

* 119

* CHAPTER VII.

BALLADS ON SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH CHIVALRY. — BALLADS FROM SPANISH HISTORY. — BERNARDO DEL CARPIO. — FERNAN GONZALEZ. — THE LORDS OF LARA. — THE CID. — BALLADS FROM ANCIENT HISTORY AND FABLE, SACRED AND PROFANE. — BALLADS ON MOORISH SUBJECTS. — MISCELLANEOUS BALLADS, AMATORY, BURLESQUE, SATIRICAL, ETC. — CHARACTER OF THE OLD SPANISH BALLADS.

Ballads of Chivalry. — The first thing that strikes us, on opening any one of the old Spanish ballad-books, is the national air and spirit that prevail throughout them. But we look in vain for many of the fictions found in the popular poetry of other countries at the same period, some of which we might well expect to find here. Even that chivalry, which was so akin to the character and condition of Spain when the ballads appeared, fails to sweep by us, with the train of its accustomed personages. Of Arthur and his Round Table the oldest ballads tell us nothing at all, nor of the “Mervaille of the Graal,” nor of Perceval, nor of the Palmerins, nor of many other well-known and famous heroes of the shadow-land of chivalry. Later, indeed, some of these personages figure largely in the Spanish prose romances. But, for a long time, the history of Spain itself furnished materials enough for its more popular poetry; and therefore, though Amadis, Lancelot du Lac, Tristan de Leonnais, and their compeers, present themselves now and then in the ballads, it is not till after the prose romances, filled with their adventures, had made them familiar. Even then, they are somewhat awkwardly introduced, and never occupy

any well-defined place; for the stories of the Cid and Bernardo del Carpio were much nearer to the hearts of the Spanish people, and had left little space for such comparatively cold and unsubstantial fancies.

The only considerable exception to this remark is to be * found in the stories connected * 120 with Charlemagne and his peers. That great sovereign — who, in the darkest period of Europe since the days of the Roman republic, roused up the nations, not only by the glory of his military conquests, but by the magnificence of his civil institutions — crossed the Pyrenees in the latter part of the eighth century, at the solicitation of one of his Moorish allies, and ravaged the Spanish marches as far as the Ebro, taking Pamplona and Saragossa. The impression he made there seems to have been the same he made everywhere; and from this time the splendor of his great name and deeds was connected in the minds of the Spanish people with wild imaginations of their own achievements, and gave birth to that series of fictions which is embraced in the story of Bernardo del Carpio, and ends with the great rout, when, according to the persuasions of the national vanity,

“Charlemain with all his peerage fell
By Fontarabbia.”

These marvellous adventures, chiefly without countenance from history,¹ in which the French paladins appear associated with fabulous Spanish heroes, such as Montesinos and Durandarte,² and once with the

¹ Sismondi, Hist. des Français, Paris, 1821, 8vo, Tom. II. pp. 257–260. There was, however, as is usual in such cases, some historical foundation for the fiction. The rear guard of Charlemagne’s army, when it was leaving Spain, was defeated by the Navarrese in the mountain pass of Roncesvalles, and its baggage plundered. Aschbach, Geschichte

der Ommajaden in Spanien, 8vo, 1829, Tom. I. pp. 171–178.

² Montesinos and Durandarte figure so largely in Don Quixote’s visit to the cave of Montesinos, that all relating to them is to be found in the notes of Pellicer and Clemencin to Parte II. cap. 23 of the history of the mad knight.

noble Moor Calaynos, are represented with some minuteness in the old Spanish ballads. The largest number, including the longest and the best, are to be found in the ballad-book of 1550-1555, to which may be added a few from that of 1593-1597, making together somewhat more than fifty, of which only twenty occur in the collection expressly devoted to the Twelve Peers, and first published in 1608. Some of them are evidently very old; as, for instance, that on the Conde d' Irlas, that on the Marquis of Mantua, two on Claros of Montalban, and both the fragments * 121 * on Durandarte, the last of which can be traced back to the Cancionero of 1511.³ One of the best of them is "Lady Alda's Dream," full of the spirit of a chivalrous age, and of a simple pathos which is of all ages and all countries. It is from the Ballad-Book of 1550.

In Paris Lady Alda sits, Sir Roland's destined bride,
With her three hundred maidens, to tend her, at her side;
Alike their robes and sandals all, and the braid that binds their hair,
And alike the meal, in their Lady's hall, the whole three hundred share.
Around her, in her chair of state, they all their places hold:
A hundred weave the web of silk, and a hundred spin the gold,
And a hundred touch their gentle lutes to soothe that lady's pain,
As she thinks on him that's far away with the host of Charlemagne.
Lulled by the sound, she sleeps, but soon she wakens with a scream,
And, as her maidens gather round, she thus recounts her dream:
"I sat upon a desert shore, and from the mountain nigh,
Right toward me, I seemed to see a gentle falcon fly;
But close behind an eagle swooped and struck that falcon down,
And with talons and beak he rent the bird, as he cowered beneath my gown."
The chief of her maidens smiled, and said: "To me it doth not seem
That the Lady Alda reads aright the boding of her dream.

³ These ballads begin, "Estabase el Conde d' Irlas," which is the longest I know of; "Assentado esta Gayferos," which is one of the best, and cited more than once by Cervantes; "Media noche era por hilo," where the counting of time by the dripping of water is a proof of antiquity in the ballad itself; "A

caça va el Emperador," also cited repeatedly by Cervantes; and "O Belerma, O Belerma," translated by M. G. Lewis; to which may be added, "Durandarte, Durandarte," found in the Antwerp Romancero, and in the old Cancioneros Generales.

Thou art the falcon, and thy knight is the eagle in his pride,
As he comes in triumph from the war and pounces on his bride."
The maidens laughed, but Alda sighed, and gravely shook her head.
"Full rich," quoth she, "shall thy guerdon be, if thou the truth hast said."
'T is morn: her letters, stained with blood, the truth too plainly tell,
How, in the chase of Ronceval, Sir Roland fought and fell.⁴

The ballads of this class are occasionally quite long, and approach the character of the old French and English *metrical romances; that of the * 122 Conde d' Irlas extending to about thirteen hundred lines. The longer ballads, too, are generally the best; and those through large portions of which the same *asonante*, and sometimes, even, the same *consonante* or full rhyme, is continued to the end, have a solemn harmony in their protracted cadences, that produces an effect on the feelings like the chanting of a rich and well-sustained recitative.

Taken as a body, they have a grave tone, combined with the spirit of a picturesque narrative, and entirely different from the extravagant and romantic air afterwards given to the same class of fictions in Italy, and even from that of the few Spanish ballads which, at a later period, were constructed out of the imaginative and fantastic materials found in the poems of Bojardo and Ariosto. But, in all ages and in all forms, they have been favorites with the Spanish people. They were alluded to as such above five hundred years ago, in the oldest of the national chronicles; and when, at the end of the last century, Sarmiento notices the ballad-book of the Twelve Peers, he speaks of it as

⁴ It may be found in most of the good recent collections of Spanish ballads, as, for instance, in Grimm's *Silva*, 1815, p. 108, and in Wolf's *Primavera*, 1856, Tom. II. p. 314. The beautiful translation in the text I have received from the kindness of Sir Edmund Head,

Bart., and it is, I think, much better than the one by Lockhart, which, though spirited, is diffuse and unfaithful. In the original it begins: *En Paris está Doña Alda, la esposa de Don Roldan.*

one which the peasantry and the children of Spain still knew by heart.⁵

Historical Ballads.—The most important and the largest division of the Spanish ballads is, however, the historical. Nor is this surprising. The early heroes in Spanish history grew so directly out of the popular character, and the early achievements of the national arms so nearly touched the personal condition of every Christian in the Peninsula, that they naturally became the first and chief subjects of a poetry which has always, to a remarkable degree, been the breathing of the popular feelings and passions. It would be easy, therefore, to collect a series of ballads,—few in number as far as respects the Gothic and Roman periods, but ample from the time of Roderic and the Moorish conquest of Spain down to the moment when its restoration was gloriously fulfilled in the fall of Granada,—a series which would constitute such a * 123 poetical illustration of Spanish history as * can be brought in aid of the history of no other country. But, for our present purpose, it is enough to select a few sketches from these remarkable ballads devoted to the greater heroes,—personages half shadowy, half historical,—who, between the end of the eighth and the beginning of the twelfth century, occupy a wide space in all the old traditions, and serve alike to illustrate the early popular character in Spain, and the poetry to which that character gave birth.

The first of these, in the order of time, is Bernardo del Carpio, concerning whom we have about fifty ballads, which, with the accounts in the Chronicle of Alfonso the Wise, have constituted the foundations for many a drama and tale, and at least three long heroic

⁵ Memorias para la Poesía Española, Sect. 528.

poems. According to these early narratives, Bernardo flourished about the year 800, and was the offspring of a secret marriage or intrigue between the Count de Saldaña and the sister of Alfonso the Chaste, at which the king was so much offended, that he kept the Count in perpetual imprisonment, and sent the Infanta to a convent; educating Bernardo as his own son, and keeping him ignorant of his birth. The achievements of Bernardo, ending with the victory of Roncesvalles; his efforts to procure the release of his father, when he learns who his father is; the falsehood of the king, who promises repeatedly to give up the Count de Saldaña, and as often breaks his word; with the despair of Bernardo, and his final rebellion, after the Count's death in prison,—are all as fully represented in the ballads as they are in the chronicles, and constitute some of the most romantic and interesting portions of each.⁶

Of the ballads which contain this story, and which generally suppose the whole of it to have passed in one reign, though the Chronicle spreads it over three, none, perhaps, is finer than the one in which the Count de Saldaña, in his solitary prison, complains of his son, who, he supposes, must know his descent, and of his wife, the Infanta, who, he presumes, must be in league with her royal brother. * After a de- * 124 scription of the castle in which he is confined, the Count says:—

The tale of my imprisoned life
Within these loathsome walls,
Each moment, as it lingers by,
My hoary hair recalls;
For when this castle first I saw,
My beard was scarcely grown,

⁶ The story of Bernardo is in the "Crónica General," Parte III., beginning at f. 30, in the edition of 1604. But it must be almost entirely fabulous.

And now, to purge my youthful sins,
 Its folds hang whitening down.
 Then where art thou, my careless son?
 And why so dull and cold?
 Doth not my blood within thee run?
 Speaks it not loud and bold?
 Alas! it may be so, but still
 Thy mother's blood is thine;
 And what is kindred to the king
 Will plead no cause of mine:
 And thus all three against me stand;—
 For, the whole man to quell,
 'T is not enough to have our foes—
 Our heart's blood must rebel.
 Meanwhile, the guards that watch me here
 Of thy proud conquests boast;
 But if for me thou lead'st it not,
 For whom, then, fights thy host?
 And since thou leav'st me prisoned here,
 In cruel chains to moan,
 O! I must be a guilty sire,
 Or thou a guilty son!
 Yet pardon me, if I offend
 By uttering words so free;
 For while oppressed with age I grieve,
 No words come back from thee.⁷

* 125 * The old Spanish ballads have often a resemblance to each other in their tone and phraseology; and occasionally several seem imitated from some common original. Thus, in another, on this same subject of the Count de Saldaña's imprisonment, we find the length of time he had suffered, and the idea of his relationship and blood, enforced in the following

⁷ Los tiempos de mi prision
 Tan aborrecida y larga,
 Por momentos me lo dizen
 Aquestas mis tristes canas
 Quando entre en este castillo,
 Apenas entre con barbas,
 Y agora por mis pecados
 Las veo crecidas y blancas
 Que desnydo es este, hijo?
 Como a voces no te llama
 La sangre que tienes mia,
 A socorrer donde falta?
 Sin duda que te detiene
 La que de tu madre alcanças,
 Que por ser de la del Rey
 Juzgaras qual el mi causa.
 Todos tres sois mis contrarios;
 Que a un desdichado no basta

Que sus contrarios lo sean,
 Sino sus propias entrañas.
 Todos los que aquí me tienen
 Me cuentan de tus hazañas:
 Si para tu padre no,
 Dime para quien las guardas?
 Aquí estoy en estos hierros,
 Y pues dellos no me sacas,
 Mal padre deuo de ser,
 O mal hijo pues me faltas
 Perdoname, si te ofendo,
 Que descanso en las palabras,
 Que yo como viejo lloro,
 Y tu como ausente callas.
 Romancero General, 1602, f. 46.

But it was printed as early as 1593.

words, not of the Count himself, but of Bernardo, when addressing the king:—

The very walls are wearied there,
 So long in grief to hold
 A man whom first in youth they saw,
 But now see gray and old.
 And if, for errors such as these,
 The forfeit must be blood,
 Enough of his has flowed from me,
 When for your rights I stood.⁸

In reading the ballads relating to Bernardo del Carpio, it is impossible not to be often struck with their resemblance to the corresponding passages of the "General Chronicle." Some of them are undoubtedly copied from it; others possibly may have been, in more ancient forms, among the poetical materials out of which we know that Chronicle was in part composed.⁹ The best are those which *are * 126

⁸ This is evidently among the older ballads. The earliest printed copy of it that I know is to be found in the "Flor de Romances," Novena Parte (Madrid, 1597, 18mo, f. 45), and the passage I have translated is very striking in the original:—

Cansadas ya las paredes
 De guardar en tanto tiempo
 A un hombre, que vieron moço
 Y ya le ven cano y viejo.
 Si ya sus culpas merecen,
 Que sangre sea en su descuento,
 Harta suya he derramado,
 Y toda en servicio vuestro.

It is given a little differently by Duran.

⁹ The ballad beginning "En Corte del casto Alfonso," in the ballad-book of 1555, is taken from the "Crónica General" (Parte III. ff. 32, 33, ed. 1604), as the following passage, speaking of Bernardo's first knowledge that his father was the Count of Saldaña, will show:—

Quando Bernaldo lo supo
 Pesóle a gran demasia,
 Tanto que dentro en el cuerpo
 La sangre se le volcía.
 Yendo para su posada
 Muy grande llanto hacia,

Vistióse paños de luto,
 Y delante el Rey se iba.
 El Rey quando así le vio,
 Desta suerte le decía:
 "Bernaldo, por aventura
 Cobdiciades la muerte mia?"

The Chronicle reads thus: "E el [Bernardo] quando lo supo, que su padre era preso, pesol mucho de coraçon, e bolvióse la sangre en el cuerpo, e fuesse para su posada, faziendo el mayor duelo del mundo; e vistióse paños de duelo, e fuesse para el Rey Don Alfonso; e el Rey, quando lo vido, dixol: 'Bernaldo, cobdiciades la muerte mia?'" It is plain enough, in this case, that the Chronicle is the original of the ballad; but it is very difficult, if not impossible, from the nature of the case, to show that any particular ballad was used in the composition of the Chronicle, because we have undoubtedly none of the ballads in the form in which they existed when the Chronicle was compiled in the middle of the thirteenth century, and therefore a correspondence of phraseology like that just cited is not to be expected. Yet it would not be surprising if some of these ballads on Bernardo, found in the Sixth Part of the "Flor de Romances" (To-

least strictly conformed to the history itself; but all, taken together, form a curious and interesting series, that serves strikingly to exhibit the manners and feelings of the people in the wild times of which they speak, as well as in the later periods when many of them must have been written.

The next series is that on Fernan Gonzalez, a popular chieftain, whom we have already mentioned, when noticing his metrical chronicle; and one who, in the middle of the tenth century, recovered Castile anew from the Moors, and became its first sovereign Count. The number of ballads relating to him is not large; probably about twenty. The most poetical are those which describe his being twice rescued from prison by his courageous wife, and those which relate his contest with King Sancho, where he displayed all the turbulence and cunning of a robber baron in the Middle Ages. Nearly all their facts may be found in the Third Part of the "General Chronicle"; and though only a few of the ballads themselves appear to be derived from it as distinctly as some of those on Bernardo del Carpio, still two or three are evidently indebted to that Chronicle for their materials and phraseology, while yet others may, possibly, in some ruder shape, have preceded it, and contributed to its composition.¹⁰

ledo, 1594, 18mo), which Pedro Flores tells us he collected far and wide from tradition, were known in the time of Alfonso the Wise, and were among the *Cantares de Gesta* to which he alludes. I would instance particularly the three beginning "Contandole estaba un dia," "Antes que barbas tuviesse," and "Mal mis servicios pagaste." The language of those ballads is, no doubt, chiefly that of the age of Charles V. and Philip II.; but the thoughts and feelings are evidently much older.

¹⁰ Among the ballads taken from the "Crónica General" is, I think, the one

in the ballad-book of 1555, beginning "Preso esta Fernan Gonzalez," though the Chronicle says (Parte III. f. 62, ed. 1604) that it was a Norman Count who bribed the castellan, and the ballad says it was a Lombard, as does also the old poem of Fernan Gonzalez, col. 797. Another, which, like the two last, is very spirited, is found in the "Flor de Romances," Séptima Parte (Alcalá, 1597, 18mo, f. 65), beginning "El Conde Fernan Gonzalez," and contains an account of one of his victories over Almanzor not told elsewhere, and therefore the more curious.

The ballads which naturally form the next group are those on the Seven Lords of Lara, who lived in the time * of Garcia Fernandez, the son of Fernan Gonzalez. Some of them are beautiful, and the story they contain is one of the most romantic in Spanish history. The Seven Lords of Lara, in consequence of a family quarrel, are betrayed by their uncle into the hands of the Moors, and put to death; while their father, with the basest treason, is confined in a Moorish prison, where, by a noble Moorish lady, he has an eighth son, the famous Mudarra, who at last avenges all the wrongs of his race. On this story there are above thirty ballads; some very old, and exhibiting either inventions or traditions not elsewhere recorded, while others seem to have come directly from the "General Chronicle." The following is a part of one of the last, and a good specimen of the whole: ¹¹ —

What knight goes there, so false and fair,
That thus for treason stood?
Velasquez hight is that false knight,
Who sold his brother's blood.
Where Almenár extends afar,
He called his nephews forth,
And on that plain he bade them gain
A name of fame and worth.
The Moors he shows, the common foes,
And promises their rout;
But while they stood prepared for blood
A mighty host came out.

¹¹ The story of the Infantes de Lara is in the "Crónica General," Parte III., and in the edition of 1604, begins at f. 74. I possess, also, a striking volume, containing forty plates, on their history, by Otto Vaenius, the master of Rubens, and a scholar and artist, who died in 1634. It is entitled "Historia Septem Infantium de Lara" (Antverpiæ, 1612, fol.); the same, no doubt, an imperfect copy of which Southey praises in his notes to the "Chronicle of the Cid" (p. 401). Sepulveda (1551—

84) has a good many ballads on the subject; the one I have partly translated in the text beginning:—

Quien es aquel caballero
Que tan gran traycion hacia?
Ruy Velasquez es de Lara,
Que a sus sobrinos vendia.

The corresponding passage of the Chronicle is at f. 78, ed. 1604.

Important ballads on the Infantes de Lara are to be found in Wolf's tract, *Über eine Sammlung Spanischer Romanzen*, Wien, 1850.

Of Moorish men were thousands ten,
 With pennons flowing fair;
 Whereat each knight, as well he might,
 Inquired what host came there.
 "O, do not fear, my kinsmen dear,"
 The base Velasquez cried;
 * "The Moors you see can never be
 Of power your shock to bide;
 I oft have met their craven set,
 And none dared face my might:
 So think no fear, my kinsmen dear,
 But boldly seek the fight."
 Thus words deceive, and men believe,
 And falsehood thrives amain;
 And those brave knights, for Christian rights,
 Have sped across the plain;
 And men ten score, but not one more,
 To follow freely chose:
 So Velasquez base his kin and race
 Has bartered to their foes.

* 128

But, as might be anticipated, the *Cid*, even more than Bernardo and Fernan Gonzalez, was seized upon, with the first formation of the language, as the subject of popular poetry, and has been the occasion of more ballads than any other of the great heroes of Spanish history or fable.¹² They were first collected in a separate ballad-book as early as 1612, and have continued to be published and republished, at home and abroad, down to our own times.¹³ It would be easy to find

¹² In the barbarous rhymed Latin poem, printed with great care by Sandoval (Reyes de Castilla, Pamplona, 1615, f. 189, etc.), and apparently written, as we have noticed, by some one who witnessed the siege of Almeria in 1147, we have the following lines:—
 Ipse Rodericus, *Mio Cid* semper vocatus,
 De quo cantatur, quod ab hostibus haud superatus,
 Qui domuit Moros, comites quoque domuit nostros, etc.

These poems must, by the phrase *Mio Cid*, have been in Spanish; and, if so, could hardly have been anything but ballads.

¹³ Nic. Antonio (Bib. Nova, Tom. I. p. 684) gives 1612 as the date of the oldest Romancero del *Cid*. The oldest I possess is of Pamplona (1706, 18mo);

but the Madrid edition (1818, 18mo), the Frankfort (1827, 12mo), and the collection in Duran (Caballarescos, Madrid, 1832, 12mo, Tom. II. pp. 43-191), are more complete. The one by Keller (Stuttgart, 1840, 12mo) is larger yet, and contains one hundred and fifty-four ballads; but Duran's Romancero General, Tom. I., Madrid, 1849, brings up the number to one hundred and eighty-four. A few, however, could be added even to this ample mass;—seven from Wolf's "Sammlung," 1850.

Seventy-eight ballads on the *Cid* are translated into *asmanantes*, preserving the measure of the original, in *Der Cid, ein Romanzen-Kranz*, von F. M. Duttenhofer, of which the second edition was printed at Stuttgart in 1837.

two hundred: some of them very ancient; some poetical; many prosaic and poor. The chronicles seem to have been but little resorted to in their composition.¹⁴ * The circumstances of the *Cid's* * 129 history, whether true or fictitious, were too well settled in the popular faith, and too familiar to all Christian Spaniards, to render the use of such materials necessary. No portion of the old ballads, therefore, is more strongly marked with the spirit of their age and country; and none constitutes a series so complete. They give us apparently the whole of the *Cid's* history, which we find nowhere else entire; neither in the ancient poem, which does not pretend to be a life of him; nor in the prose chronicle, which does not begin so early in his story; nor in the Latin document, which is too brief and condensed. At the very outset, we have the following minute and living picture of the mortification and sufferings of Diego Laynez, the *Cid's* father, in consequence of the insult he had received from Count Lozano, which his age rendered it impossible for him to avenge:—

Sorrowing old Laynez sat,
 Sorrowing on the deep disgrace
 Of his house, so rich and knightly,
 Older than Abarea's race.
 For he saw that youthful strength
 To avenge his wrong was needed;
 That, by years enfeebled, broken,
 None his arm now feared or heeded.
 But he of Orgaz, Count Lozano,
 Walks secure where men resort;
 Hindered and rebuked by none,
 Proud his name, and proud his port.

¹⁴ The ballads beginning "Guarte, guarte, Rey Don Sancho," and "De Zamora sale Dolfos," are indebted to the "*Crónica del Cid*" (1593, c. 61, 62). Others, especially those in Sepulveda's collection, show marks of other parts of the same chronicle, or of the "*Crónica General*," Parte IV. But the whole amount of such indebtedness in the ballads of the *Cid* is comparatively small.