; and thus from rock to rock from beach to beach, fishing whatever can be handled. 39

All around them the appearance of the water is like that of a smooth, and brilliant mirror. Tio Mechelín in the meantime indulges in the daily habit of standing at the prow with uncovered head, reciting a Credo and ordering others to join him. The pleasant morning passes quickly, and as the thought of a refreshing luncheon whets their appetites, they proceed to row towards the beach for their noon-day meal. They arrive at the coast about a half hour later, while the

breeze was increasing a little; and as the beach is plain, the surge invades it a good space between the open sandy beach and point in which, the boat purposely ran aground. It was so placed that it was a question of whoever was not able to land with one jump or to pull off shoes and stockings, had to be content in being carried on the arms of someone stronger. 40

The avidity with which all partake of the delicacies is an indication that Andres' mother has prepared a most delicious luncheon. After the customary siesta they return to the boat, where they find Cole, who has remained to guard the boat, fast asleep. After persistent calling from the shore, they succeed in arousing him and then all proceed to the boat, where

39 Ibid., 333.
40 Ibid., 336.
again Tio Mechelín claims the honor of its command by virtue of his age. Andres, who has eagerly awaited an opportune moment of assuming the leadership, submits to Mechelin without a word, in avowed respect to the older and more experienced sailor. Mechelin then

obtains the fishing-rod and seats himself at the head, while there could be heard only the flapping of the smooth canvas, as of the drum-head of a paper kite. The boat was on its course, rising and falling on the billows of waves which strike it, like an impetuous horse that encounters an obstacle on its way.41

As the month of August is rapidly coming to an end, all possible efforts are exerted to prepare for the traditional boat race, which is held every year, as a finale to the solemn feast. Every one desiring to participate in the race is obliged to repair the various parts of the boat, making sure that the boat is in excellent condition. The one from Arriba is painted white with a red band, while that from Abajo is decked in blue and white. Cleto is one of the crew for the former, while Cole and Guarin undertake the management of the latter. Both rivals have one common goal, the winning of the race. The victor wishes to manifest his intense love for Sotileza by presenting her with the prize banner.

The long anticipated day finally arrives, and at about two o'clock in the afternoon the crowd begin to gather on the rocky banks to view the race. On the balconies of the near-by houses are many who prefer to enjoy the

41 Ibid., 345.
the scene away from the confusion of the multitude, while others who desire to be at closer range seat themselves in the nearby boats. The people in the distance suddenly stir from their reverie at the sound of music which becomes more audible as the musicians approach the location. The musicians progress slowly towards the boats until they arrive at the bridge of a coast-lugger, which has been elaborately decorated for the occasion. The fishing smacks and other boats that surround them extend in wide rows toward the north and south. Those who are to compete in the race are breathlessly in assigned places waiting for the final signal. At last the intensity is broken.

The two boats passed so swiftly as if a mysterious hurricane was impelling them forward; and within three minutes they had sailed past the honor banner which fluttered and saluted them. Sometimes the blades of one of the oars would touch the rival one, but the strokes rose and fell without ceasing, and so many strokes at a time, as if one single arm was moving them; and the oarsmen doubled and straightened with unalterable rhythm in such a manner that men, oars, and boats, seemed to compose but one single body guided by a single will.42

A few minutes later they are so far away that their colors can no longer be distinguished. Finally one of the boats disappears behind that side of the island which is scooped with sheltered rocks. The other follows within close range. Both again reappear wedging their way across the bay and towards the crowd until the spectators are able to discern the colors of one of the boats.

42 Ibid., 453.
The two boats in the meanwhile have not slackened their speed since the very beginning of the struggle.

The first boat advanced like a flash arriving at the mouth of the wide canal; and from there, with the oars already on the side, it approaches the boat with the banner. Cleto then takes the banner with one stroke, amidst the applause of the multitude; and without losing its speed, the winning boat approaches that of tio Mechelin; and there Cleto, triumphantly hands the prized banner to Sotileza, and says in a strong voice: "Take it, my dear Sotileza, that you may fasten it with your own hands."43

Amid the applause of all Cleto has the happiness of presenting the banner to Sotileza, the fairest and most beautiful of all maidens in his eyes.

The labor in the fields during the month of August is barely finished when the seamen must again return to the vicissitudes of the sea. On this particular morning it is scarcely five when the sailors are awakened and required to prepare to embark in the Rampa Larga. The dim light of the coming day guides them as they pass the street on their way to the pier. The deep silence is broken only by the sound of their own steps. As the throng of fisher-men reach Rampa Larga, loaded down with fishing-nets and much of the other necessary equipment, they immediately man it and place it on its course and begin to stroke its subtle keel on the proud and brilliant surface of the bay. By that time the light of dawn is beginning to outline the profiles of the

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43 Ibid., 455.
land-marls from Quintres as far as the Cabarga mountain; there also appears the reflection of the coast of San Martin on the crystal waters...and in the surrounding meadows there was seen the beginning of the ordinary activities of country life, that farthest away from the conflicts of the world. 44

Doubtless, Andres and the other fishermen can not but help appreciate the surrounding view, for no one could contemplate a scene such as this and not be stirred to the very depths. It is on this occasion that Andres resolved to throw his lot with the fishermen, for it is excursions such as these that are capable of making him realize fully that fishing is a pleasant way to obtain an honest living. 45

It is a foregone conclusion that in order to catch the best fish it is expedient to sail farther into the deep sea or to be at least eight miles away from the harbor. Time for reminiscing is brought to an end with the sudden shouts, "Praised be to God!" It is the first indication that the fish are about to bite.

Cole at once pulled in at the fishing line and hastily withdrew some distance, but not without a strong grasp on the line. A hake landed in the boat, which to Andres, not being accustomed to fishing methods, appeared as a monstrous shark. He clapped his hands from sheer excitement. Moments later he saw the landing of another, and then two others; the sight of this urged Andres, so that he asked to be given a fishing line in order to try his luck. 46

44 Ibid., 567.
45 José Augustin Balseiro, 94.
46 Obras Completas, IX, 574.
But Andres does not succeed as the others, and therefore the entire morning is spent in futile attempts to attract the fish. In the meantime the sky has been assuming a different appearance:

Along the northern horizon, which appeared unsettled, there was an aspect of the sky with varied hues, in great irregular bands of intense blue, impressed in a depth of brilliant orange-color. The Pyrenees seemed as accumulated mountains of large masses of threatening clouds; the sun, in its highest course, warmed more than ordinary, when it was not being hidden by the various hues. 47

The unexpected smoke signal, given from the foreland, indicating that the bay is becoming disturbed towards the south, is indeed a distressing sign of impending danger on the way to the coast. They fearfully obey the signal and strenuously clutch to the oars. For more than an hour nothing more can be heard than the

crujir de los estrovos, y las acompasadas caídas de los remos en el agua, y del ardiente respirar de los hombres que ayudaban con su fatiga a las lonas a medir henchir. A ratos era el aire tambien mas fresco, y entonces descansaban los remeros. En los celajes no se notaba alteracion de importancia. Por la popa y por la proa se veían las lanchas que llevaban al mismo derrotero que la de Renales. 48

But this is immediately followed by a thundering noise as of gigantic trains approaching. The rowers abandon the oars in order to carry out the orders of the desperate leader, but before they suspect it, their launch is in a

47 Ibid., 574.
48 Ibid., 579.
whirlwind of rain. At the same time such a heavy cloud covers the horizon that the only things visible are the splashing waves against the bobbing bark. Nothing worse can be capable of freezing the blood of even the most valiant man. To increase their apprehension they see an oar sweep past them on the rough waves. A moment later, another oar; then the floating corpse of Muergo adds to their intense agony and suspense. Andres now takes entire command as Renales, the leader, is thrown headlong into unconsciousness. After ordering all hands back to the oars, Andres assists the men untiringly in order to surmount the mountains of waves, and they all try with superhuman effort to attack the threatening danger that surrounds them. But what direction to pursue? Placing themselves in the hands of God, they row in the direction of the least storm until they espy

a great multitude of people, on the hill of Hano who are watching the dashing of the waves, and the terrible situation of the boat. A colossal wave would dash at the boat now and then...but the oars continued to creak, the men to pant, and the boat continued to bob, but at the same time it is gaining ground. 49

As they near a rugged mountain, their hope of deliverance fades for they are now more than convinced that here they will be dashed to pieces. But no, the wave passes and the boat begins to glide into more settled waters. Again another tempest has spared them.

Who, after witnessing such a storm or reading the fisherwoman's lament

49 Ibid., 592.
at her sick husband's bedside, would argue over the trifling price of fish?

Poor fellow! Fifty long years struggling with the sea, with chills that give fever and suns that scorch, with wind and rain and snow; little rest, a moment's sleep, and off to the smack before the break of day. And then, shut your eyes so as not to see the image of death that always goes aboard before any living creature, and accompanies the poor wretches, to end their business, when they least expect it and when they have no other near help but God's mercy...If they only would think what it costs to get that fish out of the sea, What peril! What work! And why, good sir? Because the first day the unfortunate fisherman remains in bed his family has nothing to eat, however laborious and honest he may have been, like the poor fellow here, who hasn't a single vice. 50

Cleto continues to make various voyages, always returning a much more accomplished person and always preserving his upright nature. In the course of time Sotileza, having the good sense to feel that Cleto is a much better match for her than Andres in the higher station, marries the former. 51

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51 William Henry Bishop. World's Best Literature, XXIX. The International Society, New York, 1897, 11322.
Menéndez y Pelayo, in referring to the *Sabor de la Tierruca* (Redolent of the Soil), writes in his prologue to the *Obras Completas* of Pereda:

> It is a book of the rural and mountains, a book which is filled with perfumes of the soil and brings us neither problems nor conflicts nor tendencies, nor another single thing except what has been placed on the earth in order to please the eyes of mortals: water and air, grass and light, strength and life.52

In the first chapter the descriptions of the region are admirable; they form one vast panorama of rural life. One peculiar detail to be noticed in the beginning, when the author has not yet begun his great painting, is the use of the words "green" and "blue" in his description. In the remainder of the magnificent painting that the author describes there is not another single word of color. In one section where he describes the market place, he has an opportunity of using a vast number of words designating colors, but again in this description of fruits and linens he does not employ one single word to specify the colors.53 In the characterization of the oak, Pereda says:

> Ordinarily the oak-tree is a wild, untamed personality of the woodland. It grows where you least expect it, uncultured and

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53 Ibid., 81.
neglected; between brambles, in the crevices of a boulder, at the edge of the river, in the bare ridge, on the rugged hill-side, and at the bottom of the dale, or in any place. It grows slowly, as if the inaction is boring to it; stretching and twisting its arms, it gapes and spreads its legs apart, and becomes old, dislodged and knotted; and places its garments to one side and leaves the other half bare. It never adorns or brushes itself and it only removes the old garments when it is spring, then it is that it tears its garments into tatters in order to dress it with a new one. 54

The woodland in more concise terms is a plantation of prickly oaks, a wilderness among ostentatious beech-trees, the shiny silver birch, the showy and stately alder-tree, and the colorful holly-tree.

In this woodland are accommodations for at least six persons. This make-shift dwelling can be reached by a stairway along side the trunk of the gigantic oak which "the natural fertility of the soil has covered with soft green tapestry. From that site, as well as from the fountain, one can view the gorgeous landscape," 55 as well as from the vast plain of meadows which are traversed by foot-paths. At the end of this extensive plain, stretching ahead from east to west is "one wide zone of hillocks and bare ridges yonder, sylvan mountains with green patches and shady ravines; bluish mountains; and still further up peaks leaden with indentations." 56 As the summit of an ascent of about fifty yards is a wide plateau from which a small village can be glimpsed between groups of fruit-bearing trees and narrow passages. The

55 Ibid., 21.
56 Ibid., 21.
height of this observation permits a minute examination of the landscape in all directions, and from this elevation there is also visible a neighboring village, sloping into the meadow and "lining the back and sides of the village are thick groves of the chestnut-trees which gradually disappear into shrubbery towards Cumbrales." 57

From this imposing height can also be discerned the outline of the rival villages of Cumbrales and Rinconeda, joined by brushwood, turf, and by rush; while in the adjacent prairie there are other meadows and a river which meanders from Poniente to Levante. The mountains, of which the snow-capped peaks resemble a colossal diamond of some immense beautiful ring, form the boundary of this picturesque whole.

The village, situated on a higher plane, has by the very fact of its location developed peculiar characteristics, which are quite opposite to those of the people who dwell in the corner of the meadow. These characteristics are so adverse that the villagers frequently come to loggerheads over some point of local prestige, and one occasion there is even a pitched battle between them. This is probably the direct result of different administrations.

Cumbrales administers its own affairs, and has a mayor, councilmen, municipal judge, and public school in perfect order; while Rinconeda does not have more than one petty officer, because it is a small fraction of a municipal whose capital is far away. 58

57 Ibid., 23.
58 Ibid., 25.
The apparent facility which those of Cumbrales demonstrate in the care of their sheep and other animals provokes and intensifies the animosity of the people of Rinconeda. Another source of contention is the buoyant disposition and cooperation of the inhabitants of Cumbrales. But the petty animosity, as described by Pereda, are not deep-seated. The conflicts that take place are only outbreaks of healthy animal spirits, pent up by their own narrow circumscribed interests.

Halting on the same heights as before and surveying the illimitable fields below, the reader finds it impossible to fathom the full measure of the scene, but notwithstanding the distance it is possible at various times to perceive vividly the activities of the country side:

If it is in April or May...one can see the neighbors ploughing in the open plain or pulverizing the clods with the rake, or covering the furrows after planting. If it is in June, when the grain is already green, it is the melodious songs of the laborers, who work in large files. But in August, when the grain is already matured, one can discern the workers, with their drinking horns at their waists, spreading out the herbage of the land. In the meantime, the women, distinguished because of their gay colored skirts and straw hats, pulverize the loams with the handle of the rake, or employ themselves in gathering the grass in stacks.59

To characterize the activities of the rural folk in the most descriptive term, Pereda compares the people themselves to myriads of ants going to and fro about their daily tasks.

59 Ibid., 34.
Juan de Prezanes and don Pedro are intimate friends. Both have the opportunity of receiving a higher education, but don Pedro soon contracts the feeling of loneliness and returns to his beloved soil; while Juan de Prezanes, imbued with more worldly ambitions than his friend, persists in his studies. For some political reasons Juan de Prezanes seeks the aid of his friend, on whom he wishes to bestow a prominent position as a recompense, but the latter refuses to cooperate with him by emphatically answering: "But understand that I shall never struggle by your side, except in order to exterminate those intruding tyrants from Cumbrales." With the most possible serenity don Pedro vainly attempts to explain to Juan de Prezanes that the latter is being deceived and that his ambition will not be of benefit to Cumbrales. Finally, infuriated by the obstinacy of his friend's intolerance, he exclaims:

How can our friendship be lasting, if my heart is broken by your brutal intolerance! Why do you detest me? Is it because I am better than you, because I am worth more? Is it because in one fiber of my heart there is more nobleness than in your whole being, puffed up by vanity and hypocrisy?

These two hidalgos, whose families are now falling out, now making up, are intrinsically sound, their disagreements arising more from the accidents of temperament than from any actual grievances. Of these friends, Pereda says:

60 Ibid., 72.
61 Ibid., 75.
De los encuentros entre Juan de Prezanes, y don Pedro Montero surgen dos retratos de cuerpo entero; en aquél vemos la red nerviosa, agitada de continuo por la corriente electrica de la passion.62

Baldomero, a rustic youth, dwells with his father and sister near the village church. Don Valentin, the father, is deeply imbued with the idea that his people are degenerating because of materialistic influences, and as a consequence of this belief he daily makes his son a patient listener to his complaints. The trend of this degeneration can be grasped from the father's own words:

I tell you in truth that man is degenerating from day to day, and that those virtues which made the Spaniard, in other times a model of chivalry, are rapidly disappearing. But I will not fail in my duty, although the entire world betrays the temple of liberty. There is no way to convince these ignorant ones that the law of progress imposes duties, the same as the law of God.63

The apparent disinterestedness of his son to these same sentiments irritates don Valentin; but he only displays his displeasure by a scornful glance while his son very conveniently slips away for a quiet nap.

Pablo and Nisco, two neighbor friends, frequently enjoy a day rambling through the mountains, but Pablo's father, who is a lawyer, expects more from his son than his mere sauntering to the hills. As a consequence, Pablo is frequently reprimanded. The father fails to impress his son with his future significance as one of the leading men who will have a far-reaching

62 Francisco Blanco García, 523.
63 Obras Completas, X, 83.
influence in Cumbrales. The son is given to understand that to hold such a position he is required to conduct himself in a manner that will command the respect of the people. In reviewing the qualities of his friend, Pablo summarizes them by explaining to his father that Nisco, aside from being a very conscientious worker, is more intelligent and high-minded than those who assume the authority of underestimating his true worth. The son reiterates his firm conviction of his friend's integrity in the following tribute:

He will not become a great instructor or lecturer of note, because his occupation is incompatible with that; but further, in him there can be awakened superior tastes for his position. Nisco is the best in the village for the purpose which you are pointing to me, and so, to Nisco I will cling. 64

The ensuing jaunt of Pablo and Nisco to the mountains, their progress through the grain-fields of the plains offer countless opportunities for observation. They slowly wend their way, now and then commenting on the thickets, on the neighbor who prefers the raising of cat-tails and rush to that of good grain, on the copious foliage of the trees, on the fragrance of the woods, on the vastness of the land, and on the distant mountains. These are only the responsive heart-throbs to the scenic sentiments, which are stirred no less by the reality than by the naturalness that pervaded it.

That both are unconsciously moved by the surrounding country is evident from their actions. Pablo occasionally touches the flowers, Nisco leisurely and mechanically rolls and unrolls a corn husk. Arriving at the highest point, they seat themselves to view the luxuriant landscape of Cumbrales.

64 Obras Completas, X, 114.
showing both by their profound yet expressive silence that they are rapt in awe and wonderment at the beauty of nature. The grain-fields are in full bloom, and so bountiful is the yield of the fruit that verily it seems, as in truth it is, a blessing of God.

The last of the month is scarcely at an end when these very fields are invaded by the workers. Each family proceeds to its own piece of land, applying a stout club to the ears of corn. They fill the carts and then carry the grain to their homes. In less than a week everything has been gathered, and so assiduously have they worked that there is sufficient time remaining to apply a sickle to the wild fields and to shake the chestnut-trees and gather the half-open husks before returning to the fishing cruises.

At all events, these tasks require a large number of people, who generally assemble at the place of Fedro Montero, because of the unquestionably greater need. Since there is no limit placed on the number nor on the age of persons who engage in the process of hulling, already before eight in the evening there is an assemblage of fifty persons mostly young people, who seat themselves on the floor, surrounded by a mountain of grain. Lanterns hanging on near-by posts are the only sources of illumination for that nocturnal task.

It is obvious that the labor does not grow tedious nor do the spirits of the group flag. Weariness and tedium are held in abeyance by the merry repetition of songs by the young girls, the boys answering with rhythmical ballads; in the intervals that follow the ballads and the songs, there is heard the neighing of those who are fortunate in possessing robust voices; with a laughing
here and a murmur there; and in the mean-
while, they strip the grain forming a hill
of it on one side, and a mountain of husks
on the other. 65

Their endeavors are not concluded, however, until midnight. When the task
is completed, the grain flailers are rewarded with steaming chestnuts and
brandy; and amid lively songs and parting words they grope their way homeward.
The silence of the night is broken only by the distant echoes of some song,
and the gay crowing of the early-rising cock, and now and then the sad moaning
of the horned owl in the mountains.

On Sunday immediately after Mass the prominent men of the village meet
to discuss the advantages of clinging to their old customs. They all concede
except Valentin, who constantly reiterate his belief that it is a danger to liberty; and as they strive to throw his incessant complaints, they are for-
utunately interrupted by the village bells ringing a derrota, the signal for
the cattle to be led out to pasture. This signal is a welcome termination
to their discussion, but before the first bell has finished ringing, another
loud call is heard.

This is melodiously intermingled with the
moaning, the pin-pan serenades of the cow-
bells thundering throughout all the lanes
of the village. No one has let loose the
live stock that morning, in expectation of
the resolution of the municipal court, which
the bells are now proclaiming throughout
the whole circumference of Cumbrasles, with
their harmonious sounds. 66

65 Ibid., 209.
66 Ibid., 209.
parallel lines, facing each other, at a distance of about two of their sticks. The last one now being in the extreme third part of the ground and far away from his respective comrades...Then Bodoques places the ball over a mole-hill, then he proceeds to moisten the palms of his hands and grasping both ends of the stick, without forgetting his aim, shouts, "brilla va!" to which his opponent answers, "brilla venga!"67

This game is continued by keeping the ball in the air without touching the ground. At times more than ten sticks are trying to bring the ball to the ground, not wishing their opponents to take it into their own territory. Everything is permitted in the game except the entrance of a player in the opponent's territory. The penalty for such violation of rule is the merciless skinning of shin-bones or striking the knuckles of the barefoot one, this is accompanied by the repetition of the words; "a tu tierra, que te pego un palo."68

The political situation and enimity between Cumbrales and Rinconeda has been accentuated not only by don Valentin, who stands ever ready to defend the intruders of Cumbrales, but also by Rodrigo Calteretas, who in a letter to Juan de Prezanes expresses his fears created by the lack of vigilance of the neighboring village, and also a fear aroused by the alcalde. The latter, according to his judgment, is the only person not belonging to the municipal government. He suggests the alcalde's withdrawal by any intrigue that will serve as a pretext for his removal. In regard to don Valentin he makes some

67 Ibid., 214.
68 Ibid., 216.
some recommendations in the following words:

For this I also recommend the protection of don Valentin with whose falange we cannot reckon at this time. You are probably aware of the fact that the respectable veteran has an earnest desire that his defence plan be approved against the enemy in the possible event that they attempt to enter Cumbrales. Don Valentin came to see me this morning and minutely explained the project. It seems quite complicated, costly to me, but will undoubtedly succeed; but the brave veteran also complains that no one listens to him, and he fears not finding the essentials that he needs in order to realize his patriotic goal. He attributes the greater part of this unconcern of the neighbors to the reactionary influence of a certain person whom I do not wish to mention. 69

He also explains how don Valentin would be incapable of voting for another candidate, except the one from whom he has obtained assistance. Further, he says that it is his opinion that a warlike cry from Cumbrales against the rebels would be the best thing for the country; but above all, through this action the candidacy of the marques de la Cuerniga will be obtained.

Hours later after the arrival of the letter, Asaduras also comes to Juan de Prezanes to tell him how happy he is to be able to help him obtain the candidacy of the marques de la Cuerniga, casually explaining to him how the field near the mountain, which he had at one time legally obtained, has been taken by Pedro Mortera. He requires his assistance in obtaining it back in recompense for the services which he is about to render him. Then he continues:

69 Obras Completas, X, 233.
What a field, señor don Juan!... Well, that inclosure is what I am asking for serving you on this occasion... The documents of the sale are in order; everything has been done according to the law; and I also assure you that if you assist me in removing these members of the board, who are yours, before eight days the action will not know its own author; a notice will be given on time; don Rodrigo will countenance it, the inclosure will be ordered opened... and before three weeks, the field will be mine. 70

Don Valentín arrives on the scene and gives a very appropriate discourse to both on the duty of free-men's resisting perjurers who are dishonoring the nation, and with the greatest fervor he expresses himself thus:

There is more than you realize between my assisting your candidate, and your helping me in my undertaking which is depriving me of sleep. I am a slave to my own political principles, and according to them I regulate the actions of my civil life. The execution of the plan that I have on hand enters my political conscience; and by my helping those who help me I fulfill my duty, for I then serve my cause, the cause of liberty which is the cause of the land. 71

His words fall upon deaf ears, for not even his friend don Juan will consent to cooperate in his undertakings. So he departs from them more crestfallen than before.

70 Ibid., 236.
71 Ibid., 239.
La Fuchera (The Family Board) is one of Pereda's most characteristic works. It derives its title from a homely expression for earning one's livelihood or puchero, the national dish. The theme is the meagre existence of an assemblage of characters in an obscure corner of Santander province: amphibious fishermen they may be called since they labor both on the sea and on the land in order to eke out a bare subsistence, stone-hearted misers, insatiable gossip-mongers, clap-trap adventurers and schemers.

The people in "this hidden village life a very real life of their own, and with its full share of the passions and tragedies that persecute humanity."72 "It is a story of rustic hidalgos with their squabbles and their fundamental good nature; of young men and girls with their labours and their love making."73 The novel has a sentimental thread worked into it, the heart affairs of an adventurer-gallant and his simple-minded country sweetheart.

"The plots in this novel have been united by means of el Berrugo, who is the creditor of el Lebrato and his son, which characters and the unfolding of their daily lives are excellently executed."74

There are more than ten villages, nearer or farther away, that may see themselves reflected in the waters of the mouths of the rivers. The largest

of these villages is situated on a higher level than the others. Beneath it is the beach, spacious, clear, and sheltered, in which alternately quiet and noisy waves dash against the dunes and on the boulders of the estuary. This San Martín village, not greatly interested in the soil and its products, has greater courage and more maritime characters than the others. In its possessions are included a good number of fishing smacks, and its fishermen belong to the unfortunate legion of heroës, "who pay in proportion, the black tribute that the tempests of the Cantabrico so often gathers to itself." 75

Along side the village of San Martín is that of Robleses which is more popular and has a larger population. It is divided into three suburbs, separated by three grain fields, two fenced-in-fields, four camberones deep, and a bare ridge. From the nearest suburb as far as the mouth of the river called Las Pozas, probably so called on account of what abounds in it during the winter, are the only amphibious who make up the population of the entire place. 76

The leading personages are Inez and her father, El Berrugo. Marcones and his aunt, two minor characters, are almost of equal importance. The reason is probably because Marcones serves as the inspiration that arouses Inez from her torpor. This is very essential to the story, for without the machinations of Marcones and his aunt the full measure of justice cannot be meted out to el Berrugo.

75 José María Pereda. La Fuchera. Imprenta de Ramona Velasco, Madrid, 1922, 6.
76 Ibid., 6.
The *Puchera* is really two novels. In the first, Juan Pedro, the loquacious fisherman; his son, el Josco or Pedro Juan; and Pilara, who is the sweetheart of Pedro Juan, are the principal figures, together with the hungry doctor who keeps himself and his poor family alive on good-humored gossip and extravagant concern for his neighbors. The other is the story of Inez and Tomas Quicanes. The latter, a handsome but impecunious immigrant, poses as a rich *Indiano*; while Marcones is an unscrupulous seminarist, who forsakes his studies in order to gain the hand of Inez and her wealth.

The central figure of the two novels is the merciless usurer, el Berrugo, powerful but hated, a dread combination of coarseness, superstition, materialism, and brutality. His tyranny has driven his gentle wife to an untimely grave, and in the same spirit he aims to subject his beautiful, but neglected daughter to his base principles of life, according to which all things are estimated in terms of gold. But the daughter's mind, long in dormant state of mind, is finally awakened by a theological student who plays a sort of selfish scheming and who is incited by an infamous harpy, his aunt. Tomas Quicanes completes the young lady's transformation by awakening her heart.

Juan Pedro, or el Lebrato, has been chastened by age and by his experiences with the world's adversities. Pedro Juan, his timid, silent son, however, is not precisely of the model of a saint. "He is restless under wrong and injustice, and on occasion he is quite capable of using his own fists."77

77 *Obras Completas*, XIII, lxi.
He is silent and uncouth, with abortive efforts to propose to the girl that he loves in a dismayed, wandering fashion, but at heart he is thoroughly sound. "His timidity, which is responsible for his repeated failures to bring his dearest to interests to a favorable crisis, forms the humorous vein of the story." These two characters arrest our attention at the very outset. Their life story is a tale of toil and privation, "while the clutches of the village usurer are fastening on them ever tighter." But, despite much provocation to the contrary, the milk of human kindness in them has never soured. Their hardships and squalor are irradiated by their true optimism, by their simple Christian heroism that uncomplainingly accepts its task and then cheerfully acquiesces to the inevitable. Juan Pedro has attached himself to this particular region with only his house as a possession, and for which both father and son, "must fight amphibiously, on land and water, in order to obtain their subsistence." In order the better to work out their existence they have a boat

pierced like a sieve with patches and stoppers, caulked with tatters, and be-smeared with something not even of a bright black color. Neither the straps, nor the impermeability of the pitch are of good quality; but it is a boat that is capable of what will be known little by little.

78 Hannah Lynch, 230.
79 Obras Completas, XIII, lx.
81 Obras Completas, XI, 7.
Despite the inadequacy of their fishing apparatus and the fact that they are as opposite as the sea and the sky in character, Juan Pedro and his son work as one. The father is the dominating spirit and his word is final; the son is the strength, the docile machine that, although it creaks, yet never relinquishes the task until the order from the father has been given. Only in one matter does Pedro Juan resist the will of his father, and that is the question of his marriage with the parental choice of his father. The main task of both is "the plowing of the land and the care of some animals". At one time the land, the cattle, and the house are entirely the property of el Lebrato, but through misfortune he forfeits all and thus becomes indebted to el Berrugo. He labors doubly hard at fishing, which task supplies him with sufficient funds to procure grain from his creditor.

Juan Pedro and his son, by their remarkable qualities, have become veritable leaders of the fishing section. This leadership is clearly demonstrated in the eagerness with which the men and boys of the three different districts answer their summons for a fishing cruise. The eagerness of those desiring to join them is further shown by the hastiness with which they rush forward with their arms bare, and their heads covered so as to resemble a thatched wall.

There are close to a dozen youngsters, and more than six young men, who do not cease running until they arrive at the

82 Ibid., 7.
very door of the net-makers, where they will memorize the place and the number that is to be theirs in file, according to the order in which they arrive.\textsuperscript{83}

After forming in rank according to the order above indicated, they take their places behind one another. At their head are el Lebrato, his son, and his three grand-sons. The file does not number more than thirty when el Lebrato begins to hike up towards Arcillosa with short and very slow steps, at the same time dragging the half of the oro of his retuelle on the base of the canal; at the same time those who are following him imitate his example, lowering themselves, giving by their vibrations and totterings, such an aspect to the procession, that it seems more a wallowing than walking.\textsuperscript{84}

As the canal is narrow not many fish are procured, at least not a sufficient number to recompense all thirty who compose the party. Sometimes the last one in rank receives nothing; but it is an enjoyable party, and all feel sufficiently rewarded for their labors by the jokes and merry mood of el Lebrato. Regardless of the insignificant amount that they sometimes receive, the fishermen always experience a feeling that their luck will improve the next time.

It is after a similar excursion that Pedro Juan takes the occasion to woo Pilara by selecting for her some of his best catch. On each occasion that he visits her he has the intention of proposing to her, but he is always thwarted, either by his inability to express himself, or by the presence of

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 9.
his rival, Quilino. Thus, he is always obliged to return home very angry with himself for not having fulfilled his desire.

Ese Hombre, so called by Pedro; el Berrugo, by don Elias and by the whole village of Robleces when he is not within hearing distance; don Baltasar, by those who are obliged to approach him; and don Baltasar Gomez de la Terjira, on the registers, is the wretch to whom the entire village is subordinated. Inez, his daughter, is the image of her gentle mother, who has been brought to an untimely death by the cruelty of her husband. Don Elias, the village doctor, who also works for his livelihood, often visits Inez and befriends her.

On one of these occasions don Elias tells el Berrugo of his belief that a mine of pure gold most probably exists in caves in the surrounding coast. El Berrugo, although feigning disbelief, nevertheless pronounces the word "cuevas" in so strange and original a manner "that it seems that his mouth is filled with coins of gold, and strings of diamonds." With the intention of searching for the treasure, he asks el Lebrato to take him out in his bark to examine the recesses along the shore. As they near and examine different points, el Lebrato indicated to el Berrugo a large opening which can be seen from a distance. The view, however, that captivates his whole attention is the one side of the island scooped with sheltered nooks, and also that of the sea that "plays at the base of a boulder between an enormous heap of stones which seem to be torn away from the top." El Lebrato continues to describe the great difficulty of reaching the cave, which

85 José Augustín Balseiro, 102.
86 Obras Completas, XI, 59.
can only be attained by climbing from the top. El Berrugo anxiously and greedily surveys the perilous way to be undertaken in order to reach it, and after realizing and dreading the arduous task, he abandons his attempt to find the treasure.

The work of the month of August is considered a drudgery to the housekeeper of el Berrugo, for it is then that the men of the village come to help harvest the grain in payment for some trifling indebtedness. The task is an arduous one, but the laborers work so steadily that it is completed within two weeks, with only one festive day as an interruption.

The people who engage in the task are considered of the house; planters and also debtors of the planters; but both the planters and their debtors are in turn liable to el Berrugo. The only exception is Pilara, she is known as being the best Alcaldadora of yerba in Robleces and on this account she is permitted to assist them. Since it is that Pedro Juan is young, he and his father are always the principal harvesters, both being so accustomed to the rigors of the sea that there is not in them the least fear that some scythe will pierce their heels. 87

The ground that the two cover as they continue at the task resembles the work of a barber. Besides the art of conducting the bulk of a load through a crag, Pedro Juan is capable of loading and unloading in less time than the most agile harvester, and even el Berrugo acknowledges him the best of his workers. In return for their arduous labor the harvesters are served a

87 Ibid., 89.
scanty meal which consists of the worst that el Berrugo condescends to offer. The following day the toil is resumed and repeated as though the laborers will receive a treasure in return.

Recoger por la tarde lo segado la víspera, y segar y curar otro tanto para recogerlo el día siguiente; y con este motivo, más obreros y más impedimentos y doblada actividad en el Berrugo, cuya correa daba para cuanto fuera menester. Con la comida en la boca y la rastrilla al hombro, tras una mañana sin sosiego, a la mies con el primer carro, que era uno de los suyos; y allí, mientras se cargaba este carro y llegaba y punza y acribillaba al lucero del alba. Cargado el primer carro, a casa detrás de el aguantando sus bamboleos con la rastrilla y recogiendo las yerbas que se gaen o quedan enredadas en los bardales.

At length the days most desired by Pedro Juan arrive when he is permitted to enter the grass-land, for there Pilara is trampling the fragrant hay with the rake. Now everything, even the scorching sun, is sweet to Pedro, for he is near to Pilara. He often wonders whether Pilara or some one else will ride with him to unload the wagon, but he is not long in wondering, for Pilara quickly climbs the handle of the cross-bar into his wagon. She makes a gorgeous picture with her short skirt of red flannel and a blue striped waist with the kerchief of a thousand colors over her broad shoulders. Pilara is a picture of perfect contentment as she stands in the wagon, while Pedro is receiving, with open arms, the hay pitched from below.

88 Ibid., 91.
The loading being finished, Pedro drives the wagon to the corral entrance. There Pilara, gathering her skirt with both hands and walking on the handle crossbar, takes delight in jumping to the ground. The day comes to an end. The fond couple is seated side by side for the frugal evening meal that el Berrugo serves them. Pedro and Pilara are content merely to sit near each other at the table and to enjoy each other's presence.

The last day of the harvest arrives and Pedro and Pilara load and unload as usual, until at the last load Pedro is surprised to see Pilara who is preparing to leap from the rear of the wagon, rather than from the the front, as was her custom. Before Pedro is aware of it, she has jumped right into his arms, and then and there Pedro gathers enough courage to overcome his temerity and propose to her. She chides him for his timidity by answering: "cuanto hace ya, hijo de mi alma, que podíamos estar de queda, a no ser tu tan como eres!"\(^89\)

The annual feast of San Roque, the patron saint of Robleces, is always celebrated with the greatest solemnity. The priest preaches the most eloquent sermon ever heard in the village. Even Quilino contributes his share to the occasion by singing two solos, one in the Kyrie, the other in the Sanctus. The procession which follows the Mass wends its way around the church and lasts nearly an hour because

\[^89\text{Ibid.}, 95.\]
latter dressed in white, with silk kerchiefs and small bells of beads adorning even their sandals. The dancers seem to be enormous baby rattles of India-rubber tapping, raising, and bending, skipping, going and coming while in the procession, and at the same time keeping the time of the singing with the tapping of their tarranuelas.

The entire village attend this religious demonstration. Even el Berrugo is there attired in his best. El Lebrato also displays his famous boots that he has preserved for years as a relic. Pedro Juan, too, is attired in his best, but does not seem as comfortable as in his every-day clothing.

In the afternoon of the same day there is always a picnic to be enjoyed in a large oak grove near the church. Here and there can be heard the rhythmic tapping of tambourines, while the beating of the drum also holds its fascinated spectators. It is during the course of this outdoor event that the final arrangements are made for the wedding of Pedro and Pilara.

Later in the day Pilara takes the opportunity of visiting Inez, who is to be her bridesmaid, and they both chat happily about many things, but in particular of Pedro Juan, whom Pilara describes as poor as the Poor Souls, but

Pedro Juan, although destitute and without his own land, possesses a wealth of noble character. He is a rock with soul of gold. Others in the village may possess at least four small carts and their own hut in which to enter; but of what value are they? Pedro possesses nothing more than what is equitable for the provisions of two men. 91

90 Ibid., 103.
91 Ibid., 133.
Pilara continues her conversation with Inez and tells her that she is determined not to leave her house empty-handed, but will furnish a good bed, with its fluffy bedding, whiskey chairs, copper kettle, and pine chests filled with utensils. All this Pilara recounts to Inez, and finally Pilara asks about the caballero who has been devoted to Inez since the day of the solemn feast. Inez immediately informs her that he had at first given the impression that he was rich; but when her father had discovered that he was more than penniless, he ordered him from the house. So had Marcomes fared, who, with all his scheming, had succeeded only in awakening Inez from her torpor.

As the wedding day is rapidly approaching, Juan Pedro, anxious for his son to have an equal share of the expenses, begs of el Berrugo that in order to share the expenses of the wedding, simple, though it may be, he should like to have his consent to retain and sell the products of a fishing expedition, which he will be able to undertake within a few days. To this proposition el Berrugo gives his approval, but quite reluctantly.

The beginning of September opens the season, and the father and his son anxiously await the setting of the sun in order to begin their excursion, for oysters must be taken in the dark. The weather is beautiful, and it offers an unforseen opportunity to row towards the sand bank,

The night is not foggy and obscure, and there is still a bright appearance of the sky which pleases their vision and animates them; but through the second stretch, the rowing is more difficult because of the capricious and confusing curves. As they
continue to row there is no other light visible than that which is given by the blades of the oar. The splash that results from the work often re-echo and resound in the river valley, which is crowned by a heap of swamp oaks and are also brambles whose very thickness makes the night appear much darker.\footnote{Ibid., 142.}

Not an unnecessary word is exchanged between father and son. This silence is not due to fear on their part, for they know the surroundings in the darkest night as well as in the light of day. But there seems to be something in the atmosphere, dominated by the nocturnal silence, that always precludes conversation of any sort. In the midst of this obscurity the search is made in the rocks of the coast or in certain caves which the water makes as it recedes.

They must not be the first places encountered in the rocks, but such and such caves, or hollow places; because the oyster in whose search el Lebrato and his son are now going, has its preferences of refuge marked, and they must be looked for only in these shelters and no others. The fishermen know their havens perfectly and from memory; and they explore them all without wavering; at the same time making the small boat approach even to the very mouth of the deep cavern, or at least near to the rock where they are now hidden. Once there they submerge into the deep water hole, and disturb the refuge with a pole which has a hook attached to the end of it.\footnote{Ibid., 143.}
El Lebrato encounters many risks while on these excursions. Even before Pedro is old enough to accompany him, the father would embark alone, and no matter how dangerous the situations are, not once does a frown find its way into his serene countenance. Only once does he almost lose his serenity. It happens while Pedro is accompanying him when he fears more for the danger in which his son is being placed than for his own safety.

The caves are giving "su buen porqué" in that cruising, while the temptation of gaining more blinds el Lebrato, so that he is not aware of the gradual change in the weather. Pedro reminds his father of the rawness of it and asks him to return to the boat, as he does not like the action of the water. El Lebrato turns the matter into a joke with his geniality, urges Pedro to continue, saying that they have had worst times before. When they approach the water it is so deep and so far away that it is not possible to tackle it from the bark. The two proceed to scale the rock near it, and then Pedro inserts the lash of the bark in one of its crevices in order to leave it moored.

They search the cave very carefully with their poles, but the mine apparently is not yielding much. They decide, therefore, to approach the next one which is about ten fathoms away, but in order to reach this particular cave they will be obliged to hold tight to prevent their slipping into the sea. The way is rough and the caves are to be found with difficulty in a corner of a large rock. There they work arduously for a great while, or as Juan Pedro assures: "lo tenia, pero no queria darlo,"

94 Ibid., 144.
95 Ibid., 144.
Pedro notices that the waves are increasing at a distance, that the undertow is becoming stronger than before; and he prudently thinks that when such a thing occurs in the leeward side, it will be worse to go towards the other cave which faces the strong wind from the sea.

Almost instantaneously the elder thinks of the increasing danger, and he calls to his son, "Vamonos pa la barquía, y a escape." 97

They have scarcely begun to go in search of their boat, when the tempest begins to lash against the rocks, increasing in fury every second. El Lebrato is the first to reach the spot where their boat was left. He turns and immediately calls to his son in such a tone that the blood almost freezes in the veins of the brave boy. The fury of the sea has either made splinters of the boat, or has carried it far along, for it is nowhere to be seen.

The situation is so dreadful that even brave men, such as these, tremble in fear. They decide that nothing else can be done than to sit and endure the splashing of the breakers and the attacks of the wind, until the sea will hurl them far away or swallow them up in its depths. How are they to find another place of refuge, if the sole place of safety is a very high rock, which can be reached only by perilously climbing and this climb must be with agility of a monkey? How are they to attempt such a climb in the obscurity of the night, when even the light of day is not sufficient to illumine the way? This being their only hope of escape, Juan Pedro gives his son minute instructions to follow him and urges Pedro to risk the ascent for a safe

96 Ibid., 144.
97 Ibid., 144.
refuge. Commending themselves to God, they begin the dreadful and almost
impossible ascent. It is an ascent in which
every groping step on the cold sleet numbs
the boy's feet. The two unfortunate ones
make the stone which they are grasping more
slippery, and it takes minutes of reflection
and retracing their steps in order to take
a new course. They are not able to see an-
other thing but the blackness of the huge
bulk that they are scaling and which seems
to have no end.

The father is leading the climb and has one great hope of finding a wide
crevise on which they can rest, and perhaps wait until the dawn of day; but
his strength is giving out, his blood-stained hands and feet are bruised by
the sharp corners of the rocks, and he fears at every instant to discourage
his son with his dejection.

But with the efforts of self-abnegation of
a father, he attempts another step but with
such bad luck that his feet slide; and if
he does not immediately encounter a support
on the head of Pedro, who is closely follow-
ing him, el Lebrato will fall into the abyss
that is raging below.

Pedro balances the feet of his exhausted father on his head, and then places
them on his shoulders. Juan Pedro is fearful lest this procedure be danger-
ous for both, but Pedro answers and assures him that he feels as fresh as
when they began the climb, and so they continue the ascent until they reach
the top.

True, they are in shreds, bruised, drenched
in water, and stiff from the sharp cold, but

98 Ibid., 145.
99 Ibid., 145.
they have succeeded in reaching the top; and in order that their good fortune should be complete, the next day they find the boat on the beach of San Martin. It is broken and battered, but for all that it is only a sole question of a few more patches, over those which it already has, and then it is fit to venture out into the sea again with its owners, as if nothing has happened during the night. 100

This is the manner in which the two earn "la puchera," but regardless of the vicissitudes of the seas, they are as cheerful and happy as if they are the most favored in the world.

The marriage of Pedro with Pilara takes place on the last of September. The wedding guests include el Berrugo and Inez, Marcones and his aunt, don Elias, as a witness and Quilino, the rival of Pedro. During the ceremony the priest, don Alejo, asks Pedro if he wishes to take Pilara for his wife and, surprised to be asked such a question, he answers: "Pos no he de quererla? eso bien lo sabe ella, y uste tambien." 101

In the meantime the rivals for the hand of Inez are unsuccessful. Marcones, one of the suitors and the rival of Tomas Quicanes, hears that Tomas is not so wealthy as he pretends. Marcones contrives to have el Berrugo hear of this, with the consequence that both he and Tomas are excluded from entering the home of Inez. Aroused to action, Inez throws off the shackles of her father and runs away to find shelter in the house of Juan Pedro.

Inez is assisted by her friends and also by don Alejo, the parish cure who takes her to Anzares, where he places her in the care of his nephew,

100 Ibid., 146.
101 Ibid., 147.
Gaspar and his devoted wife. When el Berrugo finds out about the escapade of his daughter, he becomes so furious that not even la Galusa, his closest accomplice, is able to approach him. He appeals to the alcalde, to don Alejo, but no one will help him to bring Inez back to her father's wrath.

The next day being a beautiful one in spring, don Alejo ventures out with Juan Pedro in the boat for a breath of the sea. Don Alejo explains to both Juan Pedro and his son that Inez is in safety. They continue to enjoy the balmy day until Pedro notices something in the distance, bobbing up and down in the water. The priest recognizes it at once as being el Berrugo and urges them to row towards him and save him from his peril. As they come closer there is no longer any doubt that it is el Berrugo, who, when he recognizes the men in the boat, pleads with them to save his life.

They advance towards him, but it is very dangerous to try to help him into the boat from his position; so it occurs to el Lebrato that it will be safer to disembark on the beach and then climb the boulder and lasso him from that direction. That, however, requires time, and el Berrugo is already becoming weak. Don Alejo continues to urge the men to attempt it, as it is the only means of saving him; but it is too late. When el Berrugo comes to the surface a second time, don Alejo requests the drowning man to make an act of contrition and gives him absolution. Don Baltasar is then hidden by the foam of water and is seen to reappear about two or three times before he is swept away. The last scene is described in the words of Pereda as:
imponente y afligido aquello; y aun lo fue más cuando al ver los del barquichuelo flotar el largo pedazo de cuerda que había caído a la mar con el mísero despeñado, se lanzaron, con riesgo de sus vidas, a cogerle, y tirando de él don Alejo y remando los otros dos hacia afuera, apareció, casi a flote y remolcado por la barquía, el ensangrentado cadáver con el craneo deshecho y los miembros destrozados.102

Thus el Berrugo receives the full measure of his deserts for his many and cruel infamies. The tragic punishment furnishes the story with a good moral as well as a strong climax.

102 Ibid., 174.
Peñas Arriba (Rocky Altitudes), which is the greatest novel of José María Pereda, expresses in the highest degree the doctrine of the simple life. It is the most regional of the novels and takes its title from the nature of the neighborhood in which it is set, the highest part of the Montaña in the heart of the rugged Cantabrian Pyrenees above Santander.

It is the book of the upper mountains, the epic of rocks and escaped altitudes, filled with a rough incommunicative society, that is reticent and hard in emotion, surpassing all indication of passion with a savage modesty, and quaintly in terror of anything outside the daily routine of labour, food, rest, in a word, of the divagation of temperament.

The name is likewise, symbolic of the moral theme, the contrast of a simple, honest, and contented life under the venerable patriarch with the moral corruption of the town. It is a plea for a return to nature and simple living with its natural feelings and its spirit of human brotherhood. It teaches the duty of the high caste to be helpers and protectors of the low caste. This lesson of duty is illustrated by the life of a Cantabrian mayorazgo in his ancient casa solar and his beneficent patriarchal relation to the rustic community around and below him. "It is the advocacy of a high moral trust, that from him that hath, much is expected."  

103 Angel Valbuana Prat, 748.  
104 Hannah Lynch, 231.  
105 Obras Completas, XIII, lxv.
The mayorazgo is impelled by the traditions of his family to exercise a sort of patriarchal sway; but as he has no descendants, he views with anguish the extinction of his line. He therefore summons his nephew, Marcelo, to visit the Montaña, hoping that he will settle in the casa solar in order to continue his primate position.

From a sense of duty, the nephew complies and visits the mountain valley towards the end of autumn. The hardships he endures during his first sojourn in the heart of the Montaña amid the rigors of a Cantabrian winter does not brighten the prospects of his acceding to his uncle's dearest and most cherish wish. 106

As Marcelo jogs slowly along with Chisco and the beast of burden, the panorama of the surrounding country gradually unfolds before him. The sky seems to him a largo of mounting harmonies with banks of clouds slowly and gracefully billowing up in silken domes.

From the summits of the loftiest mountains, there issues a thick mist, and now and then fleecy clouds take off to dry out on the tips of rocks or over the thickness of those inaccessible groves; while the mountain breeze blows incessantly. It is so raw and piercing that it obliges Marcelo to lift up to his ears the warm collar of his strong water-proof garment. 107

The journey along the river bed, with its fresh and green banks, showy arches, and canopies of willows, alder-trees, and brambleberry, was only a very interesting interlude to the flowing of the crystal waters of Iger-Jijar

106 Leslie Alec Warren, 125.
107 Obras Completas, XV, 19.
through the center of the hills into the fierce Cantabrico. Then twisting, twining in and out in a series of hairpin turns, the trail which has been cut through solid rocks here follows the contour of tortuous mountain sides. Marcelo sees towers and peaks loom in distance in amazing color combinations and formations, while the clouds drift along, gaily and easily, changing into a thousand shapes one more interesting than the other. Arriving at the base of the highest ridge, Chisco points out to Marcelo a height between two lofty places, informing him that they must travel the hill beyond the higher and visible ridge before they can reach their destination.

As Marcelo views the surrounding country, which reveals a succession of purple mountains stretching far in the evening light, he begins to realize not only the richness of the area, but also its vast extent. He contemplates far below, in the depths, the colors gradually changing in a rising, exciting crescendo from cliff to cliff to the very summits. The sheer beauty of every new vista brings gasps of admiration and surprise from him. He sincerely thinks that of all the beauties of nature none can be more fascinating than this sight. The grandeur of it all forces from this exclamation:

O Divine God! What Land!
To my left and in the foreground are two of the highest cones which unite at their bases, as twins from a race of giants; to my right, opposite them, are the summits of Palombera, dominated by the Horn of the Pena Sagra, that extend its colossal hilllocks towards the west; and beyond in the

108 Angel Valbuena Prat, 748.
A short distance higher the mist is freezing, and the whole world is a mass of one immense rolling white cloud. In the supreme flaming glory of the sunset, the whole earth is transfigured as if all the life and light of centuries of sunshine stored up in the rocks were now being poured forth as from one glorious fountain, flooding both earth and sky. This scene now presents itself when the sun first begins to sink behind the distant mountain range, and it continues after evening has fallen, dropping beyond the fences of the world. Marcelo compares the scenes that he has seen before of open plains, delightful country, brilliant sun, with the fierce wilderness of the panorama now before him, the obscurity of the abyss, the deadly silence of the wilderness with its deep cliffs, and he gradually becomes enamored of these rugged heights.

Pero lo verdaderamente admirable y maravilloso de aquel inmenso panorama era cuanto abarcar los ojos pero muy lejano y como si fuera el comienzo de lo infinito una faja azul, recortando el horizonte; aquella faja era el mar, el mar Cantabrico; hacia su ultimo tercio, por la más derecha, y unida a él como una rama al tronco de que se nutre, otra mancha menos azul, algo blanquecina que se internaba en la tierra y formaba en ella como un lago; la bahía de Santander...La faja azul se presentaba a mis ojos mucho más elevada que

109 Obras Completas, XV, 26.
el perfil de la costa, y con ella se fundían otras mucho más blancas que iban a extendiéndose y prolongándose hacia nosotros, quedando entre la mayor parte de ellas islotes de las más extrañas formas: picos, y hasta cordilleras que parecían surgir de un repentina inundación.110

New surprises and impressions confront him as he laboriously ascends and descends until he crosses the Puerto.111 Curving the mountain road which winds up over ridges and along the ledges of precipices that sink for more than hundreds of feet below, he hesitates to survey

a precipice which looms ahead of him, and another one to the right, and another to the left. Which of these will Chisco take? Will it be through the worst, through the first, or through the only one that although bad, at least has a visible exit. This exit seems to be the result of something like a crumbling of a huge wall constructed by some giants in order to scale the sky.112

In the presence of this new stupendous marvel, Marcelo often closes his eyes to the perils of the yawning abyss below him. As he follows Chisco, his head is constantly coming in contact with large masses of small grain, while his right side is being pricked with thorns. In vain does he look up for light, only to view a "bristle-covered mountain with hoary summits and hooded cones with thick mists."113 They continue to wind around for miles until they reach the summit. Looking down over the brink, he can scarcely believe that a trail could be built safely amid such startling ascents.

110 Angel Valbuena Prat, 748.
111 Ibid., 748.
112 Obras Completas, XV, 31.
113 Ibid., 31.
In the recess of the crags there is revealed the vestibule of a quiet sanctuary. Upon a closer approach, Marcelo and Chisco view a shrine at which they stop to reaffirm their faith in God and in His power of endowing the surrounding country with an enduring beauty which can be sensed, but is never quite understood. Behind the railing which serves as the foundation of the vestibule is an altar with the image of the Virgin, called Virgin of the Snows. The devout prayer of Chisco, together with the peaceful scene seems so near to God and so far from the world, have made a deep impression on Marcelo.

Chisco then casually tells Marcelo that without the latter having been aware of it they had just encountered a fierce bear on the way. This disclosure incites Marcelo to commend his soul to God and his life to the animal that is carrying him, in order to arrive safely at the end of the journey.

Just as darkness is beginning to fall, they sight the casa solar far away which appears as a star in the sky. Not long after, Marcelo meets his uncle while the latter is holding the regular evening tertulia.

My uncle was there sitting in the seat of honor. Sitting on the bench next to him on the left was a very fat priest, wearing a cloth gown, a stiff velvet cap, having a stout stick with a crooked handle between his knees; facing them on the other side of the hearth was a person fatter than the priest, with a large head, grey hair, lemon-colored face, and protuberant eyes... On my appearance in the kitchen, the noisy domain of the conversation, which from the passage outside had sounded like a dispute, stopped instantly, and everybody in the group turned on seeing me.
Hello! Hello! exclaimed my uncle on seeing me. You've come to look for your bread, have you? I'm delighted, man, I'm delighted... Come, he added, looking at the priest and at the huge man on the other bench. "Behold here you have him; this is my nephew Marcelo, the son of my late brother, Juan Antonio." 114

The men arise to greet Marcelo. Their stature gives Marcelo the impression that they are giants, especially the layman who is able to put head and shoulders up the chimney. Don Celso continues to introduce him, addressing Marcelo and indicating

Señor don Sabas Rinos, parish priest of the village... and don Pedro Nolasco de la Castanolera, mayor of this Royal Valley in 1832, councillor in 1830, alderman in 1827, official receiver in 1825, formerly employee in the cloth laundry of Messrs. Botifora and Company, outside the walls of Valencia. We rule and command. 115

The supper that has been arranged in honor of Marcelo is a source of terror rather than of temptation to him, because he is accustomed to the elegant trifles of fashionable cookery. Everything that made its appearance on the table was immense, solid, and abundant to a degree almost incredible.

First, an earthen basin of milk soup, then a deep dish with a mixture of turnips in salad; next an omelette with rashers of bacon, which was followed by a highly seasoned liver; and finally a colossal compote of apples; and a large quantity of dried goats cheese. The only

114 Leslie Alec Warren, 129.
115 Ibid., 130.
things lacking there are light and heat, because the light from the lamp burners was almost lost in the black space before it reached to the table, and the warming up I had given to myself in the kitchen, now in the dining room only served to make me feel with double intensity the glacial temperature of that wilderness.116

Despite the discomforts of the journey, Marcelo sleeps the whole night through without a break, dreaming of the bear on the pass, of endless rows of valleys and of gorges so narrow that he is not able to traverse them even by going sideways.

He gradually condescends to become acquainted with the peasants of Tablanca, and unsuspectantly begins to enjoy their company and conversation and even manifests a deep interest in their occupation. His attention is first attracted by a certain monotonous uniformity in the tailoring of their garments.

The young men wear red suspenders, while the elders wear green; the women wear a shawl of similar color, crossed in the same manner over the left shoulder and waist. Both men and women seem to walk, speak, and move with the same temperance, and a certain expression of goodness is revealed in the faces of the young and old, combined with a tinge of fear, as if the continual vision of the large and solid masses at whose shadow these people are living, have intimidated them.117

Marcelo also observed that the houses of Tablanca are constructed on the same plan; the ground floor is used for the sheep and goats; the next floor consists of the rooms for the family, with a kitchen that has no more

116 Obras Completas, XV, 52.
117 Ibid., 79.
roof than the tile and above which there is a garret of limited size.

On his daily rounds of the village, Marcelo meets the country doctor, don Servando Celis, who has been given a start in his career through the instrumentality of Marcelo's uncle. He desires that Chisco become a doctor also, because he already has an older son studying law in Valladolid. Although Chisco does not feel an aversion for literary and scientific ideas, he has his heart set in his native soil and wishes to live there. He does not let anyone know of this love, but he feels it very deeply. Besides, he thinks that his father is right in giving him an education that will undoubtedly convince him that he belongs only to the soil. The experiment is tried with the result that Chisco is back in the village happily assisting the patriarch.

Marcelo continues to interrogate don Servando. The latter explains why he also has returned to his native land. He contends that since no one would censure a cultured man for making a copy, good as it is, of beautiful paintings which have been taken from nature, so too the world should not censure those who prefer to lead their lives as close to the soil as possible. The doctor proceeds to suppose that he has the delirium of the greatest of poets and is endowed with the fever of the most admirable of painters. Servando continues the discussion and his defence of his native region by the supposition:

Pero suponga también que no sé hacer una mala copia ni coger los pinceles en la mano; suponga usted igualmente que, aunque me enamoran cuadros, no satisfacen por completo las necesidades de esa especia
que padezco yo, y suponga, por último, que en éste valle mínimo, y en los montes que circundan de cerca y de lejos, cuya visión continua le abruma y le entristece a usted, y en el conjunto de todo ello, con la luz que lo envuelve, espléndida a ratos, mortecina a veces, tética muy a menudo, dulce y soledosa siempre, y con los ruidos de su lenguaje, desde el fiero de la tempestad hasta el rumoroso de las brisas de mayo, y su fragancia exquisita nunca igualada por los artificios orientales, encuentro, el himno sublime, el poema, el cuadro, la armonía insuperables, que no se han escrito ni pintado, ni compuesto, no sonado todavía por los hombres, porque no alcanza ni alcanzará jamás a tanto la pequeña del más ingenio humano: el arte supremo, en una palabra... No halla usted en esta razón, poco más que esbozada, algo que justifique estas inclinaciones, más que tan inexplicables le parecen? 118

Marcelo accomplished only one thing by trying to convince the doctor of the monotony of living out in this wilderness, and that was to stir don Servando to speak more convincingly of the wholesomeness of this particular region:

Monotonía! ... Y yo que la encuentro sola-mente en las tierras llanas y en sus grandes poblaciones: Madrid, Sevilla, Barcelona... París, la capital que usted quiera, pasa de ser una jaula más o menos grande, mejor o peor fabricada, en la cual viven los hombres amontonados, sin espacio en que moverse ni aire puro que respirar? 119

Don Servando undertakes the problem of explaining how business, theatres, cafes and other occupations not attached to the soil are legitimate and very useful for city folks; but he denies to these occupations the power of being


119 Ibid., 461.
able to enrich the spiritual lives of himself and of his fellow men. He further reiterates how those surrounding boulder heights seem at first only grotesque aspects capable of frightening a new-comer, but which after a time give one an insight and feeling of the infinite.

Marcelo is finally convinced that beauty and sublimity have much to do in lifting the spirits of men, but he cannot comprehend what part the men themselves play in this perpetual existence. He feels a keen sympathy for these rustic people who must continue to exist in ignorance and who have been deprived of enjoying the Royal theatres, the reception halls of the great, and also the greatest boulevards of Madrid. He maintains that the mountainous country furnishes an existence well suited for the contemplative and aesthetic, but that these people should be given the opportunity of learning the social life of the city. He further contends that this existence only brings them down to the baseness of the earth. At his remark the village doctor becomes more excited as if, up until now, he had not taken Marcelo's words too seriously. He protests vigorously:

Por que ha de ser el hombre de los campos el que se eleve hasta el hombre de la ciudad, y no el hombre de la ciudad el que descienda con su entendimiento, más luminoso, hasta el hombre de los campos para entenderse los dos? Hágase este trueque, y se verá resulta la inteligencia mutua que se da como imposible por los que no saben buscárla. Y no haya un temor de que las dos naturalezas se compenetren y de las roñas de la una se contamine la otra; porque la comunicación no ha de ser continua ni para todo, y al hombre culto, por lo mismo que es más inteligente, le sobran los medios para no rebasar de los límites de la prudencia y hacer que cada de los dos guarde el puesto que le corresponde.120

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120 Ibid., 462.
Servando's final remarks concern the education and the knowledge that the peasants learn from thecrudeness of the mountains. He feels that the city folks learn to admire the mountains if their eyes are not accustomed to the splendors of their civilized world, or rather are not striving to grasp shadows, monotony, loneliness, and the weird sadness of the city.

Winter gradually comes to Tablanca with the descent of a gray cloud from the mountain, enveloping all the village. There follows a cold north wind, then a deafening noise as of a distant cannon, which seems to Marcelo to be the sea clashing against the rocks of the shore. Then is heard the sound of echoes and re-echoes of thunder throughout the valley. The wind becomes stronger and stronger until the inhabitants begin to barricade their homes against the winter. The entire valley roars with the rage of wild winds beating down from the high mountains, hurling the loose sands against the walls and howling in glee among the corridors of the Montana. This snowstorm in the mountains is described in the words of Marcelo:

Así continuaron las cosas hasta muy cerca del mediodía. A esa hora aparecieron por el Nor- oeste unos celajes negros, sucios, tormentosos; vi, casi al mismo tiempo, que las arboledadas y puntas salientes de los montes que cercaban el valle por el lado opuesto, como por la fuerza de un estremecimiento instantáneo, se desnudaban de sus envolturas de nieve, las cuales caían en cataratas, levantando al caer blancas polvaredas que arrastraba el aire que estaba embriestado ya... A compañero bala un sinsietro rebramar, y una luz tética que apenas me dejó ver el estrago de su choque contra el obstáculo inmovible de los montes, sobre los cuales se deshizo en negros y deshilados ji- rones.121

121 César Barja, 364.
In spite of the severe weather the regular evening tertulia of the village folk takes place in the great old-fashioned kitchen of the casa solar, an assembly presided over by the mayorazgo, who, through this agency, exercises a moral potency over the community. By this means he keeps in close touch with the people, encouraging all, appeasing quarrels, knitting all members of the community together into one great family.

Throughout the entire village Marcelo hears the same expression of sentiment: the general regret that, in the event of the death of don Celso, his work must end, for he is without heir. Consequently these rustics, who have become accustomed to live spiritually in the shadow of the Casa Solar, will be deprived of a protector.

Weighing his ideas and impressions of the man of the city against the mysteries of nature, Marcelo reconciles himself to the landscape and thereafter looks at the mountain people with different eyes. He notices their gravity, their manner of performing their tasks, and he observes that they lead a peaceful and serene life. He thereupon decides to cast his lot with the Montaña, for "What existence could be more noble and serene, than to continue the work of his uncle." 122

Marcelo is told by his uncle when he is least expecting it that, God willing, they would both go through the woods on the following morning. The next day Chisco awakens Marcelo only after great effort, for the fatigue of the previous day has made Marcelo almost too weak to begin another journey.

122 Romera-Navarro, 572.
It does not seem day to Marcelo, for it is as dark as the night before. Chisco assists Marcelo to dress and then gives him coffee to awaken him and to dispel his shivering in the cold. After some time Marcelo descends to the gate, where don Sabas and Chisco are patiently awaiting his arrival.

No sooner has he approached than he is immediately helped by Chisco to mount the horse, and all three set out through the darkness. They follow the same way that he has traveled on his arrival to Tablanca. The night then was as dark as now, but now Marcelo is better accompanied and feels more accustomed to the saddle. It seems that both don Sabas and Chisco are capable of traveling in this thickness of night as securely as in mid-day. Some of the going is difficult. At all events it is not an easy climb, for what appears smooth and bare from a distance is rough and overgrown with a heavy brush. Although Chisco carries a lantern, it gives no more light than the sparks from the shoe of the horse directly ahead of him. The priest makes every effort to entertain Marcelo, but his entertainment is quite boresome to Marcelo as the latter does not have a high opinion of the priest’s ability as a conversationalist. Marcelo describes his uncle as:

El Cura, que parecía tener esa condición de los pájaros del monte, a medida que se elevaba y veía surgir la luz por encima de las barreras tenebrosas del horizonte, se volvía más locuaz y empezaba a soltar poco a poco las ocultas armonías de sus cánticos; no mucho pero agradables, y, sobre todo al caso.  

123Walter T. Pattison, 464.
As they catch a last glimpse of the moon on the crest of the mountain, don Sabas praises God in a very fervent salutation. A little higher and nearer to the hermitage, which is still invisible to them even at a distance, don Sabas drives his horse near to that of Marcelo and snatches the reins from him. He points to a far-away peak on the summit of which is visible the last rays of the moon, then to a sharp precipice which is a sheer facade of rocks and crumbly rock. Don Sabas says to Marcelo:

Mira, Marcelo! No jurarías que aquellos que resplandece y flamea alla arriba, alla arriba, en aquel picacho, es la última de las luminarias con que el mundo festeja a su Creador mientras el sol anda apagado por los abismos de la noche? Cosa buena! Cosa grande!  

Upon arriving in a sanctuary of the Virgin, they uncover their heads and don Sabas prays in a loud sonorous voice while Marcelo and Chisco answer in a similar manner. After finishing the prayers, Chisco approaches the iron bar and leaves the lantern on the ground, very near to the wall in order to take it back on the return trip. Chisco does this only after he has blessed himself and turned reverently to contemplate the image with such veneration as to incite the Virgin to pity him and pardon his offences. He blesses himself for the privilege of keeping his lantern safe in that sacred spot until his return.

After a slight respite they take the trail which twisted along the fearful heights.

...otro por el estilo a la derecha; y montes y colladas van, tajos y barrancas vienen; aqui siguiendo la cuenca del rio, all per-diendola de vista, y siempre subiendo o

124 Ibid., 464.
Since the climb was too steep for Marcelo, his uncle guided the group through side paths in order to facilitate the ascent to the highest point. Then Marcelo dismounts willingly, for he feels the need of a change of position and feels surer on his feet.

Don Sabas begins to clamber on hands and knees between rocks and strong roots. How Marcelo envies Chisco who has been allowed to remain at the base of the slope, where he cares for the animal! Don Sabas is accustomed to these ascents, besides being in love with the heights; but to Marcelo who neither loves the mountains nor is accustomed to them the trip is only one more monotonous routine. He suffers a heaviness in his legs, which he has never before experienced.

The panting of Marcelo makes his uncle aware that the journey has been tedious for his nephew. He therefore orders his nephew to lie down and to rest. Marcelo obeys gratefully more from necessity than from a sense of obedience. He lies there on his back for a long time, with both hands over his eyes, because it seems that only in this recumbent position can he obtain rest, which is very necessary at this particular time. He feels the thumping of his heart throughout his entire body and experiences a sensation heretofore unknown to him. When Marcelo is again calm, his uncle shows

125 Ibid., 463.
him the heights that they had just scaled. The distance which they both
surveyed Marcelo describes as:

Particularmente hacia el Este y hacia el Norte parecía no tener límites a mi vista, poco ave-
zada a estimar espectaculos de la magnitud de aquel; y era de una originalidad tan sorprenden-
te y extrana, que no acertaba a darme cuenta cabal ni de su naturaleza ni de su argumento.
Por el Sur se dominaba el hermoso valle de cam-
poo, ya en otra ocasión visto y admirado por mí; en la misma dirección, y más lejos, los tonos pardos de la tierra castellana; más cerca, el Puerto de marras con sus monolitos descarnados y su soledad desconsoladora. Al Oeste, y asombrando todo con sus moles, Peña Sagra y los Picos de Europa separados por el Deva cuya porfundo y maravillosa garganta se distinguía fácilmente en muchos de sus caprichosos escar-
ceos entre los penascos inaccesibles y los fantaséticos de una y otra ribera; y más alla del Deva, en sus valles bajos, según se iba informándome don Sabas con el laconismo y el modo con que señala el maestro de escuela con una cana en un cartel las silabas a sus edu-
candos, una buena parte de la provincia de Asturias.126

But the most admirable part of that panorama is that which can be be-
held by one sweeping glance of the eyes. Farthest away, as if it is the
beginning of the infinite is a blue border stretching across the horizon.
That bluish belt is the sea Cantabrico, and joined to it as a branch to the
trunk that nourishes it is another bluish border, but lighter in intensity,
penetrating into the earth and forming a lake of Santander. At the same
time the long strands of clouds moving across the sky throw skeins of prism-
matic dust about the valley. There is an odor of pine and spruce and the
freshness of meadows that spread waves of color throughout the entire
stretch.

126 Ibid., 465.
A todo esto, el sol, hiriéndolo sus rayos, sacaba de la superficie de aquellos golfos, rías y ensenadas, haces de chispas, como si vertiera su luz sobre llanuras empedradas de diamantes... Pero, aun así, no podía ni deseaba deshacer aquella ilusión de óptica que me presentaba el panorama como un fantástico archipiélago cuyas islas venían creciendo en rígurosa gradación desde las más bajas sierras...

Seeing that Marcelo appreciates all this grandeur, don Sabas promises to bring him again to view the setting of the sun from that same point, or still better to view it from a higher level. This promise does not please Marcelo, for he can not imagine anyone climbing any higher. From this vantage point his uncle then continues to point in the direction of three more mountain ranges. Marcelo is unable to take his eyes from those fantastic forms, temples, castles, pyramids, and towering stone spires that seem to reach high into the bright sunlight.

Don Sabas' prediction of the beautiful changes with the coming of the first rays of the sun was not long in coming to realization. Phantom-like the mountains seem to drift as colored mists, while yet anchored to their shadows.

Poco a poco fueron las nieblas encrespándose y difundiéndose, y con ello alterándose y modificándose los contornos de los islotes, muchos de los cuales llegaron a desaparecer bajo la ficticia inundación. Después, para que la ilusión fuera más completa, vi las negras manchas de sus moles sumergidas, transparentadas en el fondo; hasta que, en rarecida más y más la niebla, fue desgarrándose y elevándose en retazos que, después de

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127 Ibid., 466.
mecerse indecisos en el aire, iban acumulándose en las faldas en los más altos montes de la cordillera.\footnote{Ibid., 467.}

The haze is like a woven web of filmy gauze over the peaks. Then the misty veil is broken and every beauty that has before been hidden is revealed so that there is now a clear and distinct line of the coast above the blue line of the sea. There can also be seen towards the southeast the green patches of meadows, the white outline of the village, the black brush-strokes of the groves. All these and a thousand other details compose that supernatural panorama, complemented by the profound silence of those august valleys. Gradually the crystal air magnifies the shapes until every detail of contour appears in sharp clarity. Then glory follows gloom as the Sun-god bursts through the lower clouds, ignites the mists, and outlines the faces of the cliffs gleaming through the wisps of vapor breathed out of the cosmic purple of the lower depths.

Marcelo has never felt so near to the Creator. This profound beauty, which Marcelo senses, but is not able to understand, causes a deep and an everlasting impression on him.
For the first time Marcelo feels repugnance for the worldiness of life that he has led in Madrid. In the innermost recesses of his mind, he now reflects on truths from which he can not easily free himself. His eyes seem fixed to the sublime heights which consumed him with a desire to be able to reach the height of Him Who was their Creator. Marcelo is brought back to earth by his uncle's inquiry as to what he thinks of this immense grandeur, that can only make man experience a spiritual exaltation. Don Sabas has the keen satisfaction of knowing for the first time that his nephew is more than pleased. In Marcelo's own words: "Grande es, en efecto, y hermoso y admirable este espectáculo?"  

Don Sabas then extends his arms as if to embrace the entire expanse before him; then he reverently uncovers his head.

cuyos cabellos grises flotaron en el aire; elevó al cielo la mirada y la mano con su sombrero y todo, y exclamó con voz solemne y varonil que vibraba con extraño son en el silencio imponente de aquellas alturas majestuosas.  

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129 Ibid., 467.
130 Ibid., 468.
131 Ibid., 468.
It is probably the exceptional state of Marcelo's soul at this particular moment or the work of some exterior agent, but it is certain that the vast picture is a refuge and a relief from the harassing unpleasantness of everyday existence.

The dominant incident in Peñas Arriba is the death of the patriarch don Sabas. The religious sentiment is not only enhanced, but also made extremely solemn, by the gravity and the dramatic force with which it is expressed. The preparation for the death of don Sabas begins with the church bells ringing intermittently. At times the sound seems far away, and then again very near, sometimes weak, as a moan of agony. It is the first signal to the village that the last sacraments are about to be administered to some soul hovering on the brink of eternity.

In the meantime the inmates of the Casa Solar witness the arrival of two men from the church with armsful of candles, which are to be used in illuminating the darkest corners of the house while the Blessed Sacrament is present. After a short interval of silence the bells again resound in order to indicate that the priest is already on the way with the Blessed Sacrament. It is

[...]

132 Leslie Alec Warren, 133.
As the procession wends its way to the Casa Solar, even the elements become calm, as out of respect to the solemnity of the occasion.

The death of don Sabas, together with a combination of skillful local influences which work in behalf of his conversion to the Montana, especially the moral and the material grandeur of the peasant life, brings Marcelo to resign himself to the thought of remaining in the obscurity of the mountain. Love itself appears on the scene as the most potent auxiliary of all to complete the task and solidify the work. The lovers, "beat about nature, in semi-consciousness of their state, troubled, afraid, in desperate revolt against speech, or any of the outward signs of love." 133

The haughty madrileño, who has gone through a severe apprenticeship to the rough existence of the Upper Rocks, feels as foolish as any village lad. The mountain lass is afraid to admit even to herself the depth of her own feeling toward the brilliant young man, "before whom she stands in humility as King Cophetua's beggar maid." 134

The genteel, well-ordered young man of the town, who heartily appreciates urban society with its brilliant cafes and theatres and elegant ladies, becomes thoroughly converted to rural wholesomeness, becoming an active and useful worker.

This is what Pereda expects of the mountain country: the regeneration of those ill from the evils of city life and the strengthening of a faith in the creed that God is in His Heaven and all is right with the world. Such is the true argument of Peñas Arriba. 135

133 Hannah Lynch, 231.
134 Ibid., 231.
135 César Barja, 371.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

It has been the purpose of the foregoing study to investigate the regionalism in the work of José María de Pereda in order to indicate his contribution to Spanish Literature. To accomplish this it has been imperative to consider the life and ideas which formed the background to his work.

In 1854 Pereda found the Spanish novel still in extreme infancy, there was a great mass of novels translated from the French, but good original Spanish novels were rare. He therefore, resolved to follow his own bent, to cultivate his own garden, to be regional, to turn for his material to the people and for his subjects to life and reality.

Pereda's literary work first became known to the reading public in 1859 with the publication of the sketches of manners and customs afterwards gathered into a volume called Escenas Montañesas. It is in this work that Pereda demonstrates the rare ability to suggest by a few telling strokes the whole life of an individual, and in the individual, the life of an entire community. A number of these are marked by the triviality of their origin; but several others, as La Leva (Heighing Anchor) and El Fin de Una Raza (The Last of the Race), are esteemed equal to the best of his work.

Undaunted by his failure to attract favorable notice by his first efforts in the Escenas Montañesas, he repeated his experiment in a group of thirteen short stories. As one novel followed another, Pereda illustrates
the regular and harmonious development, of growth step by step in range and power, ending in a series of masterpieces that form an imposing literary monument crowned by a worthy capstone, Peñas Arriba, the regional novel of the nineteenth century. Sotileza, (1885) his most popular work, is one of the finest work of the sea; while La Puchera (1889) brings in both water and land.

We might divine from them what Pereda tells elsewhere, that he is only striving to set down for future readers the surroundings of his boyhood, and also the picturesque characteristics fast yielding to the march of civilization. He has supported this by vividly portraying types in which he sub-serves a thesis in which he had a firm belief which depicts the superiority of a social existence in the small towns of the provinces and in the rustic community, when they succeed in eliminating the contamination of influences, particularly, political influences that radiate from the more popular civic centers.

The prejudice that Pereda had against refined materialism, force him to anatematize the society of the city centers; and to defend the simple life of the country, because it is more wholesome life, a more industrious one, which because of its direct contact with nature and its underlying influence on the character of its people, constitutes them more frank, less subtle and treacherous than those in the city.

In his disdain for new opinions, in his love for traditions of the past, in his independent spirit, in all this, he is a typical Spaniard, and very characteristic of the old Spanish which is opposed to that which is modern
because, in his opinion it has the stamp of the grossest materialism. He could not look upon democratic ideas with sympathy, and often compares the decadence and political corruption with the splendid and glorious accomplishments of Spain in the past. His political ideology was that of a paternal and beneficent autocracy, as exercised by the hidalgo of Peñas Arriba.

These truths forgotten by the learned constitute the doctrine of the author who believes happiness consists in the nobleness of the soul, and not in the magnitude of material possessions; the burden of this life is lightened, by eliminating caprices and desires; felicity consists in the peace of the spirit, in serene existence, while the more we search for selfish pleasures, the more we bring about our misfortune.

Many of Pereda's characters illustrate the contentment with their own surroundings which he so admired. Their language is reproduced and their faithfulness and mental limitations are delineated with the most amazing exactness. There are Tremontorio, the old Santander fisherman; Sotileza, Muergo, el padre Apolinar, the noble don Celso, and others.

Pereda's most dominant characteristic is his love of nature, by which he enables us to perceive the mountains, trees, and the elements not only with sight; but also with feelings. For the panorama which he displays there is a deep religious background, a faith as changeless and as rugged as the sea and the mountains themselves. Almost as essential is the prevalence of patriarchal customs, according to which a noble gentleman feels personal solicitude for the welfare of all the humble people who surround him, while in turn, they look up to him, visit him in the evening, question and consult him on every difficulty.
The entire work of Pereda is stamped with the highest moral; it is steeped with universal humanity and power of portraiture and such as has not been known in Spanish Literature since the appearance of the *Novelas Exemplares* of Cervantes in 1613, while *Penas Arriba* and *Sotileza* stand for all time among the masterpieces of literature.

Pereda made a vigorous defence of *regionalism*, before the Spanish Academy in 1897, denying that the love for the *patria chica*, or *provincia*, impairs the love for the *patria grande*. He puts in an earnest plea for the legitimate claims of the *novela regional*, as one descending to the heart of the nation. He defends its dignity, conceding full competence for the task only to those favored few who possess *lo de adentro*, the subjective insight that comes only to a native whose spirit has been molded by the surroundings through long association with them. What Pereda defines in the regional novel is a tradition, a manner of being, a literary national genre, against the discolored life of the city. In the same defence is included the basic institution of the regional and national: the family, the church, and the language. The regional novel of Pereda means a popular novel, and as such a novel of customs more than of ideas; of deeds more than of doctrine.

Pereda has been generously named the most original contemporary of the Spanish writers of fiction, and also the most revolutionary in the sense of having cast off the conventional influence of the romantic and classical traditions of the earlier half of the nineteenth century.

As a lighthouse high on a point of solid rock totally unaffected by the surf that roars against cliffs, so Pereda, enthroned upon his granite faith in church and state, regards untouched the religious and political upheaval around him, but below him.
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CRITICAL WORKS ON PEREDA


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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Sister Mary Ludmilla Valdez has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Spanish.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

March 11-47
Date

Signature of Adviser