

- Peralta.* But what are yours so lined and stuffed withal,
That thus they seem so very smooth and tight?
- Fuentes.* Of that we 'll say but little. An old mantle,
And a cloak still older and more spoiled,
Do vainly struggle from my hose t' escape.
- Peralta.* To my mind they were used to better ends
If sewed up for a horse's blanket, sir.
- Fuentes.* But others stuff in plenty of clean straw
And rushes to make out a shapely form—
- Peralta.* Proving that they are more or less akin
To beasts of burden.
- Fuentes.* But they wear, at least,
Such gallant hosiery that things of taste
May well be added to fit out their dress.
- Peralta.* No doubt the man that dresses thus in straw
May tastefully put on a saddle too.²⁸

* 55 * In all the forms of the drama attempted by
Lope de Rueda, the main purpose is evidently
to amuse a popular audience. But, to do this, his
theatrical resources were very small and humble. "In
the time of this celebrated Spaniard," says Cervantes,

²⁸ *Per.* Señor Fuentes, que mudanza
Habeis hecho en el calzado,
Con que andais tan abultado?
Fuent. Señor, calzas á la usanza.
Per. Pense qu' era verdugado.
Fuent. Pues yo d' ellas no me corro.
Que han de ser como las vuestas?
Per. Hermano, ya no usan d' esas.
Mas que les hechais de aforro,
Que aun se paran tan tiesas?
Fuent. D' eso poco: un sayo viejo
Y toda una ruin capa,
Que á esta calza no escapa.
Per. Pues, si van á mi consejo,
Hecharan una gualdrapa.
Fuent. Y aun otros mandan poner
Copia de paja y esparto,
Porque les abulten harto.
Per. Esos deben de tener
De bestias quizi algun quarto.
Fuent. Pondrase qualquier alhaja
Por traer calza gallarda.
Per. Cierito yo no sé que aguarda.
Quien va vestido de paja
De hacerse alguna albarda.

I do not know that this dialogue is
printed anywhere but at the end of the
edition of the Comedias, 1576. It refers
evidently to the broad-bottomed stuffed
hose or boots, then coming into fashion;
such as the daughter of Sancho, in her
vanity, when she heard her father was
governor of Barrataria, wanted to see
him wear; and such as Don Carlos, ac-
cording to the account of Thuanus, wore,

when he used to hide in their strange
recesses the pistols that alarmed Philip
II.;—"caligis, quæ amplissimæ de
more gentis in usu sunt." They were
forbidden by a royal ordinance in 1623.
See D. Quixote, (Parte II. c. 50.) with
two amusing stories told in the notes
of Pellicer and Thuanus Historiarum,
Lib. XLI., at the beginning. They
became fashionable in other parts of
Europe, as the whole Spanish costume,
hat, feathers, cloak, etc., did from the
spread of Spanish power and *prestige*;
that is, precisely for the same reasons
that the French dress and fashions have
spread since the time of Louis XIV.
Figueroa (Plaça Universal, 1615, ff. 226,
227) has an amusing article about
tailors, in which he claims precedence
for the skill and taste of those in Ma-
drid, and shows how their supremacy
was acknowledged in France and Italy.
That it was acknowledged in England
in the time of Elizabeth and James I.
we very well know. Roger Ascham,
in his "Schoolmaster," talks of the
very "huge hose" here referred to, as
an "outrage" to be rebuked and re-
pressed, like that of the "monstrous
hats," etc.,—all Spanish.

recalling the gay season of his own youth,²⁹ "the whole
apparatus of a manager was contained in a large sack,
and consisted of four white shepherd's jackets, turned
up with leather, gilt and stamped; four beards and
false sets of hanging locks; and four shepherd's crooks,
more or less. The plays were colloquies, like eclogues,
between two or three shepherds and a shepherdess,
fitted up and extended with two or three interludes,
whose personages were sometimes a negress, some-
times a bully, sometimes a fool, and sometimes a Bis-
cayan;—for all these four parts, and many others,
Lope himself performed with the greatest excellence
and skill that can be imagined. . . . The theatre
was composed of four benches, arranged in a square,
with five or six boards laid across them, that were
thus raised about four palms from the ground. . . .
The furniture of the theatre was an old blanket drawn
aside by two cords, making what they call the tiring-
room, behind which were the musicians, who sang old
ballads without a guitar."

The place where this rude theatre was set up was
a public square, and the performances occurred when-
ever an audience could be collected; apparently both
forenoon and afternoon, for, at the end of one of his
plays, Lope de Rueda invites his "hearers only to eat
their dinner and return to the square,"³⁰ and witness
another.

His four longer dramas have some resem-
blance to portions * of the earlier English com- * 56
edy, which, at precisely the same period, was
beginning to show itself in pieces such as "Ralph
Royster Doyster," and "Gammer Gurton's Needle."

²⁹ Comedias, Prólogo.

³⁰ "Auditores, no hagais sino comer, y dad la vuelta á la plaza."

They are divided into what are called scenes, — the shortest of them consisting of six, and the longest of ten; but in these scenes the place sometimes changes, and the persons often, — a circumstance of little consequence, where the whole arrangements implied no real attempt at scenic illusion.³¹ Much of the success of all depended on the part played by the fools, or *simples*, who, in most of his dramas, are important personages, almost constantly on the stage;³² while something is done by mistakes in language, arising from vulgar ignorance or from foreign dialects, like those of negroes and Moors. Each piece opens with a brief explanatory prologue, and ends with a word of jest and apology to the audience. Naturalness of thought, the most easy, idiomatic, purely Castilian turns of expression, a good-humored, free gayety, a strong sense of the ridiculous, and a happy imitation of the manners and tone of common life, are the prominent characteristics of these, as they are of all the rest of his shorter efforts. He was, therefore, on the right road, and was, in consequence, afterwards justly reckoned, both by Cervantes and Lope de Vega, to be the true founder of the popular national theatre.³³

The earliest follower of Lope de Rueda was his friend and editor, Juan de Timoneda, a bookseller of Valencia, who certainly flourished during the middle and latter part of the sixteenth century, and probably

³¹ In the fifth *escena* of the "Eufemia," the place changes, when Valiano comes in. Indeed, it is evident that Lope de Rueda did not know the meaning of the word *scene*, or did not employ it aright.

³² The first traces of these *simples*, who were afterwards expanded into the *graciosos*, is to be found in the *parvos* of Gil Vicente.

³³ Cervantes, in the *Prólogo* already cited, calls him "el gran Lope de Rueda,"

and, when speaking of the Spanish Comedias, treats him as "el primero que en España las sacó de mantillas y las puso en toldo y vistió de gala y apariencia." This was in 1615; and Cervantes spoke from his own knowledge and memory. In 1620, in the *Prólogo* to the thirteenth volume of his Comedias, (Madrid, 4to,) Lope de Vega says, "Las comedias no eran mas antiguas que Rueda, á quien oyeron muchos, que hoy viven."

died in extreme old age, soon after the year *1597.³⁴ His thirteen or fourteen pieces that *57 were printed pass under various names, and have a considerable variety in their character; the most popular in their tone being the best. Four are called "Pasos," and four "Farsas," — all much alike. Two are called "Comedias," one of which, the "Aurelia," written in short verses, is divided into five *jornadas*, and has an *intróito*, after the manner of Naharro; while the other, the "Cornelia," is merely divided into seven scenes, and written in prose, after the manner of Lope de Rueda. Besides these, we have what, in the present sense of the word, is for the first time called an "Entremes"; a Tragicomedia, which is a mixture of mythology and modern history; a religious Auto, on the subject of the Lost Sheep; and a translation, or rather an imitation, of the "Menæchmi" of Plautus. In all of them, however, he seems to have relied for success on a spirited, farcical dialogue, like that of Lope de Rueda; and all were, no doubt, written to be acted in the public squares, to which, more than once, they make allusion.³⁵

The "Cornelia," first printed in 1559, is somewhat confused in its story. We have in it a young lady, taken, when a child, by the Moors, and returned, when grown up, to the neighborhood of her friends, without knowing who she is; a foolish fellow, deceived by his wife, and yet not without shrewdness enough to make much merriment; and Pasquin, partly a quack doctor,

³⁴ Ximeno, *Escritores de Valencia*, Tom. I. p. 72, and Fuster, *Biblioteca Valenciana*, Tom. I. p. 161. But best in Barreira y Leirado *ad verb.*

³⁵ In the *Prologue* to the *Cornelia*, one of the speakers says that one of the principal personages of the piece lives

in Valencia, "in this house which you see," he adds, pointing the spectators picturesquely, and no doubt with comic effect, to some house they could all see. A similar jest about another of the personages is repeated a little further on.

partly a magician, and wholly a rogue; who, with five or six other characters, make rather a superabundance of materials for so short a drama. Some of the dialogues are full of life; and the development of two or three of the characters is good, especially that of Cornalla, the clown; but the most prominent personage, perhaps, — the magician, — is taken, in a considerable degree, from the "Negromante" of Ariosto, which was represented at Ferrara about thirty years earlier, and proves that *Timoneda had some scholarship, if not always a ready invention.³⁶

The "Menennos," published in the same year with the Cornelia, is further proof of his learning. It is in prose, and taken from Plautus; but with large changes. The plot is laid in Seville; the play is divided into fourteen scenes, after the example of Lope de Rueda; and the manners are altogether Spanish. There is even a talk of Lazarillo de Tórmes, when speaking of an unprincipled young servant.³⁷ But it shows frequently the same free and natural dialogue, fresh from common life, that is found in his master's dramas; and it can be read with pleasure throughout, as an amusing *rifacimento*.³⁸

The Paso, however, of "The Blind Beggars and the Boy" is, like the other short pieces, more characteristic of the author and of the little school to which he belonged. It is written in short, familiar verses, and opens with an address to the audience by Palillos, the boy, asking for employment, and setting forth his own good qualities, which he illustrates by showing how

³⁶ "Con privilegio. Comedia llamada Cornelia, nuevamente compuesta, por Juan de Timoneda. Es muy sentida, graciosa, y vozijada. Año 1559." 8vo.

³⁷ It is in the twelfth scene. "Es el mas agudo rapaz del mundo, y es

hermano de Lazarillo de Tórmes, el que tuvo trezientos y cincuenta años."

³⁸ "Con privilegio. La Comedia de los Menennos, traduzida por Juan Timoneda, y puesta en gracioso estilo y elegantes sentencias. Año 1559." 8vo.

ingeniously he had robbed a blind beggar who had been his master. At this instant, Martin Alvarez, the blind beggar in question, approaches on one side of a square where the scene passes, chanting his prayers, as is still the wont of such persons in the streets of Spanish cities; while on the other side of the same square approaches another of the same class, called Pero Gomez, similarly employed. Both offer their prayers in exchange for alms, and are particularly earnest to obtain custom, as it is Christmas eve. Martin Alvarez begins: —

What pious Christian here
Will bid me pray
A blessed prayer,
Quite singular
And new, I say,
In honor of our Lady dear?

* On hearing the well-known voice, Palillos, the * 59 boy, is alarmed, and, at first, talks of escaping; but, recollecting that there is no need of this, as the beggar is blind, he merely stands still, and his old master goes on: —

O, bid me pray! O, bid me pray! —
The very night is holy time, —
O, bid me pray the blessed prayer,
The birth of Christ in rhyme!

But as nobody offers an alms, he breaks out again: —

Good heavens! the like was never known!
The thing is truly fearful grown;
For I have cried,
Till my throat is dried,
At every corner on my way,
And not a soul heeds what I say
The people, I begin to fear,
Are grown too careful of their gear,
For honest prayers to pay.

The other blind beggar, Pero Gomez, now comes up and strikes in: —

Who will ask for the blind man's prayer?
 O, gentle souls that hear my word!
 Give but an humble alms,
 And I will sing the holy psalms
 For which Pope Clement's bulls afford
 Indulgence full, indulgence rare,

And add, besides, the blessed prayer
 For the birth of our blessed Lord.³⁹

The two blind men, hearing each other, enter into conversation, and, believing themselves to be * 60 alone, Alvarez * relates how he had been robbed by his unprincipled attendant, and Gomez explains how he avoids such misfortunes by always carrying the ducats he begs sewed into his cap. Palillos, learning this, and not well pleased with the character he has just received, comes very quietly up to Gomez, knocks off his cap, and escapes with it. Gomez thinks it is his blind friend who has played him the trick, and asks civilly to have his cap back again. The friend denies, of course, all knowledge of it; Gomez insists; and the dialogue ends, as others of its class do, with a quarrel and a fight, to the great amusement, no doubt, of audiences such as were collected in the public squares of Valencia or Seville.⁴⁰

³⁹ Devotos cristianos, quien
 Manda rezar
 Una oracion singular
 Nueva de nuestra Señora?

Mandadme rezar, pues que es
 Noche santa,
 La oracion segun se canta
 Del nacimiento de Cristo.
 Jesus! nunca tal he visto,
 Cosa es esta que me espanta:
 Seca tengo la garganta
 De pregonos
 Que voy dando por cantones,
 Y nada no me aprovecha:
 Es la gente tan estrecha,
 Que no cuida de oraciones.

Quien manda sus devociones,
 Noble gente,
 Que rece devotamente
 Los salmos de penitencia,
 Por los cuales indulgencia
 Otorgo el Papa Clemente?

La oracion del nacimiento
 De Christo.

L. F. Moratin, Obras, Madrid, 1830, 8vo, Tom.
 I. p. 648.

⁴⁰ This Paso—true to the manners
 of the times, as we can see from a similar
 scene in the "Diablo Cojuelo,"
 Tranco VI.—is reprinted by L. F.
 Moratin, (Obras, 8vo, Madrid, 1830,
 Tom. I. Parte II. p. 644.) who gives
 (Parte I. Catálogo, Nos. 95, 96, 106—
 118) the best account of all the works
 of Timoneda. The habit of singing
 popular poetry of all kinds in the streets
 has been common, from the days of the
 Archpriest Hita (Copia 1488) to our
 own times. I have often listened to it,
 and possess many of the ballads and
 other verses still paid for by an alms,
 as they were in this Paso of Timoneda.

In one of the plays of Cervantes,—
 that of "Pedro de Urdemalas,"—the
 hero is introduced enacting the part of
 a blind beggar, and is advertising him-
 self by his chant, just as the beggar in
 Timoneda does:—

The prayer of the secret soul I know,
 That of Pancras the blessed of old;
 The prayer of Acacius and Quirce;
 One for chilblains, that come from the cold,
 One for jaundice that yellows the skin,
 And for scrofula working within.

The lines in the original are not con-
 secutive, but those I have selected are
 as follows:—

Se la del anima sola,
 Y se la de San Pancracio,
 La de San Quirce y Acacio,
 Se la de los sabauones,
 La de curar la tericia
 Y resolver lamparones.

Comedias, Madrid, 1615, 4to, f. 207.