

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.

it of poetry was abroad throughout the whole * 96 * Peninsula, so far as it had been rescued from the Moors, animating and elevating all classes of its Christian population. Their own romantic history, whose great events had been singularly the results of popular impulse, and bore everywhere the bold impress of the popular character, had breathed into the Spanish people that remarkable spirit, which, beginning with Pelayo, had been sustained by the appearance, from time to time, of such heroic forms as Fernan Gonzalez, Bernardo del Carpio, and the Cid. At the point of time, therefore, at which we are now arrived, a more popular literature, growing directly out of the enthusiasm which had so long pervaded the whole mass of the Spanish people, began naturally to appear in the country, and to assert for itself a place, which, in some of its forms, it has successfully maintained ever since.

What, however, is thus essentially popular in its sources and character,—what, instead of going out from the more elevated classes of the nation, was, in two of its forms at least, neglected or discounted by them,—is, from its very wildness, little likely to be traced down by the dates and other proofs which accompany such portions of the national literature as fell earlier under the protection of the higher orders of society. But, though we may not be able to make out an exact arrangement or a detailed history of what, in its most popular forms, was so free and so little watched, it can still be distributed into four different classes, and will afford tolerable materials for a notice of its progress and condition under each.

These four classes are, first, the BALLADS, or the poetry, both narrative and lyrical, of the common peo-

*fundador de
la monarquía
de España 937
contra moros*

Ballad - poetic song
em galmente assemblada
national
foreigner

ple, from the earliest times; second, the CHRONICLES, or the half-genuine, half-fabulous histories of the great events and heroes of the national annals, which, though begun by authority of the state, were always deeply imbued with the popular feelings and character; third, the ROMANCES OF CHIVALRY, intimately connected with both the others, and, after a time, as passionately admired as either by the whole nation; and, fourth, the DRAMA, which, in its origin, has always been a * popular and religious amusement, and was no less so in Spain than it was in Greece or in France. * 97

These four classes compose what was generally most valued in Spanish literature during the latter part of the fourteenth century, the whole of the fifteenth, and much of the sixteenth. They rested on the deep foundations of the national character, and, therefore, by their very nature, were opposed to the Provençal, the Italian, and the courtly schools, which flourished during the same period, and which will be subsequently examined.

THE BALLADS. — We begin with the ballads, because it cannot reasonably be doubted that poetry, in the present Spanish language, appeared earliest in the ballad form. And the first question that occurs in relation to them is the obvious one, why this was the case. It has been suggested, in reply, that there was probably a tendency to this most popular form of composition in Spain at an age even much more remote than that of the origin of the present Spanish language itself;² that such a tendency may, perhaps, be traced

² The *Edinburgh Review*, No. 146, contains the ablest statement of this theory. It is on Lockhart's *Ballads*, contains the by R. Ford, Esq.

back to those indigenous bards of whom only a doubtful tradition remained in the time of Strabo;³ and that it may be seen to emerge again in the Leonine and other rhymed Latin verses of the Gothic period,⁴ or in that more ancient and obscure Basque poetry, of which the little that has been preserved to us is thought to breathe a spirit countenancing such conjectures.⁵ But these and similar suggestions * 98 have so slight a foundation in recorded * facts, that they can be little relied on. The one more frequently advanced is, that the Spanish ballads, such as we now have them, are imitations from the narrative and lyrical poetry of the Arabs, with which the whole southern part of Spain for ages resounded; and that, in fact, the very form in which Spanish ballads still appear is Arabic, and is to be traced to the Arabs in the East, at a period not only anterior to the invasion of Spain, but anterior to the age of the Prophet. This is the theory of Conde.⁶

³ The passage in Strabo here referred to, which is in Book III. p. 139 (ed. Casaubon, fol., 1620), is to be taken in connection with the passage (p. 151) in which he says that both the language and its poetry were wholly lost in his time.

⁴ Argote de Molina (Discurso de la Poesía Castellana, in Conde Lucanor, ed. 1575, f. 93. a) may be cited to this point, and one who believed it tenable might also cite the "Crónica General" (ed. 1604, Parte II. f. 265), where, speaking of the Gothic kingdom, and mourning its fall, the Chronicle says, "Forgotten are its songs (*cantares*)," etc.

⁵ W. von Humboldt, in the *Mithridates of Adelung and Vater*, Berlin, 1817, 8vo, Tom. IV. p. 354, and Argote de Molina, ut sup., f. 93; — but the Basque verses cited by the latter cannot be older than 1322, and were, therefore, quite as likely to be imitated from the Spanish as to have been themselves the subjects of Spanish imitation.

⁶ *Dominación de los Arabes*, Tom. I.,

Prólogo, pp. xviii—xix, p. 169, and other places. But in a manuscript preface to a collection which he called "Poesías Orientales traducidas por Jos. Ant. Conde," and which he never published, he expresses himself yet more positively: "In the versification of our Castilian ballads and *seguidillas*, we have received from the Arabs an exact type of their verses." And again he says: "From the period of the infancy of our poetry, . . . we have rhymed verses according to the measures used by the Arabs before the times of the *Koran*." "Desde la infancia de nuestra poesía, desde los tiempos en que solo sabían escribir los monges y los obispos, tenemos versos rimados según las reglas métricas usadas por las Arabes desde tiempos anteriores al Alcorán." I transcribe from a MS. copy of the preface to this collection of poems, which Conde gave me in 1818. This is the work, I suppose, to which Blanco White alludes (*Varietades*, Tom. II. pp. 45, 46). The theory of Conde has

But though, from the air of historical pretension with which it presents itself, there is something in this theory that bespeaks our favor, yet there are strong reasons that forbid our assent to it. For the earliest of the Spanish ballads, concerning which alone the question can arise, have not at all the characteristics of an imitated literature. Not a single Arabic original has been found for any one of them; nor, so far as we know, has a single passage of Arabic poetry, or a single phrase from any Arabic writer, entered directly into their composition. On the contrary, their freedom, their energy, their Christian tone and chivalrous loyalty, announce an originality and independence of character that prevent us from believing they could have been in any way materially indebted to the brilliant but effeminate literature of the nation to whose spirit everything Spanish had, when they first appeared, been for ages implacably opposed. It seems, therefore, that they must, of their own nature, be as original as any poetry of modern times; containing, as they do, within themselves proofs that they are Spanish by their birth, natives of the soil, and stained with all its variations. For a long time, too, subsequent to that of their first appearance, they continued to exhibit the same * elements of nation- * 99 ality; so that, until we approach the fall of Granada, we find in them neither a Moorish tone, nor Moorish subjects, nor Moorish adventures; nothing, in short, to justify us in supposing them to have been more indebted to the culture of the Arabs than was any other portion of the early Spanish literature.

Indeed, it does not seem reasonable to seek, in the East or elsewhere, a foreign origin for the mere *form*

been often approved. See Retrospective translation of Bouterwek, Tom. I. p. Review, Tom. IV. p. 31, the Spanish 164, etc.

of the Spanish ballads. Their metrical structure is so simple, that we can readily believe it to have presented itself as soon as verse of any sort was felt to be a popular want. They consist merely of those eight-syllable lines which are composed with great facility in other languages as well as the Castilian, and which, in the old ballads, are the more easy, as the number of feet prescribed for each verse is little regarded.⁷ Sometimes, though rarely, they are broken into stanzas of four lines, thence called *redondillas*, or *roundelays*; and then they have rhymes in the first and fourth lines of each stanza, or in the second and fourth, as in the similar stanzas of other modern languages.⁸ Their prominent peculiarity, however, and one which they have succeeded in impressing * 100 * upon a very large portion of all the national poetry, is one which, being found to prevail in

⁷ Argote de Molina (Discurso sobre la Poesia Castellana, in Conde Lucanor, 1575, f. 92) will have it that the ballad verse of Spain is quite the same with the eight-syllable verse in Greek, Latin, Italian, and French; "but," he adds, "it is properly native to Spain, in whose language it is found earlier than in any other modern tongue, and in Spanish alone it has all the grace, gentleness, and spirit, that are more peculiar to the Spanish genius than to any other." The only example he cites, in proof of this position, is the Odes of Ronsard, — "the most excellent Ronsard," as he calls him, — then at the height of his euphuistical reputation in France; but Ronsard's odes are miserably unlike the freedom and spirit of the Spanish ballads. (See Odes de Ronsard, Paris, 1573, 18mo, Tom. II. pp. 62, 139.) The nearest approach that I recollect to the mere *measure* of the ancient Spanish ballad, where there was no thought of imitating it, is in a few of the old French Fabliaux, in Chaucer's "House of Fame," and in some passages of Sir Walter Scott's poetry. Jacob Grimm, in his "Silva de Romances Viejos" (Vienna, 1815, 18mo), taken chiefly

from the collection of 1555, has printed the ballads he gives us as if their lines were originally of fourteen or sixteen syllables; so that one of his lines embraces two of those in the old Romaneros. His reason was, that their epic nature and character required such long verses, which are, in fact, substantially the same with those in the old "Poem of the Cid." But his theory, which was not generally adopted, is sufficiently answered by V. A. Huber, in his excellent tract, "De Primitivâ Cantilenarum Popularium Epicarum (vulgo *Romances*) apud Hispanos Formâ" (Berolini, 1844, 4to), and in his preface to his edition of the "Crónica del Cid," 1844.

⁸ An error of Sarmiento about *Redondillas* is corrected by Alcala Galiano in his edition of Depping's *Romancero Castellano* (Leipsique, 1844, Tom. I. p. lxix). He does not, however, seem to be quite right, and I have, therefore, followed the definition in the large dictionary of the Spanish Academy, confirmed by the recent editions of the abridgment. See, also, Rengifo, *Arte Poetica*, ed. 1727, p. 15, sqq.

no other literature, may be claimed to have its origin in Spain, and becomes, therefore, an important circumstance in the history of Spanish poetical culture.⁹

The peculiarity to which we refer is that of the *asonante*, — an imperfect rhyme confined to the vowels, and beginning with the last accented one in the line; so that it embraces sometimes only the very last syllable, and sometimes goes back to the penultimate, or even the antepenultimate. It is contradistinguished from the *consonante*, or full rhyme, which is made both by the consonants and vowels in the concluding syllable or syllables of the line, and which is, therefore, just what *rhyme* is in English.¹⁰ Thus *feróz* and

⁹ The only suggestion I have noticed affecting this statement is to be found in the *Repertorio Americano* (Londres, 1827, Tom. II. pp. 21, etc.), where the writer, who, I believe, is Don Andres Bello, endeavors to trace the *asonante* to the "Vita Mathildis," a Latin poem of the twelfth century, reprinted by Muratori (*Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, Mediolani, 1725, fol., Tom. V. pp. 335, etc.), and to a manuscript Anglo-Norman poem, of the same century, on the fabulous journey of Charlemagne to Jerusalem. But the Latin poem is, I believe, singular in this attempt, and was, no doubt, wholly unknown in Spain; and the Anglo-Norman poem, which has since been published by Michel (London, 1836, 12mo), with curious notes, turns out to be *rhymed*, though not carefully or regularly. Raynouard, in the *Journal des Savants* (February, 1833, p. 70), made the same mistake with the writer in the *Repertorio*; probably in consequence of following him. The imperfect rhyme of the ancient Gaelic seems to have been different from the Spanish *asonante*, and, at any rate, can have had nothing to do with it. (Logan's *Scottish Gael*, London, 1831, 8vo, Vol. II. p. 241.)

¹⁰ Cervantes, in his "Amante Liberal," calls them *consonancias* or *consonantes difcultosos*. No doubt, their greater difficulty caused them to be less used than the *asonantes*. Juan de

la Enzina, in his little treatise on Castilian Verse, Cap. 7, written before 1500, explains these two forms of rhyme, and says that the old romances "no van veraderos consonantes." Curious remarks on the *asonantes* are to be found in Rengifo, "Arte Poetica Española" (Salamanca, 1592, 4to, Cap. 34), and the additions to it in the edition of 1727 (4to, p. 418); to which may well be joined the philosophical suggestions of Martinez de la Rosa, *Obras*, Paris, 1827, 12mo, Tom. I. pp. 202–204.

Diez, in his valuable *Altromanische Sprachdenkmale* (8vo, Bonn, 1846, pp. 83, sqq.), thinks that, in the poem on Boethius, and in some other early Provençal poetry, traces of *asonantes* can be found. This suggestion, which I had not seen when I published the preceding note for the first time, does not, however, affect the statement in the text. *Asonantes* have not prevailed in any literature but the Spanish. Indeed, I still think that in the few cases where they occur elsewhere, and are not, as in Germany, intentional imitations of the Spanish, they are the result of accident, like the occasional rhymes in Virgil and the other classical poets of antiquity; or of caprice in the individual author, as in the "Vita Mathildis"; or of an unsuccessful attempt at full rhyme, as in the case of the poem on Charlemagne. Diez, in fact, admits this so far as the poem on Bo-

* 101 *furór, cása* and * *abárca, infámia*, and *contrária*, are good *asonantes* in the first and third ballads of the *Cid*, just as *múl* and *desleúl, voláre* and *caçáre*, are good *consonantes* in the old ballad of the Marquis of Mantua, cited by Don Quixote. The *asonante*, therefore, is something between our blank verse and our rhyme; and the art of using it is easily acquired in a language like the Castilian, abounding in vowels, and always giving to the same vowel the same value.¹¹ In the older ballads it generally recurs with every other line; and, from the facility with which it can be found, the same *asonante* is frequently continued through the whole of the poem in which it occurs, whether the poem be

this is concerned, when he says, "es ist leicht zu bemerken dass der Dichter nach dem vollen Reime strebt." I regard, therefore, generally, such instances rather as unsuccessful rhymes than as intentional *asonantes*. See *post*, notes 15 and 16.

Since the preceding portions of this note were published, in 1849 and 1863, the subject of the earliest appearance of *asonantes* has been discussed anew by Mons. A. Boucherie in a pamphlet published at Montpellier, in 1867, and entitled "Cinq Formules rythmées et assonancées du VII^e Siècle." Extracts from these *formules*, which are found in Dom. Bouquet (Vol. IV.) and elsewhere, as common prose, are by Mons. Boucherie divided into lines, and printed as *assonant* verse. But they are very irregular, and may, after all, only be like the *asonantes* that Sarmiento picked out in the old Spanish prose, and which can be found everywhere, from the time of Alfonso the Wise down. (See *post*, p. 121, and the citation, note 12.) The value of Mons. Boucherie's position is somewhat weakened by his belief that he finds intentional rhymes in Homer, and intentional *asonantes* in Molière (p. 7). Still it is not to be denied that he has brought together very curious examples of both rhyme and *asonants* from the prose and verse of writers who made, I suppose, only an accidental jingle of words, with-

out, perhaps, being aware of it. This remark, I think, applies with especial force to the examples Mons. Boucherie (pp. 42, 43) alleges from the Floridas of Apuleius (Ed. Oudendorpii, 4to, 1823, Tom. II.). He says that Schuchardt, a German scholar, came about the same time to the same conclusion, citing often for his position the same examples; but I have never seen the "Vocalismus des Vulgarlateins." In any event, however, it will be found still that, however fanciful half-rhymes may occur in one place or another from the earliest times, they have prevailed in no language except the Spanish, where their number is indefinite.

¹¹ A great poetic license was introduced before long into the use of the *asonante*, as there had been, in antiquity, into the use of the Greek and Latin measures, until the sphere of the *asonante* became, as Clemencin well says, extremely wide. Thus, *u* and *o* were held to be *asonante*, as in *Venus* and *Minos*; *i* and *e*, as in *Paris* and *males*; a diphthong with a vowel, as *gracia* and *alma, civitas* and *burlas*; and other similar varieties, which, in the times of Lope de Vega and Góngora, made the permitted combinations all but indefinite, and the composition of *asonante* verses indefinitely easy. (Don Quixote, ed. Clemencin, Tom. III. pp. 271, 272, note.)

longer or shorter. But even with this embarrassment the structure of the ballad is so simple that, while Sarmiento has undertaken to show how Spanish prose from the twelfth century downwards is often written unconsciously in eight-syllable *asonantes*,¹² Sepulveda, in the sixteenth century, actually converted large portions of the old chronicles into the same ballad-measure, with little change of their original phraseology;¹³ two circumstances which, taken together, show indisputably that there can be no wide interval between the common structure of Spanish prose and this earliest form of Spanish verse. If to all this we add the national recitatives in which the ballads have * been sung down to our own days, and the * 102 national dances by which they have been accompanied,¹⁴ we shall probably be persuaded, not only that the form of the Spanish ballad is as national as the *asonante*, which is its prominent characteristic, but that this form is more happily fitted to its especial purposes, and more easy in its practical application to them, than any other into which popular poetry has fallen, in ancient or modern times.¹⁵

¹² Poesía Española, Madrid, 1775, 4to, sec. 422-430.

¹³ It would be easy to give many specimens of ballads made from the old chronicles; but for the present purpose I will take only a few lines from the "Crónica General" (Parte III. f. 77, a, ed. 1604), where Velasquez, persuading his nephews, the Infantes de Lara, to go against the Moors, despite of certain ill auguries, says: "*Sobrinos estos agujeros que oystes mucho son buenos; ca nos dan a entender que ganaremos muy gran algo de lo ageno, e de lo nuestro non perderemos; e fizol muy mal Don Nuño Salido en non venir combusco, e mande Dios que se arrepienta,*" etc. Now, in Sepulveda (Romances, Anvers, 1551, 18mo, f. 11), in the ballad beginning "Llegados son los Infantes," we have these lines:—

*Sobrinos esos agujeros
Para nos gran bien serian,
Porque nos dan a ent nder
Que bien nos sucediera.
Ganaremos grande victoria,
Nada no se perdiera,
Don Nuño lo hizo mal
Que combuseo non venia,
Mande Dios que se arrepienta, etc.*

¹⁴ Duran, Romances Caballarescos, Madrid, 1832, 12mo, Prólogo, Tom. I. pp. xvi, xvii, with xxxv, note (14). Julius, in the German translation of this work, Band II. pp. 504, 505.

¹⁵ The peculiarities of a metrical form so entirely national can, I suppose, be well understood only by an example; and I will, therefore, give here, in the original Spanish, a few lines from a spirited and well-known ballad of Góngora, which I select because they have been translated into *English asonantes*,

Los romances son asonantados

*Se aplica a lo popular hasta
ntos, Dios*

* 103 * A metrical form so natural and obvious became a favorite at once, and continued so. From the ballads it soon passed into other departments of the national poetry, especially the lyrical. At a later period the great mass of the true Spanish

by a writer in the *Retrospective Review*, whose excellent version follows, and may serve still further to explain and illustrate the measure:—

Aquel rayo de la guerra,
Alferez mayor del réyno,
Tan galan como valiente,
Y tan noble como fiéro,
De los mozos embidiado,
Y admirado de los viejos,
Y de los niños y el vulgo
Senalado con el dedo,
El querido de las damas,
Por cortesano y discreto,
Hijo hasta allí regalado
De la fortuna y el tiempo, etc.

Obras, Madrid, 1664, 4to, f. 83.

This rhyme is perfectly perceptible to any ear well accustomed to Spanish poetry, and it must be admitted, I think, that, when, as in the ballad cited, it embraces two of the concluding vowels of the line, and is continued through the whole poem, the effect, even upon a foreigner, is that of a graceful ornament, which satisfies without fatiguing. In English, however, where our vowels have such various powers, and where the consonants preponderate, the case is quite different. This is plain in the following translation of the preceding lines, made with spirit and truth, but failing to produce the effect of the Spanish. Indeed, the rhyme can hardly be said to be perceptible except to the eye, though the measure and its cadences are nicely managed:—

"He the thunderbolt of battle,
He the first Alferez tri'd,
Who as courteous is as valiant,
And the noblest as the fiercest;
He who by our youth is envied,
Honored by our gravest ancients,
By our youth in crowds distinguished
By a thousand pointed fingers;
He beloved by fairest damsels,
For discretion and politeness,
Cherished son of time and fortune,
Bearing all their gifts divinely," etc.

Retrospective Review, Vol. IV. p. 85.

Another specimen of English *asonantes* is to be found in Bowring's "Ancient Poetry of Spain" (London, 1824, 12mo, p. 107); but the result is sub-

stantially the same, and always must be, from the difference between the two languages.

In Germany, more than anywhere else, attempts have been made to introduce the Spanish *asonante*. The first of these attempts, I think, was made by Friederich Schlegel, in his "Conde Alarcos," 1802;—a tragedy constructed on the beautiful ballad of the same name. (See *post*, note.) But, though there are passages in it not unworthy the subject, it found little favor. His brother, August Wilhelm Schlegel, in his translations from Calderon, published the very next year, 1803, adopted the *asonante* fully wherever he found it in the original Spanish, whose measures and manner he followed rigorously, and was so successful that his version of the *Principe Constante* became a favorite acting play on the German stage. (See *post*, Period II., Chap. XXII. and Chap. XXIII., notes.) From this time the *asonante* has been recognized and established in German literature, at least so far as translations from the Spanish are concerned. Thus, Gries, in his remarkable versions from Calderon, is constantly faithful to it;—a happy example of his management of it occurring in the opening of his "Dame Kobold" (*Dama Du nde*), Band V. 1822. So, too, is Adolf Martin, in his translations from Calderon (1844, 3 Bände, 12mo), of which the first scene in *Toda es Verdad y toda mentira* (Band I. seite 95) is a favorable specimen. Malsburg and others have trodden in the same path with more or less success; but perhaps nobody has been so fortunate as Cardinal von Diepenbrock, in his translation of *La Vida es sueño*. But still I think the German *asonante* falls almost as powerless on the ear as the English one does. At least, I find it so. See *post*, Part II., note at the end of Chap. XXIV., on the German translators of Calderon, by whom the Spanish measures are observed, with a fidelity unknown out of their country.

drama came to rest upon it; and before the end of the seventeenth century more verses had probably been written in it than in all the other measures used by Spanish poets. Lope de Vega declared it to be fitted for all styles of composition, even the gravest; and his judgment was sanctioned in his own time, and has been justified in ours, by the application of this peculiar form of verse to long epic stories.¹⁶ The eight-syllable *asonante*, therefore, may be considered as now known and used in every department of Spanish poetry; and since it has, from the first, been a chief element in that poetry, we may well believe it will continue * such as long * 104 as what is most original in the national genius continues to be cultivated.

Some of the ballads embodied in this genuinely Castilian measure are, no doubt, very ancient. That such

¹⁶ Speaking of the ballad verses, he says (Prologo á las Rimas Humanas, Obras Sueltas, Tom. IV., Madrid, 1776, 4to, p. 176), "I regard them as capable, not only of expressing and setting forth any idea whatever with easy sweetness, but carrying through *any* grave action in a versified poem." His prediction was fulfilled in his own time by the "Fernando" of Vera y Figueroa, a poor epic published in 1632; and in ours by the very attractive narrative poem of Don Ángel de Saavedra, Duque de Rivas, entitled "El Moro Exposito," in two volumes, 1834. The example of Lope de Vega, in the latter part of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries, no doubt did much to give currency to the *asonantes*, which, from that time, have been more used than they were earlier. The opinion of Lope de Vega is repeated by Melendez Valdes, who, in the Preface to his Works (1820, p. viii), says expressly of the old ballad measure: "Porque no aplicarla a todos los asuntos, aun los de mas aliento y osadia?" Vargas y Ponce (Declamacion, 1793, p. 64) calls the *asonante*, as I think truly, "preciosa y unica propiedad de la Poesia Española."

See, also, Book II. Chap. III. of Luzan's Poetica, but refer to it in the 8vo edition, for I believe the passage referred to is not in the folio; so that, I suppose, Luzan altered his mind about the value of the *asonante*, as his experience of its importance increased.

I have noticed particularly an instance of the *asonante* employed for popular effect in a consecutive series of ninety-nine ballads, called "Cantos," on the History of the Passion, beginning with the institution of the Last Supper, and ending with the Madonna's solitary mourning at the cross. They were printed anonymously in successive pamphlets at Malaga, by Francisco Martinez de Aguilar,—three or more in each pamphlet,—in 4to, without date, but apparently in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Their style is much simpler than might be expected from the period, and I think it probable that they were all fashioned out of some prose history of the Saviour written in better times. There is no poetry in them, but they are curious as showing how the ballad form has been used for continuous history, and how fit it is for popular effect in long poems.

La forma asonantada se hizo muy hasta
le art. y se aplicó el drama