

Synopsis Of The Verb In Leizarraga's Baskish New Testament

To the Editor of THE OXFORD TIMES,

Sir,

The Editor of the «Revue Internationale des Études Basques», having refused to publish the following reply to his incorrect observations on my hook, which was issued by the Oxford University Press last July, and Oxford being «the home of lost causes» of which the Baskish tongue appears to be one, I beg leave to put them on record here, in the birth place of the said book. To begin with, I am not yet a «polyglot!» I only wish I could boast of that great advantage. Nor were any copies of my book printed on «Dutch» paper. I am blamed for not publishing my work on «The Leizarragan Verb» as a comprehensive whole! What would my critic say, if I suggested that no number of his «Revue», which I hoped would serve to supply the need that I pointed out in the preface to my edition of Capanaga as far back as 1893, ought to have been issued until he should have a massed enough material to fill a hundred numbers? I would, of course, have prepared my work on that plan, if I had been provided with a guarantee for the printing of it when concluded, or that I should live to see it finished. No such assurance was granted to me. Moreover, I was unknown to the world outside Baskland, as a disciple of Heuscara, as Leizarraga calls his language, and had to give some proof to the learned, as well as to the unlearned, that I was devoting my time, and how much time, too! «O dembora saindua!» to this work, and was willing to go on, and capable of making it of real value and

utility for those who know, or think they know, or wish to know Baskish. Alas! I have had little encouragement: least of all from, the Bask Catholics themselves, who neither buy, read, or criticise such books in or about their language as are offered to them, as many an author and publisher of recent years knows to his cost, and who have, in many cases that have been reported to me, barbarously destroyed, without even attempting to sell, the old books which their forefathers had left to them in their picturesque and ancient houses. I wish I could do away with the first specimen of my work which the editor of the «Revue de Linguistique», who knows Baskish well enough to have seen that it required careful revision, so unkindly allowed to appear in his volume for 1890. That part must be done over again. It was the outcome of zeal rather than knowledge. I regret equally all other defects that exist in the other parts that have appeared since then: for instance, on p. 260 of «Hermathena», No 33, «has» ought to be «had». An author is the worst corrector of his own proof-sheets. No coadjutor could I find, and lonely work benumbs the mind. My design from the first, since Canon Inchauspe gave his written approval of my plan in 1889, was to draw up a complete analytical index to the verb of Leizarraga. to be published without the quotations which consume so much time in the preparation of the manuscript, and add so much to the cost of printing. But these quotations served to convince those who had access to one or other of the existing copies of Leizarraga's noble translation, or since 1900 to the nearly correct German re-print, that my work was drawn directly from the original, to put complete sentences into their mouths and memories, and to enable them to see how far my definitions hit the mark. The only parts of my work which still exist in manuscript, until fortune shine upon them, and someone who can afford it will pay for the printing, are those dealing separately with the Gospels of St. Luke and St. John, the Acts of the Apostles, and the largest part of all which combines the 924 Verbal Forms in the Apocalypse, the Epistles to the Corinthians and the Epistle to the Romans. The statement that Leizarraga's translation is not faithful to the French of Calvin, as printed between 1561 and 1571 is unfounded. It is as close as is possible between languages of such a different character, except where the author intentionally departs from Calvin, and succeeds in more exactly expressing the sense of the Greek text, which he and his four assistants appear to have known very well. The Baskish version is superior to that of Calvin. It ought to be reproduced in a column between the French of that translator and the Greek text as known in France between 1561 and 1571. The accusation that I have inserted in my quotations, italics which do not

exist in the original text, is as false as the elephant in the Church of Elorrio, unless it be added that, for purposes of teaching, it has been my plan throughout to put the verbal forms in italic in the quotations, so as to call the reader's attention more readily to their effect. It so happens that the italics, both of Calvin and Leizarraga, are most instructive, proving that both authors worked with critical discernment from the Greek text, as St. Jerome did when making his version in vulgar Latin, and that Leizarraga intentionally made himself independent of Calvin, by aid of the Greek. To write «Lizarrague» in any language but French is sacrilege, as it destroys both the sound and the meaning of the brave translator's name. Would an Englishman named Ashfield be pleased if Frenchmen insisted on calling him Eshfold? A Bask ought to call him Leizarraga, even in writing French, for «Lizarrague» means nothing at all, and the inroads of French have already succeeded in obliterating too much what made Baskland a linguistic island of singular-interest. The Gallicization of Baskish names must be resisted, if Baskland is to deserve its native name, «Heuskal-herria», which means «the land of the Heuskarian tongue.» This name shows by itself how much pride the first Bask settlers attached to marking it by their own language. I am permitted to make use of two, out of many, testimonials to the value of my work. (1) «Hackwood, Basingstoke, July 28, 1907. My dear Dodgson.— Absence from here (I only returned to-day) has delayed my acknowledgment of your most erudite work. When you asked me to peruse it, you surely placed upon me this charge with a smile. I did, indeed, read the three concluding explanatory pages with pleasure, but I confess that the remainder were too much for me, and I own myself fairly defeated. Even if you find readers, where will you find a critic? But what a labour it must all have been to you ! — Yours very truly, CURZON.» (2) «8, Chalmers-crescent, Edinburgh, September 30, 1907. My dear Principal (Sir J. Rhys),— I have been intending to write to you about Mr. Dodgson's «Leizarragan Verb», which is one of the most elaborate and painstaking pieces of philological work that I have seen for a long time, but waited to do so until I had heard that you were back in Oxford and at work. It is a credit to English scholarship, all the more so from its being concerned with a language which has been so little and so imperfectly studied, especially by Englishmen, in spite of its importance from the point of view of linguistic science. If we are ever to penetrate the secrets of Basque philology, it can only be through works like this one of Mr. Dodgson, which I therefore hope he will be able to complete. So far as it has gone, it is quite exhaustive. — Believe me to be, yours very truly, A. H. SAYCE.» I avail myself of this opportunity of pointing out that the critic to whom

I am replying ought to have stated in the preface to his edition of the philological treatises of Jean d'Etcheberri, which he discovered at Zarauz as the result of a visit that I had proposed to him, that my own discovery of the dictionary of the same author was due to a conversation that I had at Bilbao in, I think, January, 1905, with Don Florencio de Uhagon, of 7 Ferraz, Madrid, who pointed out to me that a priest named Sbarbi, in Madrid, claimed to possess the manuscript. «Cuique suum» is an honest maxim. The account given in «The Athenæum» of April 20th, 1907, of the finding of these long lost but valuable monuments of the language is not quite accurate. The late Rev. J. G. Chester, an Oxford man, remarked to me in Rome in 1891 that, having tried to be a Basque, I ought to try to be a B.A. Esq.! Now, however, it is too late to do that, as my Baskology has been rewarded by the conferment of the degree of M.A. (honoris causa) in my Alma Mater.

EDWARD S. DODGSON.

Wolsey House, Oxford.

December 17, 1907.

