

* 317 They, however, gave him a * certain number of years to achieve the position they required of any one who aspired to her hand. He accepted the offer, and became a soldier. His exploits were brilliant, but were long unnoticed. At last he succeeded, and came home in 1217, with fame and fortune. But he arrived too late. The lady had been reluctantly married to his rival, the very night he reached Teruel. Desperate with grief and disappointment, he followed her to the bridal chamber and fell dead at her feet. The next day the lady was found, apparently asleep, on his bier in the church, when the officiating priests came to perform the funeral service. Both had died broken-hearted, and both were buried in the same grave.³⁵

A considerable excitement in relation to this story having arisen in the youth of Montalvan, he seized the tradition on which it was founded, and wrought it into a drama. His lovers are placed in the time of Charles the Fifth, in order to connect them with that stirring period of Spanish history. The first act begins with several scenes, in which the difficulties and dangers of their situation are made apparent, and Isabella, the heroine, expresses an attachment which, after some

³⁵ I shall have occasion to recur to this subject when I notice a long poem published on it by Yague de Salas, in 1616. The story used by Montalvan is founded on a tradition already employed for the stage, but with an awkward and somewhat coarse plot, and a poor versification by Andres Rey de Artieda, in his "Amantes," published in 1581, and by Tirso de Molina, in his "Amantes de Teruel," 1635. These two plays, however, had long been forgotten, when an abstract of the first, and the whole of the second, appeared in the fifth volume of Aribau's "Biblioteca" (Madrid, 1848); a volume which contains thirty-six well-selected plays of Tirso de Molina, with valuable prefa-

tory discussions of his life and works. There can be no doubt, from a comparison of the "Amantes de Teruel" of Tirso with that of Montalvan, printed three years later, that Montalvan was largely indebted to his predecessor; but he has added to his drama much that is beautiful, and given to parts of it a tone of domestic tenderness that, I doubt not, he drew from his own nature. Aribau, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, Tom. V. pp. xxxvii and 690. The story of the Lovers of Teruel is found also in Canto IX. of the poetical Romance of Florando de Castilla, 1588, by Hieronymo de Huerta. See *post*, Chap. XXVII., note.

anxiety and misgiving, becomes a passion so devoted that it seems of itself to intimate their coming sorrows. Her father, however, when he learns the truth, consents to their union; but on condition that, within three years, the young man shall place himself in a position worthy the claims of such a bride. Both of the lovers willingly * submit, and the * 318 act ends with hopes for their happiness.

Nearly the whole of the limited period elapses before we begin the second act, where we find the hero just landing in Africa for the well-known assault on the Goleta at Tunis. He has achieved much, but remains unnoticed and almost broken-hearted with long discouragement. At this moment, he saves the Emperor's life; but the next, he is forgotten again in the rushing crowd. Still he perseveres, sternly and heroically; and, led on by a passion stronger than death, is the first to mount the walls of Tunis and enter the city. This time, his merit is recognized. Even his forgotten achievements are recollected; and he receives at once the accumulated reward of all his services and sacrifices.

But when the last act opens, we see that he is destined to a fatal disappointment. Isabella, who has been artfully persuaded of his death, is preparing, with sinister forebodings, to fulfil her promise to her father and marry another. The ceremony takes place, — the guests are about to depart, — and her lover stands before her. A heart-rending explanation ensues, and she leaves him, as she thinks, for the last time. But he follows her to her apartment; and in the agony of his grief falls dead, while he yet expostulates and struggles with himself no less than with her. A moment afterwards her husband enters. She explains to him the

scene he witnesses, and, unable any longer to sustain the cruel conflict, faints and dies broken-hearted on the body of her lover.

Like nearly all the other pieces of the same class, there is much in the "Lovers of Teruel" to offend us. The inevitable part of the comic servant is peculiarly unwelcome; and so are the long speeches, and the occasionally inflated style. But notwithstanding its blemishes, we feel that it is written in the true spirit of tragedy. As the story was believed to be authentic when it was first acted, it produced the deeper effect; and whether true or not, being a tale of the simple sorrows of two young and loving hearts, whose dark fate is the result of no crime on their part, it can never be read or acted * without exciting a sincere interest. Parts of it have a more familiar and domestic character than we are accustomed to find on the Spanish stage, particularly the scene where Isabella sits with her women at her wearisome embroidery, during her lover's absence; the scene of her discouragement and misgiving just before her marriage; and portions of the scene of horror with which the drama closes.

The two lovers are drawn with no little skill. Our interest in them never falters; and their characters are so set forth and developed, that the dreadful catastrophe is no surprise. It comes rather like the foreseen and irresistible fate of the old Greek tragedy, whose dark shadow is cast over the whole action from its opening.

When Montalvan took historical subjects, he endeavored, oftener than his contemporaries, to observe historical truth. In two dramas on the life of Don Carlos, he has introduced that prince substantially in the

colors he must at last wear, as an ungoverned madman, dangerous to his family and to the state; and if, in obedience to the persuasions of his time, the poet has represented Philip the Second as more noble and generous than we can regard him to have been, he has not failed to seize and exhibit in a striking manner the severe wariness and wisdom that were such prominent attributes in that monarch's character.³⁶ Don John of Austria, too, and Henry the Fourth of France, are happily depicted and fairly sustained in the plays in which they respectively appear as leading personages.³⁷

* Montalvan's *autos*, of which only two or * 320 three remain to us, are not to be spoken of in the same manner. His "Polyphemus," for instance, in which the Saviour and a Christian Church are introduced on one side of the stage, while the principal Cyclops himself comes in as an allegorical representation of Judaism on the other, is as wild and extravagant as anything in the Spanish drama. A similar

³⁶ "El Principe Don Carlos" is the first play in the twenty-eighth volume of the *Comedias Escogidas*, 1667, and gives an account of the miraculous cure of the Prince from an attack of insanity; the other, entitled "El Segundo Seneca de España," is the first play in his "Para Todos," and ends with the marriage of the king to Anne of Austria, and the appointment of Don John as generalissimo of the League. The representation of characters and incidents in these plays is substantially the same that is found in Luis Cabrera de Cordoba's very courtly "Felipe Segundo, Rey de España," which, as it was published in 1619, probably furnished his materials to Montalvan, who was not prone to wander far for them. See *Libro V. c. 5*; *VII. 22*; and *VIII. 5*. The work of Cabrera is not very well written, though important to the history of the time, because he had access to excellent sources of information. He

lived till 1655, but, though he is said to have completed his history, and even to have once sent the remainder to press, no more than the First Part, coming down to 1583, has ever been published. Ranke's judgment of Cabrera in a remarkable paper on D. Carlos (*Jahrb. der Lit. Wien*, XLVI. 1829) is very wise and just.

³⁷ Don John is in the play that bears his name. Henry IV. is in "El Mariscal de Biron," of which I have a separate copy printed in 12mo, at Barcelona, in 1635, preceded by the "Historia Tragica de la Vida del Duque de Biron," by Juan Pablo Martyr Rizo, — on which the play was to a considerable degree founded, although the extravagant character of Doña Blanca has no warrant in history. The life by Rizo is an interesting piece of contemporary biography, published originally in 1629, seven years after the Marshal was executed.

remark may be made on the "Escanderbech," founded on the history of the half-barbarous, half-chivalrous Iskander Beg, and his conversion to Christianity in the middle of the fifteenth century. We find it, in fact, difficult, at the present day, to believe that pieces like the first of these, in which Polyphemus plays on a guitar, and an island in the earliest ages of Greek tradition sinks into the sea amidst a discharge of squibs and rockets, can have been represented anywhere.³⁸

But Montalvan followed Lope in everything, and, like the rest of the dramatic writers of his age, was safe from such censure as he would now receive, because he wrote to satisfy the demands of the popular audiences of Madrid.³⁹ He made the *novela*, or tale, the chief basis of interest for his drama, and relied mainly on the passion of jealousy to give it life and movement.⁴⁰ Bowing to the authority of the court, he avoided, we are told, representing rebellion on the stage, lest he should seem to encourage it; and was even unwilling to introduce men of rank in degrading situations, for fear disloyalty should be implied or imputed. He would gladly, it is added, have re-
* 321 strained his action to twenty-four * hours, and limited each of the three divisions of his full-length dramas to three hundred lines, never leaving the stage empty in either of them. But such rules were not prescribed to him by the popular will, and he wrote too freely and too fast to be more anxious

³⁸ Both of them are in the fifth day's entertainments of the "Para Todos."

³⁹ Preface to "Para Todos."

⁴⁰ The story of "El Zeloso Estremeno" is altered from that of the same name by Cervantes, but is indebted to it largely, and takes the names of several of its personages. At the end of

the play, entitled "De un Castigo dos Venganzas," a play full of horrors, Montalvan declares the plot to be,—

Historia tan verdadera,
Que no ha cincuenta semanas
Que sucedió.

Many of his plays are founded on exciting and interesting but familiar tales.

about observing his own theories than his master was.⁴¹

His "Most Constant Wife," one of his plays which is particularly pleasing, from the firm, yet tender, character of the heroine, was written, he tells us, in four weeks, prepared by the actors in eight days, and represented again and again, until the great religious festival of the spring closed the theatres.⁴² His "Double Vengeance," with all its horrors, was acted twenty-one days successively.⁴³ His "No Life like Honor" — one of his more sober efforts — appeared many times on both the principal theatres of Madrid at the same moment; — a distinction to which, it is said, no other play had then arrived in Spain, and in which none succeeded it till long afterwards.⁴⁴ And, in general, during the period when his dramas were produced, which was the old age of Lope de Vega, no author was heard on the stage with more pleasure than Montalvan, except his great master.

He had, indeed, his trials and troubles, as all have whose success depends on popular favor. Quevedo, the most unsparing satirist of his time, attacked the less fortunate parts of one of his works of fiction with a spirit and bitterness all his own; and, on another occasion, when one of Montalvan's plays had been hissed, wrote him a letter which professed to be consolatory, but which is really as little so as can well be imagined.⁴⁵ But, notwithstanding such occasional

⁴¹ Pellicer de Tobar, in the "Lágrimas," etc., *ut supra*, gives this account of his friend Montalvan's literary theories, pp. 146-152. He says that Montalvan, in the more grave parts of his plays, employed *octavas*, *canciones*, and *silvas*; in the tender parts, *décimas*, *glosas*, and other similar forms; and *romances* everywhere; but that he avoided dactyles and blank verse, as

unbecoming and hard. All this, however, is only the system of Lope, in his "Arte Nuevo," a little amplified.

⁴² Para Todos, 1661, p. 508.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁴⁴ C. Pellicer, Origen, Tom. I. p. 202.

⁴⁵ Quevedo, Obras, Tom. XI., 1794, pp. 125, 163. An indignant answer was made to Quevedo, in the "Tribunal de la Justa Venganza," already no-

* 322 discouragements, * his course was, on the whole, fortunate, and he is still to be remembered among the ornaments of the old national drama of his country.

ticed. The letter attributed here to Quevedo is printed in the *Don Diego de Noche* (1623, f. 30) as if it were the work of Salas Barbadillo; but it must be Quevedo's. The feud was an old one. Montalvan's father, who, as we

have noticed, was a bookseller in Madrid, reprinted there, without Quevedo's permission, his "*Politica de Dios*," as soon as it had appeared at Saragossa in 1626, and Quevedo was very angry about it.

* CHAPTER XXI. * 323

DRAMA, CONTINUED.—TIRSO DE MOLINA.—MIRA DE MESCUA.—VALDIVIELSO.—ANTONIO DE MENDOZA.—RUIZ DE ALARCON.—LUIS DE BELMONTE, AND OTHERS.—EL DIABLO PREDICADOR.—OPPOSITION OF LEARNED MEN AND OF THE CHURCH TO THE POPULAR DRAMA.—A LONG STRUGGLE.—TRIUMPH OF THE DRAMA.

ANOTHER of the persons who, at this time, sought popular favor on the public stage was Gabriel Tellez, an ecclesiastic of rank, better known as Tirso de Molina, — the name under which he slightly disguised himself when publishing works of a secular character. Of his life we know little, except that he was born in Madrid; that he was educated at Alcalá; that he entered the Church as early as 1613; and that he died in the convent of Soria, of which he was the head, probably in February, 1648;— some accounts representing him to have been sixty years old at the time of his death, and some seventy-eight or even eighty.¹

In other respects we know more of him. As a writer for the theatre, we have five volumes of his dramas, published between 1627 and 1636; besides which, a considerable number of his plays can be found scattered through his other works, or printed each by itself. His talent seems to have been decidedly dramatic and satirical; but the moral tone of his plots is lower than common, and many of his plays contain passages whose indecency has caused them to be so hunted down by the confessional and the Inquisition,

¹ Deleytar Aprovechando, Madrid, y Baena, Hijos de Madrid, Tom. II. p. 1765, 2 tom., 4to, Prólogo. Alvarez 267.