

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.⁷¹ 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.

⁷¹ 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.

At last, when we reach the reign of Charles * 460 the Fifth, * or rather, when we come to the immediate results of that reign, it seems as if the national genius had been inspired with a poetical ambition no less extravagant than the ambition for military glory which their foreign successes had stirred up in the masters of the state. The poets of the time, or those who regarded themselves as such, evidently imagined that to them was assigned the task of worthily celebrating the achievements, in the Old World and in the New, which had really raised their country to the first place among the powers of Europe, and which it was then thought not presumptuous to hope would lay the foundation for a universal monarchy.

In the reign of Philip the Second, therefore, we have an extraordinary number of epic or rather narrative poems,—in all above twenty,—full of the feelings which then animated the nation, and devoted to subjects connected with Spanish glory, both ancient and recent,—poems in which their authors endeavored to imitate the great Italian epics, already at the height of their reputation, and fondly believed they had succeeded. But the works they thus produced, with hardly more than a single exception, belong oftener to patriotism than to poetry; the best of them being so closely confined to matters of fact, that they come with nearly equal pretensions into the province of history, while the rest fall into a dull, chronicling style, which makes it of little consequence under what class they may chance to be arranged.

The first of these historical poems is the "Carolea" of Hierónimo Sempere, published in 1560, and devoted to the victories and glories of Charles the Fifth, whose name, in fact, it bears. The author was a merchant,—

a circumstance strange in Spanish literature,—and it is written in the Italian *ottava rima*; the first part, which consists of eleven cantos, being devoted to the wars in Italy, and ending with the captivity of Francis the First; while the second, which consists of nineteen more, contains the contest in Germany, the Emperor's visit to Flanders, and his coronation at Bologna.

* The whole fills two volumes, and ends abruptly * 461 with the promise of another, devoted to the capture of Tunis; a promise which, happily, was never redeemed.¹

The next narrative poem in the order of time was published by Luis de Çapata, only five years later. It is the "Carlo Famoso," devoted, like the last, to the fame of Charles the Fifth, and, like that, more praised than it deserves to be by Cervantes, when he places both of them among the best poetry in Don Quixote's library. Its author declares that he was thirteen years in writing it; and it fills fifty cantos, comprehending above forty thousand lines in octave stanzas. But never was poem avowedly written in a spirit so prosaic. It gives year by year the life of the Emperor, from 1522 to his death at Yuste in 1558; and, to prevent the possibility of mistake, the date is placed at the top of each

¹ "La Carolea," Valencia, 1560, 2 tom. 12mo. The first volume ends with accounts of the city of Valencia, in the course of which he commemorates some of its distinguished families and some of its scholars, particularly Luis Vives. Notices of Sempere are to be found in Ximeno, Tom. I. p. 135, in Fuster, Tom. I. p. 110, and in the notes to Polo's "Diana," by Cerdá, p. 380.

A poem entitled "Conquista de la Nueva Castilla," first published at Paris in 1848, 12mo, by J. A. Sprecher de Bernegg, *may*, perhaps, be older than the "Carolea." It is a short narrative

poem, in two hundred and eighty-three octave stanzas, apparently written about the middle of the sixteenth century, by some unknown author of that period, and devoted to the glory of Francisco Pizarro, from the time when he left Panamá, in 1524, to the fall of Atabalipa. It was found in the Imperial Library at Vienna, among the manuscripts there, but it seems to have been edited with very little critical care. It does not, however, deserve more than it received. It is wholly worthless;—not better than we can easily suppose to have been written by one of Pizarro's rude followers.

page, and everything of an imaginative nature or of doubtful authority is distinguished by asterisks from the chronicle of ascertained facts. Two passages in it are interesting, one of which gives the circumstances of the death of Garcilasso, and the other an ample account of Torralva, the great magician of the time of Ferdinand and Isabella; — the same person who is commemorated by Don Quixote when he rides among the stars. Such, however, as the poem is, Çapata had great confidence in its merits, and boastfully published it at his own expense. But it was unsuccessful, and he died regretting his folly.²

* 462 * Diego Ximenez de Ayllon, of Arcos de la Frontera, who served as a soldier under the Duke of Alva, wrote a poem on the history of the Cid, and dedicated it, in 1579, to his great leader. But this, too, was little regarded at the time, and is now hardly remembered.³ Nor was more favor shown to Hippólito Sanz, a knight of the Order of Saint John, in Malta, who shared in the brave defence of that island against the Turks in 1565, and wrote a poetical history of that

² "Carlo Famoso de Don Luis de Çapata," Valencia, 1565, 4to. At the opening of the fiftieth canto, he congratulates himself that he has "reached the end of his thirteen years' journey"; but, after all, is obliged to hurry over the last fourteen years of his hero's life in that one canto. For Garcilasso, see Canto XLI.; and for Torralva's story, which strongly illustrates the Spanish character of the sixteenth century, see Cantos XXVIII., XXX., XXXI., and XXXII., with the notes of the commentators to Don Quixote, Parte II. c. 41. Çapata figured as a knight, I think, at the famous festivities of Bins in 1549. Calvete de Estrella, Viage, ec., Anveres, folio, 1552, f. 196.

³ Antonio (Bib. Nov., Tom. I. p. 323) gives the date and title, and little else. My copy, which is the only one of the poem known to me, is printed at

Alcalá de Henares, 1579, 4to, 149 leaves, double columns. It is dedicated to the great Duke of Alva, under whom its author had served, and consists chiefly of the usual traditions about the Cid, told in rather flowing, but insipid, octave stanzas.

In the Library of the Society of History at Madrid, MS. D. No. 42, is a poem in double *redondillas de arte mayor*, by Fray Gonzalo de Arredondo, on the achievements both of the Cid and of the Count Fernan Gonzalez, the merits of each being nicely balanced in alternate cantos. It is hardly worth notice, except from the circumstance that it was written as early as 1522, when the unused license of Charles V. to print it was given. Fray Arredondo is also the author of "El Castillo Inexpugnable y Defensorio de la Fé," Burgos, 1528, fol.

defence, under the name of "La Maltea," which was published in 1582.⁴

Other poems were produced during the same period, not unlike those we have just noticed; — such as Espinosa's continuation of the "Orlando Furioso," which is not entirely without merit; and "The Decade on the Passion of Christ," by Coloma, which is grave and dignified, if nothing else; — both of them in the manner of the contemporary Italian heroic and narrative poems. But neither obtained much regard when it first appeared, and neither of them can now be said to be remembered. Indeed, there is but one long poem of the age of Philip the Second, which obtained an acknowledged reputation from the first, and has preserved it ever since, both at home and abroad; — I mean the "Araucana."⁵

* Its author, whose personal character is im- * 463 pressed on every part of his poem, was Alonso

⁴ Ximeno, Tom. I. p. 179, and Velazquez, Dieze, p. 385.

⁵ Nicolas de Espinosa's second part of the "Orlando Furioso" is better known, as there are editions of it in 1555, 1556, 1557, and 1559, the one of 1556 being printed at Antwerp in 4to. Juan de Coloma's "Década de la Pasion," in ten books, *terza rima*, was printed in 1576, 18mo, ff. 166, at Caller (Cagliari) in Sardinia, where its author was Viceroy, and on which island this is said to have been the first book that was ever printed. The last statement is, I suppose, not true, or the fact would have been set forth in the license to print granted by Coloma himself, because that license declares formally that the Rev. Nicolas Cañyellas, Vicar-General of Caller, had already, with much cost and toil, introduced printing into the island. The manuscript is certified to have been examined and approved by a commission of Cardinals at Rome; — probably a compliment to the high position of the author. The book, of which I have a copy, is neatly printed for the time.

See, also, Rodriguez, Bib. Valentina, pp. 251, 252, and Ximeno, Tom. I. p. 175. It is praised by Cervantes in his "Galatea," and is a sort of harmony of the Gospels, not without a dignified movement in its action, and interspersed with narratives from the Old Testament. The story of St. Veronica, (Lib. VII.,) and the description of the Madonna as she sees her son surrounded by the rude crowd and ascending Mount Calvary under the burden of his cross, (Lib. VIII.,) are passages of considerable merit. Coloma says he chose the *terza rima* "because it is the gravest verse in the language, and the best suited to any grave subject." In a poem in the same volume, on the Resurrection, he has, however, taken the octave rhyme; and half a century earlier, the *terza rima* had been rejected by Pedro Fernandez de Villegas, as quite unfitted for Castilian poetry. See *ante*, Vol. I. p. 445, 6, note. There are poems by Coloma in the Cancionero of 1554, noticed *ante*, Vol. I. p. 393, note 8.

de Ercilla, third son of a gentleman of Biscayan origin, — a proud circumstance, to which the poet himself alludes more than once.⁶ He was born in 1533, at Madrid, and his father, a member of the council of Charles the Fifth, was able, from his influence at court, to have his son educated as one of the pages of the prince who was afterwards Philip the Second, and whom the young Ercilla accompanied in his journeys to different parts of Europe between 1547 and 1551. In 1554, he was with Philip in England, when that prince married Queen Mary;⁷ and news having arrived there, as he tells us in his poem, of an outbreak of the natives in Chili which threatened to give trouble to their conquerors, many noble Spaniards then at the English court volunteered, in the old spirit of their country, to serve against the infidels.

Among those who presented themselves to join in this romantic expedition was Ercilla, then twenty-
* 464 one years * old. By permission of the prince, he says, he exchanged his civil for military service, and for the first time girded on his sword in earnest. But the beginning of the expedition was not auspicious. Aldrete, a person of military experience, who was in the suite of Philip, and under whose standard they had embarked in the enterprise, died on the way; and after their arrival, Ercilla and his friends

⁶ In Canto XXVII. he says: "Behold the rough soil of ancient Biscay, whence it is certain comes that nobility now extended through the whole land; behold Bermeo, the head of Biscay, surrounded with thorn-woods, and above its port the old walls of the house of Ercilla, a house older than the city itself."

⁷ On this occasion there were great rejoicings in Spain, for it was believed that the English heresy was now at an end. At Toledo, in 1555, there was published by Juan del Angulo, *Tratado*

Primero of the "Flor de las Solemnes Alegrias que se hizieron en la Imperial Ciudad de Toledo por la Conversion del Reyno de Inglaterra." (4to, ff. 31.) The solemnities and frolics of the occasion are described, and the verses in old-fashioned *villancicos* and flowing *redondillas* are given, or at least a part of them; for the *Segundo Tratado* seems never to have been printed. An account of it may be found in the Spanish translation of this History, Tom. III. pp. 561, 562.

were sent, under the less competent leading of a son of the viceroy of Peru, to achieve the subjugation of the territory of Arauco, — an inconsiderable spot of earth, but one which had been so bravely defended against the Spaniards by its inhabitants as to excite respect for their heroism in many parts of Europe.⁸ The contest was a bloody one; for the Araucans were desperate and the Spaniards cruel. Ercilla went through his part of it with honor, meeting the enemy in seven severe battles, and suffering still more severely from wanderings in the wilderness, and from long exposure to the harassing warfare of savages.

Once he was in greater danger from his countrymen and from his own fiery temper than he was, perhaps, at any moment from the common enemy. In an interval of the war, when a public tournament was held in honor of the accession of Philip the Second to the throne, some cause of offence occurred during the jousting between Ercilla and another of the cavaliers. The mimic fight, as had not unfrequently happened on similar occasions in the mother country, was changed into a real one; and, in the confusion that followed, the young commander, who presided at the festival, rashly ordered both the principal offenders to be put to death, — a sentence which he reluctantly changed into imprisonment and exile, though not until after Ercilla had been actually placed on the scaffold for execution.

* When he was released, he seems to have * 465 engaged in the romantic enterprise of hunting down the cruel and savage adventurer, Lope de

⁸ "Arauco," says Ercilla, "is a small province, about twenty leagues long and twelve broad, which produces the most warlike people in the Indies, and is therefore called The Unconquered State." Its people are still proud of their name. Luis de Belmonte, in his

preface to the play in honor of the Marquis of Cañete, 1622, (noticed *post.*) says, when speaking of the smallness of the Araucan territory: "Its soil is nourished with the bones of Spaniards. Alexander conquered the east with fewer soldiers than Arauco has cost Chili."

Aguirre; but he did not arrive in the monster's neighborhood till the moment when his career of blood was ended. From this time we know only, that, after suffering from a long illness, Ercilla returned to Spain in 1562, at the age of twenty-nine, having been eight years in America. At first, his unsettled habits made him restless, and he visited Italy and other parts of Europe; but in 1570 he married a lady connected with the great family of Santa Cruz, Doña María de Bazan, whom he celebrates at the end of the eighteenth canto of his poem. About 1576, he was made gentleman of the bedchamber to the Emperor of Germany, — perhaps a merely titular office; and about 1580, he was again in Madrid and in poverty, complaining loudly of the neglect and ingratitude of the king whom he had so long served, and who seemed now to have forgotten him. During the latter part of his life we almost entirely lose sight of him, and know only that he began a poem in honor of the family of Santa Cruz, and that he died as early as 1595.

Ercilla is to be counted among the many instances in which Spanish poetical genius and heroism were one feeling. He wrote in the spirit in which he fought; and his principal work is as military as any portion of his adventurous life. Its subject is the very expedition against Arauco which occupied eight or nine years of his youth; and he has simply called it "La Araucana," making it a long heroic poem in thirty-seven cantos, which, with the exception of two or three trifles of no value, is all that remains of his works. Fortunately, it has proved a sufficient foundation for his fame. But though it is unquestionably a poem that discovers much of the sensibility of genius, it has great defects; for it was written when the elements

of epic poetry were singularly misunderstood in Spain, and Ercilla, misled by such models as the "Carolea" and "Carlo Famoso," fell easily into serious mistakes.

The first division of the Araucana is, in fact, a versified *history of the early part of the *466 war. It is geographically and statistically accurate. It is a poem, thus far, that should be read with a map, and one whose connecting principle is merely the succession of events. Of this rigid accuracy he more than once boasts; and, to observe it, he begins with a description of Arauco and its people, amidst whom he lays his scene, and then goes on through fifteen cantos of consecutive battles, negotiations, conspiracies, and adventures, just as they occurred. He composed this part of his poem, he tells us, in the wilderness, where he fought and suffered; taking the night to describe what the day had brought to pass, and writing his verses on fragments of paper, or, when these failed, on scraps of skins; so that it is, in truth, a poetical journal, in octave rhymes, of the expedition in which he was engaged. These fifteen cantos, written between 1555 and 1563, constitute the first part, which ends abruptly in the midst of a violent tempest, and which was printed by itself in 1569.

Ercilla intimates that he soon discovered such a description of successive events to be monotonous; and he determined to intersperse it with incidents more interesting and poetical. In his second part, therefore, which was not printed till 1578, we have, it is true, the same historical fidelity in the main thread of the narrative, but it is broken with something like epic machinery; such as a vision of Bellona, in the seventeenth and eighteenth cantos, where the poet witnesses in South America the victory of Philip the Second at