

He tells us that he had the Emperor's authority to demand, from the different governors of Spanish America, the documents he might need for his work; ²⁴ and, as his divisions of the subject are those which naturally arise from its geography, he appears to have gone judiciously about his task. But the materials he was to use were in too crude a state to be easily manageable, and the whole subject was too wide and various for his powers. He falls, therefore, into a loose, rambling style, instead of aiming at philosophical condensation; and, far from an abridgment, which his work ought to have been, he gives us chronicling, documentary accounts of an immense extent of newly discovered country, and of the extraordinary events that had been passing there, — sometimes too short and slight to be satisfactory or interesting, and sometimes too detailed for the reader's patience. He was evidently a learned man, and maintained a correspondence with Ramusio, the Italian geographer, which could not fail to be useful to both parties. ²⁵ And he was desirous to write in a good and eloquent style, in which he sometimes succeeded. He has, therefore, on the whole, produced a series of accounts of the natural condition, the aboriginal inhab-

tiempo nos avise de otras cosas que en el se acrecientan"; from which I infer that he kept each book, or each large division of his work, open for additions, as long as he lived, and therefore that parts of it may have been written as late as 1557.

²⁴ "I have royal orders that the governors should send me a relation of whatever I shall touch in the affairs of their governments for this History." (Lib. XXXIII., Introd., MS.) I apprehend Oviedo was the first authorized Chronicler of the New World; an office which was at one period better paid than any other similar office in the kingdom, and was held, at different

times, by Herrera, Tamayo, Solís, and other writers of distinction. It ceased, I believe, with the creation of the Academy of History.

²⁵ "We owe much to those who give us notice of what we have not seen or known ourselves; as I am now indebted to a remarkable and learned man, of the illustrious Senate of Venice, called Secretary Juan Bautista Ramusio, who, hearing that I was inclined to the things of which I here treat, has, without knowing me personally, sought me for his friend, and communicated with me by letters, sending me a new geography," etc. (Lib. XXXVIII., MS.)

itants, and the political affairs, of the wide-spread Spanish possessions in America, as they stood in the middle of the sixteenth century, which is of great value as a vast repository of facts, and not wholly without merit as a composition. ²⁶

* The other considerable work of Oviedo, the * 35

²⁶ As a specimen of his manner I add the following account of Almagro, one of the early adventurers in Peru, whom the Pizarros put to death in Cuzco, after they had obtained uncontrolled power there. "Therefore hear and read all the authors you may, and compare, one by one, whatever they relate, that all men, not kings, have freely given away, and you shall surely see how there is none that can equal Almagro in this matter, and how none can be compared to him; for kings, indeed, may give and know how to give whatever pleaseth them, both cities and lands, and lordships, and other great gifts; but that a man whom yesterday we saw so poor that all he possessed was a very small matter should have a spirit sufficient for what I have related, — I hold it to be so great a thing that I know not the like of it in our own or any other time. For I myself saw, when his companion, Pizarro, came from Spain, and brought with him that body of three hundred men to Panamá, that, if Almagro had not received them, and shown them so much free hospitality with so generous a spirit, few or none of them could have escaped alive; for the land was filled with disease, and the means of living were so dear that a bushel of maize was worth two or three pesos, and an arroba of wine six or seven gold pieces. To all of them he was a father, and a brother, and a true friend; for, inasmuch as it is pleasant and grateful to some men to make gain, and to heap up and to gather together moneys and estates, even so much and more pleasant was it to him to share with others and to give away; so that the day when he gave nothing he accounted it for a day lost. And in his very face you might see the pleasure and true delight he felt when he found occasion to help him who had need. And since, after so long a fellowship and friendship as there was between these two great leaders, from the

days when their companions were few and their means small, till they saw themselves full of wealth and strength, there hath at last come forth so much discord, scandal, and death, well must it appear matter of wonder even to those who shall but hear of it, and much more to us, who knew them in their low estate, and have no less borne witness to their greatness and prosperity." (General y Natural Historia de las Indias, Lib. XLVII., MS.) Much of it is, like the preceding passage, in the true, old, rambling, moralizing, chronicling vein.

Since the preceding account of the "Historia General" of Oviedo was printed, (1849,) the whole work has been published by the Spanish Academy of History, in four rich folio volumes, Madrid, 1851-1855, edited by Don José Amador de los Rios. The Prefatory notice contains a Life of Oviedo, with an account of his works, among which are two that have been published, and should be at least mentioned. The first is "Claribalte," composed during a period when Oviedo was out of favor at court, and printed at Valencia in 1519; — a book which it is singular he should have written, because it is a Romance of Chivalry, and, in the latter part of his life, when such fictions were at the height of their favor, nobody treated them with more severity than he did. The other is an ascetic work, entitled "Reglas de la Vida," which, he says, he translated from the Tuscan, and which was printed at Seville in 1548, but which is now become so rare that Sr. Amador has never seen it, and does not determine precisely what it was, nor who was its original author. Of the works in manuscript, which, besides the two Quinquagenas, amount to six, we should, I suppose, be most curious to see the account Oviedo prepared of the occurrences and gossip at the court of Madrid during the captivity of Francis I., in 1525.

fruit of his old age, is devoted to fond recollections of his native country, and of the distinguished men he had known there. He calls it "Batallas y Quinquagenas," and it consists of a series of dialogues, in which, with little method or order, he gives gossiping accounts of the principal families that figured in Spain during the times of Ferdinand and Isabella and Charles the Fifth, mingled with anecdotes and recollections, such as — not without a simple-hearted exhibition of his own vanity — the memory of his long and busy life could furnish. It appears from the Dialogue on Cardinal Ximenes, and elsewhere, that he was employed on it as early as 1545;²⁷ but the year

1550 occurs yet more frequently among the * 36 dates of its imaginary conversations,²⁸ and it * is probable that he continued to add to it, as he did to his History, until near the end of his life, for it seems still imperfect. He died at Valladolid in 1557.

But, both during his life, and after his death, Oviedo had a formidable adversary, who, pursuing nearly the same course of inquiries respecting the New World, came almost constantly to conclusions quite opposite. This was no less a person than Bartolomé de las Casas, or Casaus, the apostle and defender of the Amer-

²⁷ "En este que estamos de 1545." *Batallas y Quinquagenas*, MS., El Cardinal Cisneros.

²⁸ As in the Dialogue on Juan de Silva, Conde de Cifuentes, he says, "En este año en que estamos 1550"; and in the Dialogue on Mendoza, Duke of Infantado, he uses the same words, as he does again in that on Pedro Fernandez de Córdoba. There is an excellent note on Oviedo in Vol. I. p. 112 of the American edition of "Ferdinand and Isabella," by my friend Mr. Prescott, to whom I am indebted for the manuscript of the *Batallas y Quinquagenas*, as well as of the *Historia*. The

"*Batallas y Quinquagenas*" are not to be confounded with a poem which Oviedo entitled "Las Quinquagenas," on the distinguished Spaniards of all times, and which he completed in 1556, in one hundred and fifty stanzas of fifty lines each, or seven thousand five hundred lines in all; — an error into which I fell in the first edition of this work, owing chiefly to an obscurity in the account of the two *Quinquagenas* by Clemencin, in his *Elogio* on Queen Isabella. It is much to be desired that both should be published, and we can have no accurate idea of them till they are.

ican Indians,²⁹ — a man who would have been remarkable in any age of the world, and who does not seem yet to have gathered in the full harvest of his honors. He was born in Seville, probably in 1474; and, in 1502, having gone through a course of studies at Salamanca, embarked for the Indies, where his father, who had been there with Columbus nine years earlier, had already accumulated a decent fortune.

The attention of the young man was at once drawn to the condition of the natives, from the circumstance that one of them, given to his father by Columbus, had been attached to his own person as a slave, while he was still at the University; and he was not slow to learn, on his arrival in Hispaniola, that their gentle natures and slight frames had already been subjected, in the mines and in other forms of toil, to a servitude so harsh that the original inhabitants of the island were rapidly wasting away under the severity of their labors. From this moment he devoted his life to their emancipation. In 1510 he took holy orders, and continued as a priest, and, for a short time, as Bishop of Chiapa, nearly forty years, to teach, strengthen, and console, the suffering flock committed to his charge. Six times, at least, he crossed the Atlantic, in order to persuade the government of Charles the Fifth to ameliorate their condition, and always with more or less * success. At last, but not until * 37 1547, when he was above seventy years old, he established himself at Valladolid, in Spain, where he passed the remainder of his serene old age, giving it freely to the great cause to which he had devoted the

²⁹ The family was originally French, spelling its name Casaus; but it appears in Spanish history as early as 1253, in the Repartimiento of Seville. (Zuñiga, *Anales de Sevilla*, 1677, p. 75.) In the

Chronicle of John II. its descendants are called Las Casas, and Fr. Bartolomé wrote his name both ways. Later they reverted to the original spelling. Gu-diel, *Familia de los Girones*, 1577, f. 98.

freshness of his youth. He died, while on a visit of business, at Madrid, in 1566, at the advanced age, as is commonly supposed, of ninety-two.³⁰

Among the principal opponents of his benevolence were Sepúlveda, — one of the leading men of letters and casuists of the time in Spain, — and Oviedo, who, from his connection with the mines and his share in the government of different parts of the newly discovered countries, had an interest directly opposite to the one Las Casas defended. These two persons, with large means and a wide influence to sustain them, intrigued, wrote, and toiled against him, in every way in their power. But his was not a spirit to be daunted by opposition or deluded by sophistry and intrigue; and when, in 1519, in a discussion with Sepúlveda concerning the Indians, held in the presence of the young and proud Emperor Charles the Fifth, Las Casas said, "It is quite certain that, speaking with all the respect and reverence due to so great a sovereign, I would not, save in the way of duty and obedience as a subject, go from the place where I now stand to the opposite corner of this room, to serve your Majesty, unless I believed I should at the same time serve God,"³¹

³⁰ There is a valuable life of Las Casas in Quintana, "Vidas de Españoles Célebres" (Madrid, 1833, 12mo, Tom. III. pp. 255-510). The seventh article in the Appendix, concerning the connection of Las Casas with the slave-trade, will be read with particular interest; because, by materials drawn from unpublished documents of unquestionable authenticity, it makes it certain that, although at one time Las Casas favored what had been begun earlier, — the transportation, I mean, of negroes to the West Indies, in order to relieve the Indians, — as other good men in his time favored it, he did so under the impression that, according to the law of nations, the negroes thus brought to America were both rightful captives

taken by the Portuguese in war and rightful slaves. But afterwards he changed his mind on the subject. He declared "the captivity of the negroes to be as unjust as that of the Indians," — "ser tan injusto el cautiverio de los negros como el de los Indios," — and even expressed a fear that, though he had fallen into the error of favoring the importation of black slaves into America from ignorance and good-will, he might, after all, fail to stand excused for it before the Divine Justice. Quintana, Tom. III. p. 471.

³¹ Quintana, Españoles Célebres, Tom. III. p. 321. I think, but am not sure, that Quintana does not say Las Casas was made a chaplain of Charles V. out of personal regard; — a circumstance

— when he said this, he uttered a sentiment * that really governed his life, and constituted * 38 the basis of the great power he exercised. His works are pervaded by it. The earliest of them, called "A very Short Account of the Ruin of the Indies," was written in 1542,³² and dedicated to the Prince, afterwards Philip the Second; — a tract in which, no doubt, the sufferings and wrongs of the Indians are much overstated by the indignant zeal of its author, but still one whose expositions are founded in truth, and by their fervor awakened all Europe to a sense of the injustice they set forth. Other short treatises followed, written with similar spirit and power, especially those in reply to Sepúlveda; but none was so often reprinted, either at home or abroad, as the first,³³ and none ever produced so deep and solemn an effect on the world. They were all collected and published in 1552; and, besides being translated into other languages at the time, an edition in Spanish, and a French version of the whole, with two more treatises than were contained in the first collection, appeared at Paris in 1822, prepared by Llorente.

mentioned by Argensola, who, it should be added, gives a fair and interesting account of the Apostle to the Indians, so far as his History of Aragon comes down. Anales de Aragon, Tom. I. 1630, p. 547.

³² Quintana (p. 413, note) doubts when this famous treatise was written; but Las Casas himself says, in the opening of his "Brevisima Relacion," that it was written in 1542, and at the end it is noted as finished at Valencia, December 8, 1542; an "Adicion" or postscript following, which is dated 1546 in the copy I use.

³³ This important tract continued long to be printed separately, both at home and abroad. I use a copy of it in double columns, Spanish and Italian, Venice, 1643, 12mo; but, like the rest, the "Brevisima Relacion" may be consulted in an edition of the Works of

Las Casas by Llorente, which appeared at Paris in 1822, in 2 vols., 8vo, in the original Spanish, almost at the same time with his translation of them into French. It should be noticed, perhaps, that Llorente's version is not always strict, and that the two new treatises he imputes to Las Casas, as well as the one on the Authority of Kings, are not absolutely proved to be his.

The translation referred to above appeared, in fact, the same year, and at the end of it an "Apologie de Las Casas," by Grégoire, with letters of Funes and Mier, and notes of Llorente to sustain it, — all to defend Las Casas on the subject of the slave-trade; but Quintana, as we have seen, has gone to the original documents, and leaves no doubt, both that Las Casas once favored it, and that he altered his mind afterwards.

The great work of Las Casas, however, still remains unedited,— a General History of the Indies from 1492 to 1520, begun by him in 1527 and finished in 1561, but of which he ordered that no portion should be published within forty years of his death.

* 39 * Like his other works, it shows marks of haste and carelessness, and is written in a rambling style; but its value, notwithstanding his too fervent zeal for the Indians, is great. He had been personally acquainted with many of the early discoverers and conquerors, and at one time possessed the papers of Columbus, and a large mass of other important documents, which are now lost. He says he had known Cortés “when he was so low and humble, that he besought favor from the meanest servant of Diego Velasquez”; and he knew him afterwards, he tells us, when, in his pride of place at the court of the Emperor, he ventured to jest about the pretty corsair’s part he had played in the affairs of Montezuma.³⁴ He knew, too, Gomara and Oviedo, and gives at large his reasons for differing from them. In short, his book, divided into three parts, is a great repository, to which Herrera, and through him all the historians of the Indies since, have resorted for materials; and without which the history of the earliest period of the Spanish settlements in America cannot even now be properly written.³⁵

But it is not necessary to go further into an examina-

³⁴ “Todo esto me dixo el mismo Cortés con otras cosas cerca dello, despues de Marques, en la villa de Monçon, estando allí celebrando cortes el Emperador, año de mil y quinientos y quarenta y dos, riendo y mofando con estas formales palabras, a la mi fé andubé por allí como un gentil cosario.” (Historia General de las Indias, Lib. III. c. 115,

MS.) It may be worth noting, that 1542, the year when Cortés made this scandalous speech, was the year in which Las Casas wrote his *Brevisima Relacion*.

³⁵ For a notice of all the works of Las Casas, see Quintana, *Vidas*, Tom. III. pp. 507-510.

tion of the old accounts of the discovery and conquest of Spanish America, though there are many more which, like those we have already considered, are partly books of travel through countries full of wonders, partly chronicles of adventures as strange as those of romance; frequently running into idle and loose details, but as frequently fresh, picturesque, and manly, in their tone and coloring, and almost always striking from the facts they record and the glimpses they give of manners and character. Among those that might be added are the stories by Vaca of his shipwreck and ten years’ captivity in Florida, from 1527 to 1537, and his subsequent government * for three years of the Rio de la Plata;³⁶ the * 40 short account of the conquest of Peru, written by Francisco de Xerez, Secretary of Francisco de Pizarro,³⁷ and the ampler one, of the same wild achievements, which Augustin de Çarate began on the spot, and was prevented by Carvajal, an officer of Gonzalo de Pizarro, from finishing till after his return home.³⁸

³⁶ The two works of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, namely, his “*Naufragios*,” and his “*Comentarios y Sucesos de su Gobierno en el Rio de la Plata*,” were first printed in 1555, and are to be found in Barcia, *Historiadores Primitivos*, Tom. I., and in the *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, Tom. XXII., 1852. They are wild and romantic accounts of extraordinary adventures and sufferings, particularly the *Naufragios*, where (Chap. XXII.) the author seems to think he not only cured the sick by divine interposition, but that, in one instance, he raised the dead. But, however this may be, he was evidently a man of great courage and constancy, and of an elevated and generous nature.

³⁷ The work of Francisco de Xerez, “*Conquista del Peru*,” written by order of Francisco Pizarro, was first published in 1534 and 1547, and is to be found in Ramusio, (Venezia, ed. Giunti, folio,

Tom. III.,) and in Barcia’s collection (Tom. III.). It ends in Barcia with some poor verses in defence of Xerez, by a friend, which are ampler and more important in the original edition, and contain notices of his life. They are reprinted in the *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, Tom. XXVI., 1853, and Gayangos conjectures them to have been written by Oviedo.

³⁸ “*Historia del Descubrimiento y Conquista del Peru*,” first printed in 1555, and several times since. It is in Barcia, Tom. III., and in the *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, Tom. XXVI., 1853, and was translated into Italian by Ulloa. Çarate was sent out by Charles V. to examine into the state of the revenues of Peru, and brings down his accounts as late as the overthrow of Gonzalo Pizarro. See an excellent notice of Çarate at the end of Mr. Prescott’s last chapter on the Conquest of Peru.

But they may all be passed over, as of less consequence than those we have noticed, which are quite sufficient to give an idea, both of the nature of their class and the course it followed, — a class much resembling the old chronicles, but yet one that announces the approach of those more regular forms of history for which it furnishes abundant materials.

Pedro Cieza de Leon, also, who lived above seventeen years in Peru, published at Seville, in 1553, an important work on that country, entitled "Primera Parte de la Chronica del Peru," intending to complete and publish it in three other parts; but died in 1560, *re infecta*, at the age of forty-two. The first part is reprinted in the Biblioteca

de Autores Españoles, Tom. XXVI., and the MS. of the *third* part is said to be in the possession of James Lenox, Esq., New York. Gayangos notices, also, a small publication in eight leaves, in the British Museum, entitled *La Conquista del Peru*, which he thinks is like a gazette, and may have been the first publication on the subject.

* CHAPTER VII.

* 41

THEATRE. — INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH AND THE INQUISITION — MYSTERIES. — CASTILLEJO, OLIVA, JUAN DE PARIS, AND OTHERS. — POPULAR DEMANDS FOR DRAMATIC LITERATURE. — LOPE DE RUEDA. — HIS LIFE, COMEDIAS, COLOQUIOS, PASOS, AND DIALOGUES IN VERSE. — HIS CHARACTER AS FOUNDER OF THE POPULAR DRAMA IN SPAIN. — JUAN DE TIMONEDA.

THE theatre in Spain, as in most other countries of modern Europe, was early called to contend with formidable difficulties. Dramatic representations there, perhaps more than elsewhere, had been for centuries in the hands of the Church; and the Church was not willing to give them up, especially for such secular and irreligious purposes as we have seen were apparent in the plays of Naharro. The Inquisition, therefore, already arrogating to itself powers not granted by the state, but yielded by a sort of general consent, interfered betimes. After the publication of the Seville edition of the "Propaladia," in 1520, — but how soon afterward we do not know, — the representation of its dramas was forbidden, and the interdict was continued till 1573.¹ Of the few pieces written in the early part of the reign of Charles the Fifth, nearly all, except those on strictly religious subjects, were laid under the ban of the Church; several, like the "Orfea," 1534, and the "Custodia," 1541, being now known to have

¹ In the edition of Madrid, 1573, 18mo, we are told, "La Propaladia estava prohibida en estos reynos, años avia"; and Martinez de la Rosa (Obras, Paris, 1827, 12mo, Tom. II. p. 382) says that this prohibition was laid soon after 1520, and not removed till August,

1573. The period is important; but I suspect the authority of Martinez de la Rosa, for its termination is merely the permission to print an edition, which is dated 21st August, 1573; an edition, too, which is, after all, expurgated severely.