

into three acts, and begins in Paradise, immediately after the creation. The first scene introduces Satan, Pride, Beauty, and Envy;—Satan appearing with “dragon’s wings, a bushy wig, and above it a * 242 serpent’s * head”; and Envy carrying a heart in her hand and wearing snakes in her hair. After some discussion about the creation, Adam and Eve approach in the characters of King and Queen. Innocence, who is the clown and wit of the piece, and Grace, who is dressed in white, come in at the same time, and, while Satan and his friends are hidden in a thicket, hold the following dialogue, which may be regarded as characteristic, not only of this particular drama, but of the whole class to which it belongs:—

Adam. Here, Lady Queen, upon this couch of grass and flowers
Sit down.

Innocence. Well, that’s good, i’ faith;
He calls her Lady Queen.

Grace. And don’t you see
She is his wife; flesh of his flesh indeed,
And of his bone the bone?

Innocence. That’s just as if
You said, She, through his being, being hath.—
What dainty compliments they pay each other!

Grace. Two persons are they, yet one flesh they are.

Innocence. And may their union last a thousand years,
And in sweet peace continue evermore!

Grace. The king his father and his mother leaves
For his fair queen.

Innocence. And leaves not overmuch,
Since no man yet has been with parents born.
But, in good faith, good master Adam,
All fine as you go on, pranked out by Grace,
I feel no little trouble at your course,
Like that of other princes made of clay.
But I admit it was a famous trick,
In your most sovereign Lord, out of the mud
A microcosm nice to make, and do it
In one day.

Grace. He that the greater worlds could build
By his commanding power alone, to him
It was not much these lesser works on earth

To do. And see you not the two great lamps
Which overhead he hung so fair?

Innocence. And how
The earth he sowed with flowers, the heavens with stars?¹⁹

* Immediately after the fall, and therefore, * 243 according to the common Scriptural computation, about four thousand years before she was born, the Madonna appears and personally drives Satan down to perdition, while, at the same time, an Angel expels Adam and Eve from Paradise. The Divine Prince and the Celestial Emperor, as the Saviour and the Supreme Divinity are respectively called, then come upon the vacant stage, and, in a conference full of theological subtleties, arrange the system of man’s redemption, which, at the Divine command, Gabriel,—

Accompanied with armies all of stars
To fill the air with glorious light,²⁰—

descending to Galilee, announces as about to be accomplished by the birth of the Messiah. This ends the first act.

The second opens with the rejoicings of the Serpent, Sin, and Death,—confident that the World is now fairly given up to them. But their rejoicings are short. Clarionets are sounded, and Divine Grace appears on the upper portion of the stage, and at once expels the sinful rout from their boasted possessions;

¹⁹ *Adan.* Aquí, Reyna, en esta alfombra
De yerua y flores te assienta.

Inoc. Eso á la fe me contenta.
Reyna y Señora la nombra.

Gra. Pues no ves que es su muger,
Carne de su carne y hueso
De sus huesos? *Ino.* Y á i por esso,
Porque es como ser su ser.
Lindos requiebros se dizen.

Gra. Dos en una carne son.

Inoc. Dure mil años la union,
Y en esta paz se eternizen.

Gra. Por la Reyna dexará
El Rey a su padre y madre.

Inoc. Ninguno nació con padre,
Poco en dexarlos har i;
Y á la fe, Señor Adan,
Que aunque de Gracia vizarro,
Que los Principes del barro

Notable pena me dan.
Brauto artificio tenia
Vuestro soberano dueño,
Quando un mundo aunque pequeño
Hizo de barro en un día.

Gra. Quié los dos mundos mayores
Pudo hacer con su palabra,
Que mucho que rompa y abra
En la tierra estas labores.
No ves las lamparas bellas,
Que de los cielos colgó?

Inoc. Como de flores sembró
La tierra, el cielo de estrellas.

Comedias de Lope de Vega, Tom
XXIV., Zaragoza, 1641, f. III.

²⁰ Baza esclareciendo el ayre
Con exercitos de estrellas.

explaining afterwards to the World, who now comes on as one of the personages of the scene, that the Holy Family are immediately to bring salvation to men.

The World replies with rapture : —

O holy Grace, already I behold them ;
And, though the freezing night forbids, will haste
To border round my hoar frost all with flowers ;
To force the tender buds to spring again
* 244 * From out their shrunken branches ; and to loose
The gentle streamlets from the hill-tops cold,
That they may pour their liquid crystal down ;
While the old founts, at my command, shall flow
With milk, and ash-trees honey pure distil
To satisfy our joyful appetites.²¹

The next scene is in Bethlehem, where Joseph and Mary appear begging for entrance at an inn, but, owing to the crowd, they are sent to a stable just outside the city, in whose contiguous fields shepherds and shepherdesses are seen suffering from the frosty night, but jesting and singing rude songs about it. In the midst of their troubles and merriment, an angel appears in a cloud announcing the birth of the Saviour ; and the second act is then concluded by the resolution of all to go and find the divine child and carry him their glad salutations.

The last act is chiefly taken up with discussions of the same subjects by the same shepherds and shepherdesses, and an account of the visit to the mother and child ; some parts of which are not without poetical merit. It ends with the appearance of the three Kings, preceded by dances of Gypsies and Negroes,

²¹ Gracia santa, ya los veo.
Voy a hazer que aquesta noche,
Aunque lo defienda el yelo,
Borden la escarcha las flores,
Salgan los pimpollos tiernos
De las encorjadas ramas,
Y de los montes soberbios

Bajen los arroyos mansos
Líquido cristal vertiendo.
Hare que las fuentes manen
Candido leche, y los fuentos
Pura miel, diluvios dulces,
Que aneguen nuestros deseos.
Comedias, Tom. XXIV., Zaragoza, 1641, f. 116

and with the worship and offerings brought by all to the new-born Saviour.

Such dramas do not seem to have been favorites with Lope, and perhaps were not favorites with his audiences. At least, few of them appear among his printed works ; — the one just noticed, and another, called “The Creation of the World and Man’s First Sin,” being the most prominent and curious ;²² and one on the atonement, entitled “The Pledge Redeemed,” being the most wild and gross. But to the proper stories of the Scriptures he somewhat oftener resorted, and with characteristic talent. Thus, we have full-length plays on * the history of Tobias and * 245 the seven-times-wedded maid ;²³ on the fair Esther and Ahasuerus ;²⁴ and on the somewhat unsuitable subject of the Ravishment of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, as it is told in the Book of Genesis.²⁵ In all these, and in the rest of the class to which they belong, Spanish manners and ideas, rather than Jewish, give their coloring to the scene ; and the story, though substantially taken from the Hebrew records, is thus rendered much more attractive, for the purposes of its representation at Madrid, than it would have been in its original simplicity ; as, for instance, in the case of the “Esther,” where a comic underplot between a coquettish shepherdess and her lover is much relied upon for the popular effect of the whole.²⁶

²² It is in the twenty-fourth volume of the Comedias of Lope, Madrid, 1632, and is one of the very few of his religious plays that have been occasionally reprinted.

²³ “Historia de Tobias,” Comedias, Tom. XV., Madrid, 1621, ff. 231, etc.

²⁴ “La Hermosa Ester,” Ibid., ff. 151, etc.

²⁵ “El Robo de Dina,” Comedias,

Tom. XXIII., Madrid, 1638, ff. 118, etc. To this may be added a better one, in Tom. XXII., Madrid, 1635, “Los Trabajos de Jacob,” on the beautiful story of Joseph and his brethren.

²⁶ The underplot is slightly connected with the main story of Esther, by a proclamation of King Ahasuerus, calling before him all the fair maidens of his empire, which, coming to the ears of

Still, even these dramas were not able to satisfy audiences accustomed to the more national spirit of plays founded on fashionable life and intriguing adventures. A wider range, therefore, was taken. Striking religious events of all kinds — especially those found in the lives of holy men — were resorted to, and ingenious stories were constructed out of the * 246 * miracles and sufferings of saints, which were often as interesting as the intrigues of Spanish gallants, or the achievements of the old Spanish heroes, and were sometimes hardly less free and wild. Saint Jerome, under the name of the "Cardinal of Bethlehem," is brought upon the stage in one of them, first as a gay gallant, and afterwards as a saint scourged by angels, and triumphing, in open show, over Satan.²⁷ In another, San Diego of Alcalá rises, from being the attendant of a poor hermit, to be a general with military command, and, after committing most soldier-like atrocities in the Fortunate Islands, returns and dies at home in the odor of sanctity.²⁸ And in yet others, his-

Silena, the shepherdess, she insists upon leaving her lover, Selvagio, and trying the fortune of her beauty at court. She fails, and on her return is rejected by Selvagio, but still maintains her coquettish spirit to the last, and goes off saying or singing, as gayly as if it were part of an old ballad, —

For the vulture that flies apart,
I left my little bird's nest;
But still I can soften his heart,
And soothe down his pride to rest.

The best parts of the play are the more religious; like Esther's prayers in the first and last acts, and the ballad sung at the triumphant festival when Ahasuerus yields to her beauty; but the whole, like many other plays of the same sort, is intended, under the disguise of a sacred subject, to serve the purposes of the secular theatre.

Perhaps one of the most amusing instances of incongruity in Lope, and their number is not few, is to be found

in the first *jornada* of the "Trabajos de Jacob," where Joseph, at the moment he escapes from Potiphar's wife, leaving his cloak in her possession, says in soliloquy: —

So mayest thou, woman-like, upon my cloak
Thy vengeance wreak, as the bull wreaks his
wrath
Upon the cloak before him played; the man
Meanwhile escaping safe.

Y assi haras en essa capa,
Con venganza de muger,
Lo que el toro suele hacer
Del hombre que se escapa.

Yet, absurd as the passage is for its incongruity, it may have been loudly applauded by an audience that thought much more of bull-fights than of the just rules of the drama.

²⁷ "El Cardenal de Belen," Comedias, Tom. XIII., Madrid, 1620.

²⁸ This play is not in the collection of Lope's Comedias, but it is in Lord Holland's list. My copy of it is an old one, without date, printed for popular

torical subjects of a religious character are taken, like the story of the holy Bamba torn from the plough in the seventh century, and by miraculous command made king of Spain;²⁹ or like the life of the Mohammedan prince of Morocco, who, in 1593, was converted to Christianity and publicly baptized in presence of Philip the Second, with the heir of the throne for his godfather.³⁰

All these, and many more like them, were represented with the consent of the ecclesiastical powers, — sometimes even in convents and other religious houses, but oftener in public, and always under auspices no less obviously religious.³¹ The favorite materials for such dramas, * however, were found, at * 247 last, almost exclusively in the lives of popular saints; and the number of plays filled with such histories and miracles was so great, soon after the year 1600, that they came to be considered as a class by themselves, under the name of "Comedias de Santos," or Saints' Plays. Lope wrote many of them. Besides

use at Valladolid. And I have it, also, in the "Comedias Escogidas," Tom. III., 1653, f. 222.

²⁹ "Comedias," Tom. I., Valladolid, 1604, ff. 91, etc.

³⁰ "Bautismo del Príncipe de Marruecos," in which there are nearly sixty personages. Comedias, Tom. XI., Barcelona, 1618, ff. 269, etc. C. Pellicer, Origen del Teatro, Tom. I. p. 86. Such a baptism — and one brought on the stage, too — sounds very strange; but strange things of the sort occurred occasionally from the intimate relations that often subsisted between the Christian captives in Barbary and their misbelieving masters. For instance, in 1646, the oldest son of the Bey of Tunis escaped to Palermo, for the express purpose of becoming a Christian, and was there, with great ceremony, received into the bosom of the Church. See "Relacion de la Venida a Sicilia del Príncipe Mamet, hijo primogenito de Amat Dey de Tunis, a volverse

Christiano, por el P. Fr. Donato Ciantar, ec., traducida de Toscano en Español, en Sevilla, por Juan Gomez de Blas, Año de 1646," 4to, pp. 4; — a very curious tract, which justifies much in the play of Lope that seems improbable.

³¹ C. Pellicer, Origen, Tom. I. p. 153. When Francisco de Borja was canonized in 1625, there were great festivities for several days, and the Jesuits, of whose society he had been a proud ornament, caused a play on his life to be acted in a theatre belonging to them at Madrid; Philip IV. and the Infantes being present. Who wrote the play I do not know, for the account of the festival, intending, perhaps, to pun, only says: "Por ser el Autor de la Compañía, la modestia le venera en silencio." A masque followed; a poetical *certamen*, etc.; — but all under religious auspices. Elogio del S. P. Francisco de Borja, Duque de Gandia, ec., por el Doctor Juan Antonio de Peña, Natural de Madrid, 1625, 4to, f. 6, etc.

those already mentioned, we have from his pen dramatic compositions on the lives of Saint Francis, San Pedro de Nolasco, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint Julian, Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, Santa Teresa, three on San Isidro de Madrid, and not a few others. Many of them, like Saint Nicholas of Tolentino,³² are very strange and extravagant; others are full of poetry; but perhaps none will give a more true idea of the entire class than the first one he wrote, on the subject of the favored saint of his own city, San Isidro de Madrid.³³

It seems to have all the varieties of action and character that belong to the secular divisions of the Spanish drama. Scenes of stirring interest occur in it among warriors just returned to Madrid from
* 248 a * successful foray against the Moors; gay scenes, with rustic dancing and frolics, at the marriage of Isidro and the birth of his son; and scenes of broad farce with the sacristan, who complains, that, owing to Isidro's power with Heaven, he no longer

³² "San Nicolas de Tolentino," Comedias, Tom. XXIV., Zaragoza, 1641, ff. 167, etc. Each act, as is not uncommon in the old Spanish theatre, is a sort of separate play, with its separate list of personages prefixed. The first has twenty-one; among which are God, the Madonna, History, Mercy, Justice, Satan, etc. It opens with a masquerading scene in a public square, of no little spirit; immediately after which we have a scene in heaven, containing the Divine judgment on the soul of one who had died in mortal sin; then another spirited scene, in a public square, among loungers, with a sermon from a fervent, fanatical monk; and afterwards, successive scenes between Nicholas, who has been moved by this sermon to enter a convent, and his family, who consent to his purpose with reluctance; the whole ending with a dialogue of the rudest humor between Nicholas's servant, who is the buffoon

of the piece, and a servant-maid, to whom he was engaged to be married, but whom he now abandons, determined to follow his master into a religious seclusion, which, at the same time, he is making ridiculous by his jests and parodies. This is the first act. The other two acts are such as might be anticipated from it.

³³ This is not either of the plays ordered by the city of Madrid to be acted in the open air in 1622, in honor of the canonization of San Isidro, and found in the twelfth volume of Lope's Obras Sueltas; though, on a comparison with these last, it will be seen that it was used in their composition. It, in fact, was printed five years earlier, in the seventh volume of Lope's Comedias, Madrid, 1617, and continued long in favor, for it is reprinted in Parte XXVIII. of "Comedias Escogidas de los Mejores Ingenios," Madrid, 1667, 4to.

gets fees for burials, and that he believes Death is gone to live elsewhere. But through the whole runs the loving and devout character of the Saint himself, giving it a sort of poetical unity and power. The angels come down to plough for him, that he may no longer incur reproach by neglecting his labors in order to attend mass; and at the touch of his goad, a spring of pure water, still looked upon with reverence, rises in a burning waste to refresh his unjust master. Popular songs and poetry, meanwhile,³⁴ with a parody of the old Moorish ballad of "Gentle River, Gentle River,"³⁵ and allusions to the holy image of Almudena, and the church of Saint Andrew, give life to the dialogue, as it goes on; — all familiar as household words at Madrid, and striking chords which, when this drama was first represented, still vibrated in every heart. At the end, the body of the Saint, after his death, is exposed before the well-known altar of his favorite church; and there, according to the old traditions, his former master and the queen come to worship him, and, with pious sacrilege, endeavor to bear away from his person relics for their own protection; but are punished on the spot by a miracle, which thus serves at once as the final and crowning testimony to the divine merits of the Saint, and as an appropriate *dénouement* for the piece.

No doubt, such a drama, extending over forty or fifty years of time, with its motley crowd of personages, — among whom are angels and demons, Envy,

³⁴ A spirited ballad or popular song is sung and danced at the young Saint's wedding, beginning, —

Al villano se lo dan
La cebolla con el pan.
Mira que el toseo villano,
Quando quiera alborear,
Salga con su par de bueyes
Y su rardo otro que tal.

Le dan pan, le dan cebolla,
Y vino tambien le dan, etc.
Comedias, Tom. XXVIII., 1667, p. 54.

³⁵ Rio verde, rio verde,
Mas negro vas que la tinta
De sangre de los Christianos,
Que no de la Moreria.
p. 60.

Falsehood, and the River Manzanares, — would * 249 now be accounted * grotesque and irreverent, rather than anything else. But in the time of Lope, the audiences not only brought a willing faith to such representations, but received gladly an exhibition of the miracles which connected the saint they worshipped and his beneficent virtues with their own times and their personal well-being.³⁶ If to this we add the restraints on the theatre, and Lope's extraordinary facility, grace, and ingenuity, which never failed to consult and gratify the popular taste, we shall have all the elements necessary to explain the great number of religious dramas he composed, whether in the nature of Mysteries, Scripture stories, or lives of saints. They belonged to his age and country as much as he himself did.

But Lope ventured with success in another form of the drama, not only more grotesque than that of the full-length religious plays, but intended yet more directly for popular edification, — the "Autos Sacramentales," or Sacramental Acts, — a sort of religious plays performed in the streets during the season when the gorgeous ceremonies of the "Corpus Christi" filled them with rejoicing crowds.³⁷ No form of the Spanish drama is older, and none had so long a reign, or maintained during its continuance so strong a hold on the

³⁶ How far these plays were felt to be religious by the crowds who witnessed them may be seen in a thousand ways; among the rest, by the fact mentioned by Madame d'Aulnoy, in 1679, that, when St. Anthony, on the stage, repeated his *Confiteor*, the audience all fell on their knees, smote their breasts heavily, and cried out, *Med culpá*. Voyage d'Espagne. A la Haye, 1693, 18mo, Tom. 1. p. 56.

³⁷ *Auto* was originally a forensic term, from the Latin *actus*, and meant a de-

crete or a judgment of a court. Afterwards it was applied to these religious dramas, which were called *Autos sacramentales*, or *Autos del Corpus Christi*, and to the *autos de fé* of the Inquisition; in both cases, because they were considered solemn religious acts. Covarrubias, Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana, ad verb. *Auto*. For the early history of the procession and for the management of the *Mogigones*, the *Tarasca*, etc., see Bibliotecario, 1841, fol. pp. 25-27.

general favor. Its representations, as we have already seen, may be found among the earliest intimations of the national literature; and, as we shall learn hereafter, they were with difficulty suppressed by the royal authority after the middle of the eighteenth century. In the age of Lope, and in that immediately following, they were at the height of their success, and had become an important * part of the religious cere- * 250 monies arranged for the solemn sacramental festival to which they were devoted, not only in Madrid, but throughout Spain; all the theatres being closed for a month to give place to them and to do them honor.³⁸

Yet to our apprehensions, notwithstanding their religious claims, they are almost wholly gross and irreverent. Indeed, the very circumstances under which they were represented would seem to prove that they were not regarded as really solemn. A sort of rude mumming, which certainly had nothing grave about it, preceded them, as they advanced through the thronged streets, where the windows and balconies of the better sort of houses were hung with silks and tapestries to honor the occasion. First in this extraordinary procession came the figure of a misshapen marine monster,

³⁸ Great splendor was used, from the earliest times down to the present century, in the processions of the Corpus Christi throughout Spain; as may be judged from the accounts of them in Valencia, Seville, and Toledo, in the *Semanario Pintoresco*, 1839, p. 167; 1840, p. 187; and 1841, p. 177. In those of Toledo, there is an intimation that Lope de Rueda was employed in the dramatic entertainments connected with them in 1561; and that Alonso Cisneros, Cristóbal Navarro, and other known writers for the rude popular stage of that time, were his successors; — all serving to introduce Lope and Calderon.

But, at all periods, from first to last, the proper *autos* were rude, gross, and

indecent. In fact, they were finally forbidden as such by Charles III. in 1765. The wonder is that in a state of society claiming to be Christian they were sustained alike by the Church and the civil power; for in 1609, Mariana, in his treatise "De Spectaculis," had made it plain enough that they were unworthy all such countenance. In the Spanish version of this remarkable treatise, made by the great historian himself, I find one more chapter (the twelfth) in which he says that the most gross of all the dances (the *zarabanda*) was performed in the Corpus Christi ceremonies of the *autos* with all its indecent gestures. See *post*, p. 452, note, for the *Zarabanda*.