

XXIV.

They thought they heard the heavy tread
Of cavalry, but what was their surprise,
When twelve old women loaded down with thread
And cloth, filed slowly by before their eyes.
They rode in double files, those at the head,
Were dressed in blue, blue as the sunny skies,
A colour once quite pleasing to the eye,
But since the war began means fight or fly.

XXV.

About the hour when darkness greets the light,
Our heroes halted weary of their ride,
And found with ease good lodging for the night;
They were not altogether satisfied
With their position—their landlord might
Prove traitor—still they determined to confide
To him their secret, and without delay
Requested him to guide them on their way.

XXVI.

This charmed him; he at once agreed
To render aid in any way he could,
He told them frankly there was urgent need
Of great precaution; "if a neighbor should"
Said he, "drop in to night, (and I indeed
Think it most likely), then no doubt it would
Be wise and prudent just to have a care
And answer shrewdly who and what ye are."

XXVII.

This was arranged and seemed a proper plan,
By which their secret would be safely kept,
Just after taking supper, in a man
Of most gigantic form and features stepped;
Once being seated he began to scan
The Rebels closely, o'er whom there crept
The sense prophetic of approaching evil,
Which made them wish the stranger at the devil.

XXVIII.

"You are travelling, gentlemen, I suppose?"
"We are, Sir!" "which way, if the question's fair?"
(And here he blew his salamander nose)
"Government Agents, and just now we are
Buying cattle." But this did not disclose
Enough. "In these parts, there's but few to spare,
Who have you tried?" We've not applied to any,
To-morrow morning we'll apply to many.