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* CHAPTER VIII.

THEATRE. — FOLLOWERS OF LOPE DE RUEDA. — ALONSO DE LA VEGA. — CISNEROS. — SEVILLE. — MALARA. — CUEVA. — ZEPEDA. — VALENCIA. — VIRUES. — TRANSLATIONS AND IMITATIONS OF THE ANCIENT CLASSICAL DRAMA. — VILLALOBOS. — OLIVA. — BOSCAN. — ABRIL. — BERMUDEZ. — ARGENSOLA. — STATE OF THE THEATRE.

Two of the persons attached to Lope de Rueda's company were, like himself, authors as well as actors. One of them, Alonso de la Vega, died at Valencia as early as 1566, in which year three of his dramas, all in prose, and one of them directly imitated from his master, were published by Timoneda.¹ The other, Alonso Cisneros, lived as late as 1579, but it does not seem certain that any dramatic work of his now exists.² Neither of them was equal to Lope de Rueda or Juan de Timoneda; but the four taken together produced an impression on the theatrical taste of their times which was never afterwards wholly forgotten or lost, — a fact of which the shorter dramatic compositions that have been favorites on the Spanish stage ever since give decisive proof.

But dramatic representations in Spain between 1560 and 1590 were by no means confined to what was done by Lope de Rueda, his friends, and his strolling company of actors. Other efforts were made in various places, and upon other principles; sometimes with more success than theirs, sometimes with less. In Seville, a good deal seems to have been done. It is

¹ C. Pellicer, *Origen de la Comedia*, Tom. I. p. 111; Tom. II. p. 18; with L. F. Moratin, *Obras*, Tom. I. Parte II. p. 638, and his *Catálogo*, Nos. 100, 104, and 105.

² C. Pellicer, *Origen*, Tom. I. p. 116; Tom. II. p. 30.

probable the plays of Malara or Mal Lara, a native of that city, were represented there during this period; but they are now all *lost.³ Those of *62 Juan de la Cueva, on the contrary, have been partly preserved, and merit notice for many reasons, but especially because most of them are historical. They were represented — at least, the few that still remain — in 1579, and the years immediately subsequent; but were not printed till 1588, and then only a single volume appeared.⁴ Each of them is divided into four *jornadas*, or acts, and they are written in various measures, including *terza rima*, blank verse, and sonnets, but chiefly in *redondillas* and octave stanzas. Several are on national subjects, like "The Children of Lara," "Bernardo del Carpio," and "The Siege of Zamora"; others are on subjects from ancient history, such as Ajax, Virginia, and Mutius Scævola; some are on fictitious stories, like "The Old Man in Love," and "The Decapitated," which last is founded on a Moorish adventure; and one, at least, is on a great event of times then recent, "The Sack of Rome" by the Constable Bourbon. All, however, are crude in their structure, and unequal in their execution. The Sack of Rome, for instance, is merely a succession of dialogues thrown together in the loosest manner, to set

³ Navarrete, *Vida de Cervantes*, p. 410. Mal Lara will be noticed hereafter, (Period II. Chap. XXXIX.) but here it may be well to mention that the year before his death he published an account of the reception of Philip II. at Seville in May, 1570, when Philip visited that city after the war of the Moriscos. Mal Lara prepared the inscriptions, Latin and Spanish, used to explain the multitudinous allegorical figures that constituted a great part of the show on the occasion, and printed them, and everything else that could illustrate the occasion, in his "Recivi-

miento que hizo la muy leal Ciudad de Sevilla á la C. R. M. del Rey Felipe N. S.," etc. (Sevilla, 1570, 18mo, ff. 181); — a curious little volume, sometimes amusing from the hints it gives about Philip II., Ferdinand Columbus, Lebrixa, etc.; but oftener from the general description of the city or the particular accounts of the ceremonies of the occasion, — all in choice Castilian.

⁴ L. F. Moratin, *Obras*, Tom. I. Parte I., *Catálogo*, Nos. 132–139, 142–145, 147, and 150. Martinez de la Rosa, *Obras*, Paris, 1827, 12mo, Tom. II. pp. 167, etc.

forth the progress of the Imperial arms, from the siege of Rome in May, 1527, to the coronation of Charles the Fifth at Bologna, in February, 1530; and though the picture of the outrages at Rome is not without an air of truth, there is little truth in other respects; the Spaniards being made to carry off all the glory.⁵

"El Infamador," or The Calumniator, sets forth, in a different tone, the story of a young lady who * 63 refuses the * love of a dissolute young man, and is, in consequence, accused by him of murder and other crimes, and condemned to death, but is rescued by preternatural power, while her accuser suffers in her stead. It is almost throughout a revolting picture; the fathers of the hero and heroine being each made to desire the death of his own child, while the whole is rendered absurd by the not unusual mixture of heathen mythology and modern manners. Of poetry, which is occasionally found in Cueva's other dramas, there is in this play no trace, though there are passages of comic spirit; and so carelessly is it written, that there is no division of the acts into scenes.⁶ Indeed, it seems difficult to understand how several of his twelve or fourteen dramas should have been brought into practical shape and represented at all. It is probable they were merely spoken as consecutive dialogues, to bring out their respective stories, without any attempt at theatrical illusion; a conjecture which receives confirmation from the fact that nearly all of them are announced, on their titles, as having been

⁵ "El Saco de Roma" is reprinted in Ochoa, Teatro Español, Paris, 1838, 8vo, Tom. I. p. 251.

⁶ "El Infamador" is reprinted in Ochoa, Tom. I. p. 264. The character

of Leucino, in this "Comedia," is sometimes supposed to have suggested that of Don Juan to Tirso de Molina; but the resemblance, I think, does not justify the conjecture.

represented in the garden of a certain Doña Elvira at Seville.⁷

The two plays of Joaquin Romero de Zepeda, of Badajoz, which were printed at Seville in 1582, are somewhat different from those of Cueva. One, "The Metamorfosea," is in the nature of the old dramatic pastorals, but is divided into three short *jornadas*, or acts. It is a trial of wits and love, between three shepherds and three shepherdesses, who are constantly at cross purposes with each other, but are at last reconciled and united; — all except one shepherd, who had originally refused to love anybody, and one shepherdess, Belisena, who, after being cruel to one of her lovers, and slighted by another, is finally rejected by the rejected of all. The other play, called "La Comedia Salvage," is taken in its first two acts from the well-known dramatic novel of * "Ces- * 64 tina"; the last act being filled with atrocities of Zepeda's own invention. It obtains its name from the Salvages or wild men, who figure in it, as such personages did in the old romances of chivalry and the old English drama, and is as strange and rude as its title implies. Neither of these pieces, however, can have done anything of consequence for the advancement of the drama at Seville, though each contains passages of flowing and apt verse, and occasional turns of thought that deserve to be called graceful.⁸

⁷ One of the plays, not represented in the Huerta de Doña Elvira, is represented "en el Corral de Don Juan," and another in the Atarazanas, — Arsenal, or Ropewalks. None of them, I suppose, appeared on a public theatre.

⁸ These two pieces are in "Obras de Joaquin Romero de Zepeda, Vezino de Badajoz," (Sevilla, 1582, 4to, ff. 130 and 118,) and are reprinted by Ochoa. The opening of the second *jornada* of

The Metamorfosea may be cited for its pleasant and graceful tone of poetry, — lyrical, however, rather than dramatic, — and its air of the olden time. Another play found by Schack in MS. is dated 1626, and implies that Zepeda was long a writer for the theatre. (Nachträge, 1854, p. 59.) Other authors living in Seville at about the same period are mentioned by La Cueva in his "Exemplar Poético" (Se-

During the same period, there was at Valencia, as well as at Seville, a poetical movement in which the drama shared, and in which, I think, Lope de Vega, an exile in Valencia for several years, about 1585, took part. At any rate, his friend, Cristóval de Virues, of whom he often speaks, and who was born there in 1550, was among those who then gave an impulse to the theatrical taste of his native city. He claims to have first divided Spanish dramas into three *jornadas* or acts, and Lope de Vega assents to the claim; but they were both mistaken, for we now know that such a division was made by Francisco de Avendaño, not later than 1553, when Virues was but three years old.⁹

Only five of the plays of Virues, all in verse, are extant; and these, though supposed to have been written as early as 1579–1581, were not printed till 1609, when Lope de Vega had already given its full development and character to the popular theatre; so that it is not improbable some of the dramas of Virues, as printed, may have been more or less altered and accommodated to the standard then considered as settled by the genius of his friend. Two of them, the “Cassandra” and the “Marcela,” are on subjects apparently of the Valencian poet’s own invention, and are extremely wild and extravagant; in “El Átila Furioso” above fifty persons come to an untimely end, without reckoning the crew of a galley who perish in the flames for the diversion of the tyrant and his followers; and in the “Semíramis,”¹⁰ the

dano, Parnaso Español, Tom. VIII. p. 60):—

Los Sevillanos cómicos, Guevara,
Gutiérrez de Cetina, Cozar, Fuentes,
El ingenioso Ortíz;—

who adds that there were *otros muchos*, many more;—but they are all lost.

Some of them, from his account, wrote in the manner of the ancients; and perhaps Malara and Megia are the persons he refers to.

⁹ See L. F. Moratin, Catálogo, No. 84.

¹⁰ The “Semíramis” was printed at

subject is so handled that when Calderon used it again in his two plays entitled “La Hija del Aire,” he could not help casting the cruel light of his own poetical genius on the clumsy work of his predecessor. All four of them are absurd.

The “Elisa Dido” is better, and may be regarded as an effort to elevate the drama. It is divided into five acts, and observes the unities, though Virues can hardly have comprehended what was afterwards considered as their technical meaning. Its plot, invented by himself, and little connected with the stories found in Virgil or the old Spanish chronicles, supposes the Queen of Carthage to have died by her own hand for a faithful attachment to the memory of Sichæus, and to avoid a marriage with Iarbas. It has no division into scenes, and each act is burdened with a chorus. In short, it is an imitation of the ancient Greek masters; and as some of the lyrical portions, as well as parts of the dialogue, are not unworthy the talent of the author of the “Monserrate,”* it * 66 is, for the age in which it appeared, a remarkable composition. But it lacks a good development of the characters, as well as life and poetical warmth in

Leipzig in 1858, but published in London by Williams and Norgate. Its editor, whose name is not given, has in this rendered good service to early Spanish literature; but if, by his citation of Schack’s authority in the preface, he desires to have it understood that that eminent critic concurs with him in regarding this wild play as a work of “extraordinary merit and value,” I think he can hardly have understood Schack’s criticism on it (Dramat. Lit., Vol. I. p. 296). Certainly he had not seen the original and only edition of Virues, 1609; and, from the note at the end of his list of *errata*, he does not appear always to comprehend the text he publishes. For, if he had printed “is” (Jorn. III. v. 690) with a

capital letter, as Virues did, he would have found that it was the river “Is,” or the city “Is” on its banks, both mentioned by Herodotus, (Lib. I. c. 179,) near which was the abundance of asphalt referred to by Virues, and so the passage would have ceased to be “unintelligible” to him; and if he had read carefully the passage, (Jorn. III. v. 632, etc.,) he would not have found “a line evidently wanting.” I rather think, too, that the editor of the “Semíramis” is wrong in supposing (Preface, p. xi) that Virues “got his learning at second hand”; and that he will find he was wrong, if he will turn to the passage in Herodotus from which the Spanish poet seems to me to have taken his description of Babylon.

the action; and being, in fact, an attempt to carry the Spanish drama in a direction exactly opposite to that of its destiny, it did not succeed.¹¹

Such an attempt, however, was not unlikely to be made more than once; and this was certainly an age favorable for it. The theatre of the ancients was now known in Spain. The translations, already noticed, of Villalobos in 1515, and of Oliva before 1530, had been followed, as early as 1540, by one from Euripides by Boscan;¹² in 1555, by two from Plautus, the work of an unknown author;¹³ and in 1570–1577, by the “Plutus” of Aristophanes, the “Medea” of Euripides, and the six comedies of Terence, by Pedro Simon de Abril.¹⁴ The efforts of Timoneda in his “Menennos,” and of Virues in his “Elisa Dido,” were among the consequences of this state of things, and were succeeded by others, two of which should be noticed.

The first is by Gerónimo Bermudez, a native of Galicia, who is supposed to have been born about 1530, and to have lived as late as 1589. He was a learned Professor of Theology at Salamanca, and published, at Madrid, in 1577, two dramas, which he somewhat boldly called “the first Spanish tragedies.”¹⁵

¹¹ In the address to the “Discreto Letor” prefixed to the only edition of the “Obras tragicas y liricas del Capitan Cristoval de Virues,” (that of Madrid, 1609, 12mo, ff. 278,) we are told that he had endeavored in the first four tragedies “to unite what was best in ancient art and modern customs”; but the Dido, he says, “va escrita toda por el estilo de Griegos i Latinos con cuidado y estudio.” See, also, L. F. Moratin, Catálogo, Nos. 140, 141, 146, 148, 149; with Martinez de la Rosa, Obras, Tom. II. pp. 153–167. The play of Andres Rey de Artieda, on the “Lovers of Ternel,” 1581, belongs to this period and place. Ximeno, Tom. I. p. 263; Fuster, Tom. I. p. 212.

¹² The translation of Boscan from

Euripides was never published, though it is included in the permission to print that poet’s works, given by Charles V. to Boscan’s widow, 18th February, 1543, prefixed to the first edition of his Works, which appeared that year at Barcelona. Boscan died in 1540.

¹³ L. F. Moratin, Catálogo, Nos. 86 and 87.

¹⁴ Pellicer, Biblioteca de Traductores Españoles, Tom. II. 145, etc. The translations from Terence by Abril, 1577, are accompanied by the Latin text, and should seem, from the “Prologo,” to have been made in the hope that they would directly tend to reform the Spanish theatre;—perhaps even that they would be publicly acted.

¹⁵ Sedano’s “Parnaso Español” (Tom.

They are both on *the subject of Inez de *67 Castro; both are in five acts, and in various verse; and both have choruses in the manner of the ancients. But there is a great difference in their respective merits. The first “Nise Lastimosa,” or Inez to be Compassionated,—Nise being a poor anagram of Inez,—is hardly more than a skilful translation of the Portuguese tragedy of “Inez de Castro,” by Ferreira, which, with considerable defects in its structure, is yet full of tenderness and poetical beauty. The last, “Nise Laureada,” or Inez Triumphant, takes up the tradition where the first left it, after the violent and cruel death of the princess, and gives an account of the coronation of her ghastly remains above twenty years after their interment, and of the renewed marriage of the prince to them;—the closing scene exhibiting the execution of her murderers with a coarseness, both in the incidents and in the language, as revolting as can well be conceived. Neither probably produced any perceptible effect on the Spanish drama; and yet the “Nise Lastimosa” contains passages of no little poetical merit; such as the beautiful chorus on Love at the end of the first act, the dream of Inez in the third, and the truly Greek dialogue between the princess and the women of Coimbra; for the last two

VI., 1772) contains both the dramas of Bermudez, with notices of his life.

I think we have nothing else of Bermudez, except his “Hesperodia,” a panegyric on the great Duke of Alva, written in 1589, after its author had travelled much, as he says, in France and Africa. It is a cold elegy, originally composed in Latin, and not printed till it appeared in Sedano, Parnaso (Tom. VII., 1773, p. 149). Parts of it are somewhat obscure; and of the whole, translated into Spanish to please a friend and that friend’s wife, the author truly says that it is not so inter-

esting that they “will lose sleep by it.” Being a Galician, he hints, in the Dedication of his “Nise Lastimosa,” that Castilian was not easy to him. I find, however, no traces of awkwardness in his manner, and his Gallego helped him in managing Ferreira’s Portuguese. The two tragedies, it should be noted, were published under the assumed name of Antonio de Silva;—perhaps because he was a Dominican monk. The volume (Madrid, Sanchez, 1577) is a mean one, and the type a poor sort of Italics.