

This is certainly not poetry of a high order. Invention and dignified ornament are wanting in it; but still it is not without spirit, and, at any rate, it would be difficult to find in the whole poem a passage more worthy of regard.

In the National Library at Madrid is a poem of twelve hundred and twenty lines, composed in the same system of quaternion rhymes that we have already noticed as settled in the old Castilian literature, and with irregularities like those found in the whole class of poems to which it belongs. Its subject is Joseph, the son of Jacob; but there are two * 86 circumstances which distinguish * it from the other narrative poetry of the period, and render it curious and important. The first is, that, though composed in the Spanish language, it is written wholly in the Arabic character, and has, therefore, all the appearance of an Arabic manuscript; to which should be added the fact, that the metre and spelling are accommodated to the force of the Arabic vowels, so that, if neither of the manuscripts of it now known to exist be the original, it must still have been originally written in the same manner. The other singular circumstance is, that the story of the poem, which is the familiar one of Joseph and his brethren, is not told according to the original in our Hebrew Scriptures, but according to the shorter and less poetical version in the twelfth chapter of the Koran, with occasional variations and additions, some of which are due to the fanciful expounders of the Koran, while others may be of the author's own invention. These two circumstances taken together leave no reasonable doubt, that the writer of the poem was one of the many Moriscos who, remaining at the North after the body of the nation

had been driven southward, had forgotten their native language and adopted that of their conquerors, though their religion and culture still continued to be Arabic.³³

The "Poem of Joseph" is imperfect at the end, and is known to exist in only two manuscripts, both in the Arabic character. Not much of it, however, seems to be lost. It opens, after a few introductory stanzas, with the jealousy of the brothers of Joseph at his dream, and their solicitation of their father to let him go with them to the field.

* Then up and spake his sons : "Sire, do not deem it so ; * 87
Ten brethren are we here, this very well you know ;
That we should all be traitors, and treat him as a foe,
You either will not fear, or you will not let him go.

"But this is what we thought, as our Maker knows above :
That the child might gain more knowledge, and with it gain our love,
To show him all our shepherd's craft, as with flocks and herds we move ;
But still the power is thine to grant, and thine to disapprove."

And then they said so much with words so smooth and fair,
And promised him so faithfully with words of tender care,
That he gave them up his child ; but bade them first beware,
And bring him quickly back again, unharmed by any snare.³⁴

When the brothers have consummated their treason,
and sold Joseph to a caravan of Egyptian merchants,

³³ A good many other manuscripts of this sort are known to exist; but I am not aware of any so old, or of such poetical value. (Ochoa, *Catálogo de Manuscritos Españoles*, etc., pp. 6-21. Gayangos, *Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, Tom. I. pp. 492 and 503.) As to the spelling in the Poem of Joseph, we have *sembraredes*, *chiriador*, *certero*, *marabella*, *taraydores*, etc. To avoid a hiatus, a consonant is prefixed to the second word; as "cada guno" repeatedly for *cada uno*. The manuscript of the Poema de José, in 4to, 49 leaves, was first shown to me in the Public Library at Madrid, marked G. g. 101, by Conde, the historian; but I owe a copy of the whole of it to the kindness

of Don Pascual de Gayangos, Professor of Arabic in the University there.

³⁴ Dijeron sus filios: "Padre, eso no pensedes;
Somos diez ermanos, eso bien sabedes;
Seriamos taraidores, eso no dudedes;
Mas, empero, si no vos place, aced lo que queredes.

"Mas aquesto pensamos, sabelo el Criador;
Porque supiese mas, i ganase el nuestro amor,
Ensenarle aiemos las obelhas, i el ganado mayor;
Mas empero, si no vos place, mandad como senor."

Tanto le dijeron, de palabras fermosas,
Tanto le prometieron, de palabras piadosas,
Que el les dió el minno, dijoles las oras,
Que lo guardasen a el de manos enganosas.

(Poema de José, from the MS. in the King's Library, Madrid.)

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the story goes on much as it does in the Koran. The fair Zuleikha, or Zuleia, who answers to Potiphar's wife in the Hebrew Scriptures, and who figures largely in Mohammedan poetry, fills a space more ample than usual in the fancies of the present poem. Joseph, too, is a more considerable personage. He is adopted as the king's son, and made a king in the land; and the dreams of the real king, the years of plenty and famine, the journeyings of the brothers to Egypt, their recognition by Joseph, and his message to Jacob, with the grief of the latter that Benjamin did not return, at which the manuscript breaks off, are much amplified, in the Oriental manner, and made to sound like passages from "Antar," or the "Arabian Nights," rather than from the touching and beautiful story to which we have been accustomed from our childhood.

Among the inventions of the author is, I suppose, a conversation which the wolf—who is brought in by the false brethren as the very animal that had * 88 killed Joseph—holds with * Jacob.³⁵ Another is the Eastern fancy that the measure by which Joseph distributed the corn, and which was made of gold and precious stones, would, when put to his ear, inform him whether the persons present were guilty of falsehood to him.³⁶ But the following incident, which, like that of Joseph's parting in a spirit of ten-

³⁵ Rogo Jacob al Criador, e al lobo fue a fi-
blar;
Dijo el lobo: "No lo mando Allah, que a nabi *
fuese a matar,
En tan estranna tierra me fueron á cazar,
Anne fecho pecado, i lebanme a lazarar." MS.

³⁶ La mesura del pan de oro era labrada,
E de piedras preciosas era estrellada,
I era de ver toda con guisa enclabada,
Que fazia saber al Rey la berdad apurada.

E firio el Rey en la mesura e fizola sonar,
Pone la á su orella por oír e guardar:
Dijoles, e no quiso mas dudar,
Segun dize la mesura, berdad puede estar MS.

* Nabi, Prophet, Arabic.

It is Joseph who is here called king, as he is often in the poem, — once he is called emperor, — though the Pharaoh of the period is fully recognized; and this costly measure, made of gold and precious stones, corresponds to the cup of the Hebrew account, and is found, like that, in the sack of Benjamin, where it had been put by Joseph (after he had secretly revealed himself to Benjamin), as the means of seizing Benjamin and detaining him in Egypt, with his own consent, but without giving his false brethren the reason for it.

der forgiveness from his brethren³⁷ when they sold him, is added to the narrative of the Koran, will better illustrate the general tone of the poem, as well as the general powers of the poet.

On the first night after the outrage, Jusuf, as he is called in the poem, when travelling along in charge of a negro, passes a cemetery on a hillside where his mother lies buried.

And when the negro heeded not, that guarded him behind,
From off the camel Jusuf sprang, on which he rode confined,
And hastened, with all speed, his mother's grave to find,
Where he knelt and pardon sought, to relieve his troubled mind.

He cried, "God's grace be with thee still, O Lady mother dear!
O mother, you would sorrow, if you looked upon me here;
For my neck is bound with chains, and I live in grief and fear,
Like a traitor by my brethren sold, like a captive to the spear.

"They have sold me! they have sold me! though I never did them harm;
They have torn me from my father, from his strong and living arm;
By art and cunning they enticed me, and by falsehood's guilty charm,
And I go a base-bought captive, full of anguish and alarm."

* But now the negro looked about, and knew that he was gone, * 89
For no man could be seen, and the camel came alone;
So he turned his sharpened ear, and caught the wailing tone,
Where Jusuf, by his mother's grave, lay making heavy moan.

And the negro hurried up, and gave him there a blow;
So quick and cruel was it, that it instant laid him low.
"A base-born wretch," he cried aloud, "a base-born thief art thou;
Thy masters, when we purchased thee, they told us it was so."

But Jusuf answered straight, "Nor thief nor wretch am I;
My mother's grave is this, and for pardon here I cry;
I cry to Allah's power, and send my prayer on high,
That, since I never wronged thee, his curse may on thee lie."

And then all night they travelled on, till dawned the coming day,
When the land was sore tormented with a whirlwind's furious sway;
The sun grew dark at noon, their hearts sunk in dismay,
And they knew not, with their merchandise, to seek or make their way.³⁸

³⁷ Dijo Jusuf: "Ermanos, perdoneos el Criador,
Del tuerto que me tenedes, perdoneos el Señor
Que para siempre e nunca se parta el nuestro amor."
Abraso a cada guno, e partiése con dolor. MS.

³⁸ Dio salto del camello, donde iba cabalgando;
No lo sintió el negro, que lo iba guardando:
Fuese a la fuesa de su madre, a pedirle perdon
doblando,
Jusuf a la fuesa tan apriosa llorando

The age and origin of this remarkable poem can be settled only by internal evidence. From this it seems probable that it was written in Aragon, because it contains many words and phrases peculiar to the border country of the Provençals,³⁹ and that it dates not far from the year 1400, because the fourfold rhyme is hardly found later in such verses, and because the rudeness of the language might indicate even an earlier period, if the tale had come from Castile. But, * 90 in whatever period we may * place it, it is a curious and interesting production. It has the directness and simplicity of the age to which it is attributed, mingled sometimes with a tenderness rarely found in ages so violent. Its pastoral air, too, and its preservation of Oriental manners, harmonize well with the Arabian feelings that prevail throughout the work; while in its spirit, and occasionally in its moral tone, it shows the confusion of the two religions which then prevailed in Spain, and that mixture of the Eastern and Western forms of civilization which afterwards gives somewhat of its coloring to Spanish poetry.⁴⁰

The last poem belonging to these earliest specimens of Castilian literature is the "Rimado de Palacio," on

Disiendo: "Madre, sennora, perdoneos el Sen-
nor;
Madre, si me bidieses, de mi abriaís dolor;
Boi con cadenas al cuello, catibo con sennor,
Bendido de mis ermanos, como si fuera traidor.

"Ellos me han bendido, no teniendoles tuerto;
Partieronme de mi padre, ante que fuese mu-
erto;
Con arte, con falsia, ellos me obieron buerto;
Por mal precio me-han bendido, por do boi
ajado e cocuto."³⁷

E bolbioso el negro ante la camella,
Requiriendo a Jusuf, e no lo bido en ella;
E bolbioso por el camino aguda su orella,
Bidolo en el fosal llorando, que es marabella.

E fuese alla el negro, e obolo mal ferido,
E luego en aquella ora caio amortecido;
Dijo, "Tu eres malo, e ladron compilido;
Ansi nos lo dijeron tus señores que te hubieron
bendido."³⁸

Dijo Jusuf: "No soi malo, ni ladron,
Mas, aqui iazmi madre, e bengola a dar perdon;
Ruego ad Allah i a el fago loacion,
Que, si colpa no te tengo, te encie su maldi-
cion."³⁹

Andaron aquella noche fasta otro dia,
Entorbioselos el mundo, gran bento corria,
Afallezioselos el sol al ora de mediodia,
No vedian por do ir con la mercaderia.
Poema de José, MS.

³⁹ This is apparent also in the addition sometimes made of an *o* or an *a* to a word ending with a consonant, as *mercadero* for *mercader*.

⁴⁰ Thus, the merchant who buys Joseph talks of Palestine as "the Holy Land," and Pharaoh talks of making Joseph a Count. But the general tone is Oriental.

the duties of kings and nobles in the government of the state, with sketches of the manners and vices of the times, which, as the poem maintains, it is the duty of the great to rebuke and reform. It is chiefly written in the four-line stanzas of the period to which it belongs; and, beginning with a penitential confession of its author, goes on with a discussion of the ten commandments, the seven deadly sins, the seven works of mercy, and other religious subjects; after which it treats of the government of a state, of royal counselors, of merchants, of men of learning, tax-gatherers, and others; and then ends, as it began, with exercises of devotion. Its author is Pedro Lopez de Ayala, the chronicler, of whom it is enough to say here that he was among the most distinguished Spaniards of his time, that he held some of the highest offices of the kingdom under Peter the Cruel, Henry the Second, John the First, and Henry the Third, and that he died in 1407, at the age of seventy five.⁴¹

* The "Rimado de Palacio," which may be * 91 translated "Court Rhymes," was the production of different periods of Ayala's life. Twice he marks the year in which he was writing, and from these dates we know that parts of it were certainly composed in 1398 and 1404, while yet another part seems to have been written during his imprisonment in England, which followed the defeat of Henry of Trastamara by the Duke of Lancaster, in 1367. On the whole, there-

⁴¹ For the Rimado de Palacio, see Bouterwek, trad. de Cortina, Tom. I. pp. 138-154, and Revista Española, Diciembre, 1832. The whole poem consists of one thousand six hundred and nineteen stanzas. For notices of Ayala, see Chap. IX.

A poetical version of some of the Proverbs of Solomon is also attributed

to the Chancellor Ayala; and it is possible that a MS. in the possession of the Academy of History at Madrid is the "Book of Hunting" which Hernan Perez del Pulgar, in his Generaciones y Semblanzas (Cap. VII.), says Ayala wrote. (See the Spanish Translation of this History, Tom. I. 1851, pp. 506-508.)

fore, the Rimado de Palacio is to be placed near the conclusion of the fourteenth century, and, by its author's sufferings in an English prison, reminds us both of the Duke of Orleans and of James the First of Scotland, who, at the same time and under similar circumstances, showed a poetical spirit not unlike that of the great Chancellor of Castile.

In some of its subdivisions, particularly in those that have a lyrical tendency, the Rimado resembles some of the lighter poems of the Archpriest of Hita. Others are composed with care and gravity, and express the solemn thoughts that filled him during his captivity. But, in general, it has a quiet, didactic tone, such as befits its subject and its age; one, however, in which we occasionally find a satirical spirit that could not be suppressed, when the old statesman discusses the manners that offended him. Thus, speaking of the *Letrados*, or lawyers, he says:⁴²—

When entering on a lawsuit, if you ask for their advice,
They sit down very solemnly, their brows fall in a trice.
"A question grave is this," they say, "and asks for labor nice;
To the Council it must go, and much management implies.

"I think, perhaps, in time I can help you in the thing,
By dint of labor long, and grievous studying;
But other duties I must leave, away all business fling,
Your case alone must study, and to you alone must cling."⁴³

* 92 * Somewhat further on, when he speaks of justice, whose administration had been so lamenta-

⁴² *Letrado* has continued to be used to mean a *lawyer* in Spanish down to our day, as *clerk* has to mean a *writer* in English, though the original signification of both was different. When Sancho goes to his island, he is said to be "parte de letrado, parte de Capitán"; and Guillen de Castro, in his "Mal Casados de Valencia," Act III., says of a great rogue, "engaño como letrado." A description of *Letrados*, worthy of Tacitus for its deep satire, is

to be found in the first book of Mendoza's "Guerra de Grenada."

⁴³ The passage is in Cortina's notes to Bouterwek, and begins:—

Si quisiers sobre un pleyto d'ellos aver consejo,
Ponense solemnmente, luego abaxan el cejo:
Dis: "Grant question es esta, grant trabajo
sobejo:
El pleyto sera luengo, ca atañe a to el consejo.
"Yo pienso que podria aqui algo ayudar,
Tomando grant trabajo mis libros estudiar;
Mas todos mis negocios me conviene á dexar,
E solamente en aqueste vuestro pleyto estar."

bly neglected in the civil wars during which he lived, he takes his graver tone, and speaks with a wisdom and gentleness we should hardly have expected:—

True justice is a noble thing, that merits all renown;
It fills the land with people, checks the guilty with its frown;
But kings, that should uphold its power, in thoughtlessness look down,
And forget the precious jewel that gems their honored crown.

And many think by cruelty its duties to fulfil,
But their wisdom all is cunning, for justice doth no ill;
With pity and with truth it dwells, and faithful men will still
From punishment and pain turn back, as sore against their will.⁴⁴

There is naturally a good deal in the Rimado de Palacio that savors of statesmanship; as, for instance, nearly all that relates to royal favorites, to war, and to the manners of the palace; but the general air of the poem, or rather of the different short poems that make it up, is fairly represented in the preceding passages. It is grave, gentle, and didactic, with now and then a few lines of a simple and earnest poetical feeling, which seem to belong quite as much to their age as to their author.

We have now gone over a considerable portion of the earliest Castilian literature, and quite completed an examination of that part of it which, at first epic, and afterwards didactic, in its tone, is found in long irregular verses, with quadruple rhymes. It is all curious. Much of it is picturesque and interesting; and when to what has been already examined we

⁴⁴ The original reads thus:—

Aqui habla de la Justicia.

Justicia que es virtud atan noble e loada,
Que castiga los malos e ha la tierra poblada,
Devenla guardar Reyes e la tien olvidada,
Siendo piedra preciosa de su corona onrada.

Muchos ha que por eruesa cuydan justicia fer;
Mas pecan en la mana, ca justicia ha de ser

Con toda piedad, e la verdat bien saber:
Al fer la execucion siempre se han de doler.

Don José Amador de los Rios has given further extracts from the Rimado de Palacio in a pleasant paper on it in the *Semanario Pintoresco*, Madrid, 1847, p. 411.

* 93 shall have * added the ballads and chronicles, the romances of chivalry and the drama, the whole will be found to constitute a broad basis, on which the genuine literary culture of Spain has rested ever since.

But before we go further, we must pause an instant, and notice some of the peculiarities of the period we have just considered. It extends from a little before the year 1200 to a little after the year 1400; and, both in its poetry and prose, is marked by features not to be mistaken. Some of these features were separate and national; others were not. Thus, in Provence, which was long united with Aragon, and exercised an influence throughout the whole Peninsula, the popular poetry, from its light-heartedness, was called the *Gaya Ciencia*, and was essentially unlike the grave and measured tone heard over every other on the Spanish side of the mountains; in the more northern parts of France, a garrulous, story-telling spirit was paramount; and in Italy, Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio had just appeared, unlike all that had preceded them, and all that was anywhere contemporary with their glory. On the other hand, however, several of the characteristics of the earliest Castilian literature, such as the chronicle and didactic spirit of most of its long poems, its protracted, irregular verses, and its redoubled rhymes, belong to the old Spanish bards in common with those of the countries we have just enumerated, where, at the same period, a poetical spirit was struggling for a place in the elements of their unsettled civilization.

But there are two traits of the earliest Spanish literature which are so separate and peculiar that they must be noticed from the outset, — religious faith and knightly loyalty, — traits which are hardly less appar-

ent in the "Partidas" of Alfonso the Wise, in the stories of Don John Manuel, in the loose wit of the Archpriest of Hita, and in the worldly wisdom of the Chancellor Ayala, than in the professedly devout poems of Berceo, and in the professedly chivalrous chronicles of the Cid and Fernan Gonzalez. They are, therefore, from the earliest period, to be marked among the prominent features in Spanish literature.

* Nor should we be surprised at this. The * 94 Spanish national character, as it has existed from its first development down to our own days, was mainly formed in the earlier part of that solemn contest which began the moment the Moors landed beneath the Rock of Gibraltar, and which cannot be said to have ended until, in the time of Philip the Third, the last remnants of their unhappy race were cruelly driven from the shores which their fathers, nine centuries before, had so unjustifiably invaded. During this contest, and especially during the two or three dark centuries when the earliest Spanish poetry appeared, nothing but an invincible religious faith, and a no less invincible loyalty to their own princes, could have sustained the Christian Spaniards in their disheartening struggle against their infidel oppressors. It was, therefore, a stern necessity which made these two high qualities elements of the Spanish national character, all whose energies were for ages devoted to the one grand object of their prayers as Christians, and their hopes as patriots, — the expulsion of their hated invaders.

But Castilian poetry was, from the first, to an extraordinary degree, an outpouring of the popular feeling and character. Tokens of religious submission and knightly fidelity, akin to each other in their birth,

and often relying on each other for strength in their trials, are, therefore, among its earliest attributes. The contest for personal emancipation and national independence was, at the same time, a contest of religious faith against misbelief. We must not, then, be surprised, if we hereafter find that submission to the Church and loyalty to the king constantly break through the mass of Spanish literature, and breathe their spirit from nearly every portion of it, — not, indeed, without such changes in the mode of expression as the changed condition of the country in successive ages demanded, but still always so strong in their original attributes as to show that they survive every convulsion of the state, and never cease to move onward by their first impulse. In truth, while their very early development leaves no doubt that they are national, their nationality makes it all but inevitable that they should become permanent.

* CHAPTER VI.

* 95

FOUR CLASSES OF THE MORE POPULAR EARLY LITERATURE. — FIRST CLASS, BALLADS. — OLDEST FORM OF CASTILIAN POETRY. — THEORIES ABOUT THEIR ORIGIN. — NOT ARABIC. — THEIR METRICAL FORM. — REDONDILLAS. — ASONANTES. — NATIONAL. — SPREAD OF THE BALLAD FORM. — NAME. — EARLY NOTICES OF BALLADS. — BALLADS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY, AND LATER. — TRADITIONAL AND LONG UNWRITTEN. — APPEARED FIRST IN THE CACIONEROS, LATER IN THE ROMANCEROS. — THE OLD COLLECTIONS THE BEST.

EVERYWHERE in Europe, during the period we have just gone over, the courts of the different sovereigns were the principal centres of refinement and civilization. From accidental circumstances, this was peculiarly the case in Spain during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. On the throne of Castile, or within its shadow, we have seen a succession of such poets and prose-writers as Alfonso the Wise, Sancho, his son, Don John Manuel, his nephew, and the Chancellor Ayala, to say nothing of Saint Ferdinand, who preceded them all, and who, perhaps, gave the first decisive impulse to letters in the centre of Spain and at the North.¹

But the literature produced or encouraged by these and other distinguished men, or by the higher clergy, who, with them, were the leaders of the state, was by no means the only literature that then existed within the barrier of the Pyrenees. On the contrary, the spir-

¹ Alfonso el Sabio says of his father, St. Ferdinand: "And, moreover, he liked to have men about him who knew how to make verses (*trobar*) and sing, and Jongleurs, who knew how to play on instruments. For in such

things he took great pleasure, and knew who was skilled in them and who was not." (*Setenario, Paleographia*, pp. 80-83, and p. 76.) See, also, what is said hereafter, when we come to speak of Provençal literature in Spain, Chap. XVI.