

the Zarabanda, which was the most obnoxious \* 453 to censure, could, indeed, \* have had no better origin.<sup>63</sup> He, however, was not so severe in his judgment on others. He declares that the dances accompanied by singing were better than the *entremeses*, which, he adds disparagingly, dealt only in hungry men, thieves, and brawlers.<sup>64</sup> But whatever may have been individual opinions about them, they occasioned great scandal, and, in 1621, kept their place on the theatre only by a vigorous exertion of the popular will in opposition to the will of the government. As it was, they were for a time restrained and modified; but still no one of them was absolutely exiled, except the licentious Zarabanda, — many of the crowds that thronged the court-yards thinking, with one of their leaders, that the dances were the salt of the plays, and that the theatre would be good for nothing without them.<sup>65</sup>

Indeed, in all its forms, and in all its subsidiary attractions of ballads, *entremeses* and *saynetes*, music, and dancing, the old Spanish drama was essentially a popular entertainment, governed by the popular will. In any other country, under the same circumstances, it would hardly have risen above the condition in which it was left by Lope de Rueda, when it was the amusement of the lowest classes of the populace. But the Spaniards have always been a poetical people. There is a romance in their early history, and a picturesqueness in their very costume and manners, that cannot be mistaken. A deep enthusiasm runs, like a vein of pure and rich ore, at

<sup>63</sup> Cuevas de Salamanca. There is a curious *bayle entremesado* of Moreto, on the subject of Don Rodrigo and La Cava, in the Autos, etc., 1655, f. 92; and another, called "El Médico," in

the "Ocios de Ignacio Alvarez Pellicer," s. l. 1685, 4to, p. 51.

<sup>64</sup> See the "Gran Sultana," as already cited, note 57.

<sup>65</sup> C. Pellicer, Origen, Tom. I. p. 102.

the bottom of their character, and the workings of strong passions and an original imagination are everywhere visible among the wild elements that break out on its surface. The same energy, the same fancy, the same excited feelings, which, in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, produced the most various and rich popular ballads of modern times, were not yet stilled or quenched in the seventeenth. The same national character, which, under Saint Ferdinand \* and his successors, drove the Moorish \* 454 crescent through the plains of Andalusia, and found utterance for its exultation in poetry of such remarkable sweetness and power, was still active under the Philips, and called forth, directed, and controlled a dramatic literature which grew out of the national genius and the condition of the mass of the people, and which, therefore, in all its forms and varieties, is essentially and peculiarly Spanish.

Under an impulse so wide and deep, the number of dramatic authors would naturally be great. As early as 1605, when the theatre, such as it had been constituted by Lope de Vega, had existed hardly more than fifteen years, we can easily see, by the discussions in the first part of Don Quixote, that it already filled a large space in the interests of the time; and from the *Prólogo* prefixed by Cervantes to his plays in 1615, it is quite plain that its character and success were already settled, and that no inconsiderable number of its best authors had already appeared. Even as early as this, dramas were composed in the lower classes of society. Villegas tells us of a tailor of Toledo who wrote many; Guevara gives a similar account of a sheep-shearer at Ecija; and Figueroa, of a well-known tradesman of Seville; — all in full accordance with the



representations made in Don Quixote concerning the shepherd Chrisóstomo, and the whole current of the story and conversations of the actors in the "Journey" of Roxas.<sup>66</sup> In this state of things, the number of writers for the theatre went on increasing out of all proportion to their increase in other countries, as appears from the lists given by Lope de Vega, in 1630; by Montalvan, in 1632, when we find seventy-six dramatic poets living in Castile alone; and by Antonio, about 1660. During the whole of this century, therefore, we may regard the theatre as a part of the popular character in Spain, and as having become, in the proper sense of the word, more truly a national theatre than any other that has been produced in modern times.<sup>67</sup>

\* 455 \* It might naturally have been foreseen, that, upon a movement like this, imparted and sustained by all the force of the national genius, any accidents of patronage or opposition would produce little effect. And so in fact it proved. The ecclesiastical authorities always frowned upon it, and sometimes

<sup>66</sup> Figueroa, Pasagero, 1617, f. 105. Villegas, Eróticas Najera, 1617, 4to, Tom. II. p. 29. Diabolo Cojuelo, Tranco V. Figueroa, Plaza Universal, Madrid, 1733, folio, Discurso 91, first printed 1615.

<sup>67</sup> Two facts may be mentioned as illustrations of the passion of Spaniards for their national drama.

The first is, that the wretched captives on the coast of Barbary solaced themselves with it in those vast *Banos* which were their prison-houses at night. One instance of this we have noticed as early as 1575, when Cervantes was in Algiers (*ante*, Chap. XI.). Another is noticed as having occurred in 1589 (see Gallego, "Criticon" No. IV., 1835, p. 43). And another shows that, in 1646, they must have been of frequent occurrence at Tunis, for the Moorish prince already referred to (Chap. XVII. note 30) had been present, as if it were

nothing remarkable, at the representation of such a Spanish play the night before he escaped. Indeed, I have no doubt that the acting of Spanish plays both at Algiers and Tunis was a common solace of the Christian captives there.

The other fact is, that so many dramas were written by persons in the opposite or higher classes of society. Perhaps the most amusing instance of this indulgence is to be found in the case of the Duque de Estrada, who lived from 1589 to about 1650, and who says, in his autobiography, that, during his exile, he wrote a considerable number of plays, six on his own adventures;—so true was it that everybody from tailors to princes wrote plays upon all sorts of subjects, from the most solemn in the Scriptures down to the most frivolous in their own lives. Memorial Historico, Tom. XII., Madrid, 1860, p. 504.

placed themselves so as directly to resist its progress; but its sway and impulse were so heavy, that it passed over their opposition, in every instance, as over a slight obstacle. Nor was it more affected by the seductions of patronage. Philip the Fourth, for above forty years, favored and supported it with princely munificence. He built splendid saloons for it in his palaces; he wrote for it; he acted in improvisated dramas. The reigning favorite, the Count Duke Olivares, to flatter the royal taste, invented new dramatic luxuries, such as that of magnificent floating theatres, constructed by Cosme Lotti, on the sheets of water in the gardens of the Buen Retiro.<sup>67½</sup> All royal entertainments seemed in fact, for a time, to take a dramatic tone, or tend to it. But still the popular character of the theatre itself was unchecked and unaffected;—still the plays acted in the royal residences, before the principal persons in the kingdom, were the same with those performed before the populace in the court-yards of Madrid;—and when other times and other princes came, the old Spanish drama left the halls and palaces, where it had been so long flattered, with as little of a \* courtly air as that with which it \* 456 had originally entered them.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67½</sup> Something of the same sort had been done in the preceding reign, when the Duke de Lerma caused a floating stage to be erected on the Tormes, and had the "Casa Confusa" of his son-in-law, the Conde de Lemos, acted on it in presence of Philip III., whose *privado* the Duke de Lerma then was. But the mad folly of the Conde Duque de Olivares on the waters of the Buen Retiro, carried out as it was by the curious inventions of the Florentine architect, undoubtedly surpassed in wasteful and fantastic extravagance anything that could have been undertaken at Salamanca, or wherever else on the Tormes this whimsical exhibition—of which

I have seen only a very slight notice—may have occurred. C. Pellicer, Teatro, Tom. II. p. 135.

<sup>68</sup> Mad. d'Aulnoy, fresh from the stage of Racine and Molière, then the most refined and best appointed in Europe, speaks with great admiration of the theatres in the Spanish palaces, though she ridicules those granted to the public. (Voyage, etc., ed. 1693, Tom. III. p. 7, and elsewhere.) But Mad. de Villars, French Ambassadors at the same period, who says that she went often with the Queen to these palatial representations, gives a very different account of them. "Rien n'est si détestable," she says in one of her



The same impulse that made it so powerful in other respects filled the old Spanish theatre with an almost incredible number of cavalier and heroic dramas, dramas for saints, sacramental *autos*, *entremeses*, and farces of all names. Their whole amount, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, has been estimated to exceed thirty thousand, of which four thousand eight hundred by unknown authors had been, at one time, collected by a single person in Madrid.<sup>69</sup> Their character and merit were, as we have seen, very various. Still, the circumstance that they were all written substantially for one object and under one system of opinions gave them a stronger air of general resemblance than might otherwise have been anticipated. For it should never be forgotten, that the Spanish drama in its highest and most heroic forms was still a popular entertainment, just as it was in its farces and ballads. Its purpose was, not only to please all classes, but to please all equally; — those who paid three maravedís, and stood crowded together under a hot sun in the court-yard, as well as the rank and fashion, that lounged in their costly apartments above, and amused themselves hardly less with the motley scene of the audiences in the *patio* than with that of the actors on the stage.<sup>70</sup> Whether the story this

letters; and in another, dated March, 1680, giving an account of a play thus acted at noonday, she says "L'on y mouroit de froid." (Lettres, ed. 1760, pp. 79 and 81.) One way, however, in which the kings patronized the drama was, probably, not very agreeable to the authors, if it were often practised; I mean that of requiring a piece to be acted nowhere but in the royal presence. This was the case with Gerónimo de Villayzan's "Sufrir mas por querer mas." Comedias por Diferentes Autores, Tom. XXV., Zaragoza, 1633, f. 145, b.

<sup>69</sup> Schack's Geschichte der dramatis. Lit. in Spanien, Berlin, 1846, Tom.

III. 8vo, pp. 22-24; a work of great value.

<sup>70</sup> These rooms and balconies, from which the favored and rich witnessed the plays as they were acted, seem early to have been fitted up in a costly manner. Antonio Perez, whose troubles began in 1579, — that is, before the theatre came into the hands of Lope de Vega, — had a "palco" which was fitted up with tapestries, and cost him "treinta reales diarios," — this luxury being thought of consequence enough to be entered in the inventory of his effects after he had been arrested by order of Philip II. — See *post*, Chap. XXXVII.

mass of people saw enacted were probable or not, was to them a matter of small consequence. But it was necessary \* that it should be interesting. \* 457 Above all, it was necessary that it should be Spanish; and therefore, though its subject might be Greek or Roman, Oriental or mythological, the characters represented were always Castilian, and Castilian after the fashion of the seventeenth century, — governed by Castilian notions of gallantry and the Castilian point of honor.

It was the same with their costumes. Coriolanus was dressed like Don John of Austria; Aristotle came on the stage with a curled periwig and buckles in his shoes, like a Spanish Abbé; and Madame d'Aulnoy says, the Devil she saw was dressed like any other Castilian gentleman, except that his stockings were flame-colored and he wore horns.<sup>71</sup> But however the actors might be dressed, or however the play might confound geography and history, or degrade heroism by caricature, still, in a great majority of cases, dramatic situations are skilfully produced; the story, full of bustle and incident, grows more and more urgent as it advances; and the result of the whole is, that, though we may sometimes have been much offended, we are sorry we have reached the conclusion, and find on looking back that we have almost always been excited, and often pleased.

The Spanish theatre, in many of its attributes and characteristics, stands, therefore, by itself. It takes no cognizance of ancient example; for the spirit of antiquity could have little in common with materials so modern, Christian, and romantic. It borrowed nothing from the drama of France or of Italy; for it was

<sup>71</sup> Relation du Voyage d'Espagne, ed. 1693, Tom. I. p. 55.



in advance of both when its final character was not only developed, but settled. And as for England, though Shakespeare and Lope were contemporaries, and there are points of resemblance between them which it is pleasant to trace and difficult to explain, still they and their schools, undoubtedly, had not the least influence on each other.<sup>71</sup> The Spanish drama is, therefore, entirely national. Many of its best subjects are taken from the chronicles and traditions \* 458 familiar to the audience \* that listened to them, and its prevalent versification reminded the hearers, by its sweetness and power, of what had so often moved their hearts in the earliest outpourings of the national genius. With all its faults, then, this old Spanish drama, founded on the great traits of the national character, maintained itself in the popular favor as long as that character existed in its original attributes; and even now it remains one of the most striking and one of the most interesting portions of modern literature.

<sup>71</sup> One reason, I suppose, was the hatred of the two nations for each other during the reigns of Elizabeth and James, and those of the Philips. Still it is odd and amusing to compare the "Castelvines y Monteses" of Lope de Vega, published 1647, and the "Bandos de Verona" of Roxas, 1679, with the "Romeo and Juliet" of Shakespeare, 1597. There is a curious notice of Lope's play in Grey's Notes on Shakespeare, 1754, Vol. II. pp. 249-262, and a translation of the whole play of Lope, made with skill and taste by F. W. Cosens, 4to, London, 1869, printed at the Chiswick press, but not published. Unhappily the original was not worth the trouble.

## \* CHAPTER XXVII. \* 459

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE POEMS. — SEMPERE. — ÇAPATA. — AYLLON. — SANZ. — FERNANDEZ. — ESPINOSA. — COLOMA. — ERCILLA AND HIS ARAUCANA, WITH OSORIO'S CONTINUATION. — OÑA. — GABRIEL LASSO DE LA VEGA. — SAAVEDRA. — CASTELLANOS. — CENTENERA. — VILLAGRA. — RELIGIOUS NARRATIVE POEMS. — BLASCO. — MATA. — VIRUES AND HIS MONSERRATE. — BRAVO. — VALDIVIELSO. — HOJEDA. — DIAZ AND OTHERS. — IMAGINATIVE NARRATIVE POEMS. — ESPINOSA AND OTHERS. — BARAHONA DE SOTO. — BALBUENA AND HIS BERNARDO.

EPIC poetry, from its general dignity and pretensions, is almost uniformly placed at the head of the different divisions of a nation's literature. But in Spain, though the series of efforts in that direction begins early and boldly, and has been continued with diligence down to our own times, little has been achieved that is worthy of memory. The Poem of the Cid is, indeed, the oldest attempt at narrative poetry in the modern languages of Western Europe that deserves the name; and, composed, as it must have been, above a century before the appearance of Dante, and two centuries before the time of Chaucer, it is to be regarded as one of the most remarkable outbreaks of poetical and national enthusiasm on record. But the few similar attempts that were made at long intervals in the periods immediately subsequent, like those we witness in "The Chronicle of Fernan Gonzalez," in "The Life of Alexander," and in "The Labyrinth" of Juan de Mena, deserve to be mentioned chiefly in order to mark the progress of Spanish culture during the lapse of three centuries. No one of them showed the power of the grand old narrative Poem of the Cid.