

ers of Córdoba" is an instance in point.¹⁴ It is a parallel to the story of Ægisthus and Clytemnestra in its horrors; but the husband, instead of meeting the fate of Agamemnon, puts to death, not only his guilty wife, but all his servants and every living thing in his household, to satisfy his savage sense of honor. Poetry is abundant in many of its scenes, but the atrocities of the rest will hardly permit it to be perceived.

"The Star of Seville," on the other hand, though much more truly tragic, is liable to no such objection.¹⁵ In some respects it resembles Corneille's "Cid." At the command of his king, and from the truest * 230 * Castilian loyalty, a knight of Seville kills his friend, a brother of the lady whom he is about to marry. The king afterwards endeavors to hold him harmless for the crime; but the royal judges refuse to interrupt the course of the law in his favor, and the brave knight is saved from death only by the plenary confession of his guilty sovereign. It is one of the very small number of Lope's pieces that have no comic

¹⁴ Comedias, Tom. II. Madrid, 1609. Thrice at least, — viz. in this play, in his "Fuente Ovejuna," and in his "Peribañez," — Lope has shown us commanders of the great military orders of his country in very odious colors, representing them as men of the most fierce pride and the grossest passions, like the Front-de-Beuf of Ivanhoe.

¹⁵ Old copies of this play are excessively scarce, and I obtained, therefore, many years ago, a manuscript of it, from which it was reprinted twice in this country by Mr. F. Sales, in his "Obras Maestras Dramáticas" (Boston, 1828 and 1840); the last time with corrections, kindly furnished by Don A. Duran, of Madrid; — a curious fact in Spanish bibliography, and one that should be mentioned to the honor of Mr. Sales, whose various publications have done much to spread the love of Spanish literature in the United States,

and to whom I am indebted for my first knowledge of it. The same play is well known on the modern Spanish stage, and has been reprinted, both at Madrid and London, with large alterations, under the title of "Sancho Ortiz de las Roelas." An excellent abstract of it, in its original state, and faithful translations of parts of it, are to be found in Lord Holland's Life of Lope (Vol. I. pp. 155–200); out of which, and not out of the Spanish original, Baron Zedlitz composed "Der Stern von Sevilla"; a play by no means without merit, which was printed at Stuttgart in 1830, and has been often acted in different parts of Germany. The localities referred to in the "Estrella de Sevilla," including the house of Bustos Tabera, the lover of Estrella, are still shown at Seville. Latour, Études sur l'Espagne, Paris, 1855, Tom. II. p. 52, etc.

and is again in the noisy and gay streets seeking for Leonora. He falls in with Don Pedro, whom he has never seen before; but Don Pedro, taking him, from his inquiries, to be the brother from whom Leonora is anxious to be concealed, carefully avoids betraying her to him. Unhappily, the Lady Blanca now arrives, having been prevented from coming earlier by the confusion in the streets; and he hurries her into his house for concealment till the marriage ceremony can be performed. But she hurries out again no less quickly, having found another lady already concealed there; — a circumstance which she takes to be direct proof of her lover's falsehood. Leonora follows her, and begins an explanation; but in the midst of it, the two brothers, who had been seeking these same missing sisters, come suddenly in; * a scene of * 215 great confusion and mutual reproaches ensues; and then the curtain falls with a recognition of all the mistakes and attachments, and the full happiness of the two ladies and their two lovers. At the end, the poet, in his own person, declares, that, if his art permits him to extend his action over twenty-four hours, he has, in the present case, kept within its rules, since he has occupied less than ten.

As a specimen of plays founded on Spanish manners, few are happier than "The Saint John's Eve." The love-scenes, all honor and passion; the scenes between the cavaliers and the populace, at once rude and gay; and the scenes with the free-spoken servant who plays the wit, — are almost all excellent, and instinct with the national character. It was received with the greatest applause, and constituted the finale of the Count Duke's magnificent entertainment, which, with its music and dances, interludes and refreshments, occupied

the whole night, from nine o'clock in the evening till daylight the next morning, when the royal party swept back with great pomp and ceremony to the palace;—the stately form of Olivarez, such as we see him in the pictures of Velazquez, following the king's coach in place of the accustomed servant.

Another of the plays of Lope, and one that belongs to the division of the *Capa y Espada*, but approaches that of the heroic drama, is his "Fool for Others and Wise for Herself."⁴⁴ It is of a lighter and livelier temper throughout than most of its class. Diana, educated in the simple estate of a shepherdess, and wholly ignorant that she is the daughter and heir of the Duke of Urbino, is suddenly called, by the death of her father, to fill his place. She is surrounded by intriguing enemies, but triumphs over them by affecting a rustic simplicity in whatever she says and does, while, at the same time, she is managing all around her, and carrying on a love-intrigue with the Duke Alexander Farnese, which ends in her marriage with him.

* 216 * The jest of the piece lies in the wit she is able to conceal under her seeming rusticity. For instance, at the very opening, after she has been secretly informed of the true state of things, and has determined what course to pursue, the ambassadors from Urbino come in and tell her, with a solemnity suited to the occasion:—

Lady, our sovereign lord, the Duke, is dead!

To which she replies:—

What 's that to me? But if 't is surely so,
Why then, sirs, 't is for you to bury him.
I 'm not the parish curate.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Comedias, Tom. XXI., Madrid, 1635, f. 45, etc.

⁴⁵ *Camilo*. Señora, el Duque es muerto.
Diana. Pues que se me da á mí? pero sí es cierto,

Enterralde, Señores,
Que yo no soi el Cura.

Comedias, Tom. XXI.
Madrid, 1635, f. 47.

This tone is maintained to the end, whenever the heroine appears; and it gives Lope an opportunity to bring forth a great deal of the fluent, light wit of which he had such ample store.

Little like all we have yet noticed, but still belonging to the same class, is "The Reward of Speaking Well,"⁴⁶—a charming play, in which the accounts of the hero's birth and early condition are so absolutely a description of his own that it can hardly be doubted that Lope intended to draw the character in some degree from himself. Don Juan, who is the hero, is standing with some idle gallants near a church in Seville, to see the ladies come out; and, while there, defends, though he does not know her, one of them who is lightly spoken of. A quarrel ensues. He wounds his adversary, is pursued, and chances to take refuge in the house of the very lady whose honor he had so gallantly maintained a few moments before. She from gratitude secretes him, and the play ends with a wedding, though not until there has been a perfect confusion of plots and counterplots, intrigues and concealments, such as so often go to make up the three acts of Lope's dramas.

Many other plays might be added to these, showing, by the diversity of their tone and character, how diverse * were the gifts of the extraordi- * 217 nary man who invented them, and filled them with various and easy verse. Among them are "Por la Puente Juana,"⁴⁷ "El Anzuelo de Fenisa,"⁴⁸ "El Ruysenor de Sevilla";⁴⁹ "Porfiar hasta Morir,"⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Comedias, Tom. XXI., Madrid, 1635, f. 158, etc.

⁴⁷ Comedias, Tom. XXI., Madrid, 1635, f. 243, etc. It has often been printed separately; once in London. The title is the first line of an old ballad.

⁴⁸ Comedias, Tom. VIII., Madrid,

1617, and often printed separately; a play remarkable for its gayety and spirit.

⁴⁹ Comedias, Tom. XVII., Madrid, 1621, f. 187, etc.

⁵⁰ Comedias, Tom. XXIII., Madrid, 1638, f. 96, etc.

which last is on the story of Macias el Enamorado, always a favorite with the old Spanish and Provençal poets; and the "Bizarrias de Belisa," a gay comedy, which is interesting from the circumstance that it was finished in 1634, when he was nearly seventy-two years old. But it is neither needful nor possible to go further. Enough has been said to show the general character of their class, and we therefore now turn to another.⁵¹

⁵¹ From the Spanish translation of this History, (Tom. II. p. 551,) I collect the following dates of a few plays of Lope on the authority of his own autographs:—

Prueba de los Amigos, 12th September, 1604.

Carlos V. en Francia, 20th November, 1604.

Batalla del Honor, 18th April, 1608.
Encomienda mal guardada, 19th April, 1610.

Lo que ha de ser, 2d September, 1624.

Competencia en los Nobles, 16th November, 1625.

Sin Secreto no hay Amor, 18th July, 1626.

Bizarrias de Belisa, 24th May, 1634.

I can add to these from my own collection:—

Castigo sin Venganza, 1st August, 1631.

See, also, Salva y Baranda, Documentos Ineditos, Tom. I., and Chorley's Catalogue, already referred to.

* CHAPTER XVI.

* 218

LOPE DE VEGA, CONTINUED.— HIS HEROIC DRAMA, AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS.— GREAT NUMBER ON SUBJECTS FROM SPANISH HISTORY, AND SOME ON CONTEMPORARY EVENTS.

THE dramas of Lope de Vega that belong to the next class were called "Comedias Heróicas," or "Comedias Historiales,"— Heroic or Historical Dramas. The chief differences between these and the last are, that they bring on the stage personages in a higher rank of life, such as kings and princes; that they generally have an historical foundation, or at least use historical names, as if claiming it; and that their prevailing tone is grave, imposing, and even tragical. They have, however, in general, the same involved, intriguing stories and underplots, the same play of jealousy and an over-sensitive honor, and the same low, comic caricatures to relieve their serious parts, that are found in the dramas of "the Cloak and Sword." Philip the Second disapproved of this class of plays, thinking they tended to diminish the royal dignity,— a circumstance which shows at once the state of manners at the time, and the influence attributed to the theatre.¹

Lope wrote a very large number of plays in the forms of the heroic drama, which he substantially invented,— perhaps as many as he wrote in any other class. Everything historical seemed, indeed, to furnish him with a subject, from the earliest annals of the

¹ Lope de Vega, Obras Sueltas, Tom. IV. p. 410. Such plays were also sometimes called tragedies. "Aquella donde se introduce Rey o Señor soberano es Tragedia." See Lagrimas Panegiricas de Montalvan, 1639, f. 150, b.