

* 216

* CHAPTER XII.

OTHER ROMANCES OF CHIVALRY. — LEPOLEMO. — TRANSLATIONS FROM THE FRENCH. — RELIGIOUS ROMANCES. — CAVALLERIA CELESTIAL. — PERIOD DURING WHICH ROMANCES OF CHIVALRY PREVAILED. — THEIR NUMBER. — THEIR FOUNDATION IN THE STATE OF SOCIETY. — THE PASSION FOR THEM. — THEIR FATE.

ALTHOUGH the Palmerins failed as rivals of the great family of Amadis, they were not without their influence and consideration. Like the other works of their class, and more than most of them, they helped to increase the passion for fictions of chivalry in general, which, overbearing every other in the Peninsula, was now busily at work producing romances, both original and translated, that astonish us alike by their number, their length, and their absurdities. Of those originally Spanish, it would not be difficult, after setting aside the two series belonging to the families of Amadis and Palmerin, to collect the titles of above fifty, all produced in the course of the sixteenth century. Some of them are still more or less familiar to us, by their names at least, such as "Belianis of Greece" and "Olivante de Laura," which are found in Don Quixote's library, and "Felixmarte of Hircania," which was once, we are told, the summer reading of Dr. Johnson.¹ But, in general, like "The Renowned

¹ Bishop Percy says that Dr. Johnson read "Felixmarte of Hircania" quite through, when at his parsonage-house, one summer. It may be doubted whether the book has been read through since by any Englishman. (Boswell's Life, ed. Croker, London, 1831, 8vo, Vol. 1. p. 24.) Of the "Belianis de

Grecia" I have a copy in folio, printed at Burgos in 1587; but I have never been able to do for it what Dr. Johnson did for "Felixmarte de Hircania." It has, however, evidently not wanted readers, for, though it bears no mark of rough treatment, it is almost completely used up. Its author was Jero-

Knight Cifar" and "The Valorous Don Florando of England," their very titles sound strangely to our ears, and excite no interest when we hear them repeated. Most of them, it may be added, — perhaps all, — deserve the oblivion into which they have fallen; though some have merits which, in the days of their popularity, placed them near the best of those already noticed.

Among the latter is "The Invincible Knight Lepolemo, called the Knight of the Cross and Son of the Emperor of Germany," a romance which was published as early as 1543, and, besides drawing a continuation after it, was reprinted thrice in the course of the century, and translated into French and Italian.² It is a striking book among those of its class, not only from the variety of fortunes through which the hero passes, but, in some degree, from its general tone and purpose. In his infancy Lepolemo is stolen from the shelter of the throne to which he is heir, and completely lost for a long period. During this time he lives among the heathen; at first in slavery, and afterwards as an honorable knight-adventurer at the court of the Soldan. By his courage and merit he rises to great distinction, and, while on a journey through France, is recognized by his own family, who happen to be there. Of course he is restored, amidst a general jubilee, to his imperial estate.

In all this, and especially in the wearisome series of its knightly adventures, the Lepolemo has a sufficient

nimo Fernandez, and the book is one of the most extravagant and absurd of its class, as well as one of the rarest.

² Ebert cites the first edition known as of 1525; Bowle, in the list of his authorities, gives one of 1534; Clemencin says there is one of 1543 in the Royal Library at Madrid; and Pellicer

used one of 1562. Which of these I have I do not know, as the colophon is gone, and there is no date on the title-page; but its type and paper seem to indicate an edition from Antwerp, while all the preceding were printed in Spain.

resemblance to the other romances of chivalry. But in two points it differs from them. In the first place, it pretends to be translated by Pedro de Luxan, its real author, from the Arabic of a wise magician attached to the person of the Sultan; and yet it represents its hero throughout as a most Christian knight, and his father and mother, the Emperor and Empress, as giving the force of their example to encourage pilgrimages to the Holy Sepulchre; making the whole story subserve the projects of the Church, in the same

way, if not to the same degree, that Turpin's * 218 * Chronicle had done. And in the next place,

it attracts our attention, from time to time, by a gentle air and touches of the national manners, as, for instance, in the love passages between the Knight of the Cross and the Infanta of France, in one of which he talks to her at her grated balcony in the night, as if he were a cavalier of one of Calderon's comedies.³ Except in these points, however, the *Lepolemo* is much like its predecessors and followers, and quite as tedious.

Spain, however, not only gave romances of chivalry to the rest of Europe in large numbers, but received also from abroad in some good proportion to what she gave. From the first, the early French fictions were known in Spain, as we have seen by the allusions to them in the "*Amadis de Gaula*"; a circumstance that may have been owing either to the old connection with France through the Burgundian family, a branch of which filled the throne of Portugal, or to some strange accident, like the one that carried "*Palmerin de Inglaterra*" to Portugal from France rather than from Spain, its native country. At any rate, some-

³ See Parte I. c. 112, 144.

what later, when the passion for such fictions was more developed, the French stories were translated or imitated in Spanish, and became a part, and a favored part, of the literature of the country. "*The Romance of Merlin*" was printed very early, — as early as 1498, — and "*The Romance of Tristan de Leonnais*," and that of the Holy Cup, "*La Demanda del Sancto Grial*," followed it as a sort of natural sequence.⁴

The rival story of Charlemagne, however, — perhaps from the greatness of his name, — seems to have been, at last, more successful. It is a translation directly from the French, and therefore gives none of those accounts of his defeat at Roncesvalles by Bernardo del Carpio, which, in the old Spanish chronicles and ballads, so gratified the * national vanity; and * 219 contains only the accustomed stories of Oliver and Fierabras the Giant; of Orlando and the False Ganelon; relying, of course, on the fabulous Chronicle of Turpin as its chief authority. But, such as it was, it found great favor at the time it appeared; and such, in fact, as Nicolas de Piamonte gave it to the world, in 1528, under the title of "*The History of the Emperor Charlemagne*," it has been constantly reprinted down to our own times, and has done more than any other tale of chivalry to keep alive in Spain a taste for such reading.⁵ During a considerable period, however, a

⁴ "*Merlin*," 1498, "*Artus*," 1499, "*Tristan*," 1501, "*Sancto Grial*," 1555, and "*Segunda Tabla Redonda*," 1567, would seem to be the series of them given by the bibliographers. But the last cannot, perhaps, now be found, though mentioned by Quadrio, who, in his fourth volume, has a good deal of curious matter on these old romances generally. I do not think it needful to notice others, such as "*Pierres y Magalona*," 1519, "*Tallante de Ricamonte*," and the "*Conde Tomillas*," —

the last referred to in *Don Quixote*, but otherwise unknown.

⁵ Discussions on the origin of these stories may be found in the Preface to the excellent edition of Einhard or Eginhard by Ideler (Hamburg, 1839, 8vo, Band I. pp. 40-46). The very name *Roncesvalles* does not seem to have occurred out of Spain till much later. (*Ibid.*, p. 169.) There is an edition of the "*Carlo Magno*" printed at Madrid, in 1806, 12mo, evidently for popular use. It contains the same Pro-

few other romances shared its popularity. "Reynaldos de Montalban," for instance, always a favorite hero in Spain, was one of them;⁶ and a little later we find another, the story of "Cleomadez," an invention of a French queen in the thirteenth century, which first gave to Froissart the love for adventure that made him a chronicler.⁷

In most of the imitations and translations just noticed, the influence of the Church is more visible than it is in the class of the original Spanish romances. This is the case, from its very subject, with the story of the Saint Graal, and with that of Charlemagne, which, so far as it is taken from the pretended Archbishop Turpin's Chronicle, goes mainly to encourage founding religious houses and making pious pilgrimages. But the Church was not satisfied with this indirect and accidental influence. Romantic fiction, though overlooked in its earliest beginnings, or perhaps even punished by ecclesiastical authority * 220 in the * person of the Greek Bishop to whom we owe the first proper romance,⁸ was now become important, and might be made directly useful.

logo that Gayangos gives from the edition of 1570, and which, no doubt, comes down from the earliest edition of all. It is, I think, still reprinted, as the work itself is.

⁶ There are several editions of the First Part of it mentioned in Clemenčin's notes to Don Quixote (Parte I. c. 6); besides which, it had succession, in Parts II. and III., before 1558.

⁷ The "Cleomadez," one of the most popular stories in Europe for three centuries, was composed by Adenez, at the dictation of Marie, queen of Philip III. of France, who married her in 1272. (Fauchet, Recueil, Paris, 1581, folio, Liv. II. c. 116.) Froissart gives a simple account of his reading and admiring it in his youth. (Poésies, Paris, 1829, 8vo, pp. 206, etc.)

⁸ The "Ethiopia," or the "Loves of

Theagenes and Chariclea," written in Greek by Heliodorus, who lived in the time of the Emperors Theodosius, Arcadius, and Honorius. It was well known in Spain at the period now spoken of, for, though it was not printed in the original before 1534, a Spanish translation of it appeared as early as 1554, anonymously, and another, by Ferdinand de Mena, in 1587, which was republished at least twice in the course of thirty years. (Nic. Antonio, Bib. Nov., Tom. I. p. 380, and Conde's Catalogue, London, 1824, 8vo, Nos. 263, 264.) It has been said that the Bishop preferred to give up his rank and place rather than consent to have this romance, the work of his youth, burned by public authority. Erotici Græci, ed. Mitscherlich, Biponti, 1792, 8vo, Tom. II. p. viii.

Religious romances, therefore, were written. In general, they were cast into the form of allegories, like "The Celestial Chivalry," "The Christian Chivalry," "The Knight of the Bright Star," and "The Christian History and Warfare of the Stranger Knight, the Conqueror of Heaven"; — all printed after the middle of the sixteenth century, and during the period when the passion for romances of chivalry was at its height.⁹

One of the oldest of them is probably the most curious and remarkable of the whole number. It is appropriately called "The Celestial Chivalry," and was written by Hierónimo de San Pedro, at Valencia, and printed in 1554, in two thin folio volumes.¹⁰ In his Preface, the author declares it to be his object to drive out of the world the profane books of chivalry; the mischief of which * he illustrates by a * 221 reference to Dante's account of Francesca da Rimini. In pursuance of this purpose, the First Part is entitled "The Root of the Fragrant Rose"; which, instead of chapters, is divided into "Wonders," *Maravillas*, and contains an allegorical version of the most

⁹ The "Caballería Christiana" was printed in 1570, the "Caballero de la Clara Estrella" in 1580, and the "Caballero Peregrino" in 1601. Besides these, "Roberto el Diablo" — a story which was famous throughout Europe in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, and has been revived in our own times — was known in Spain from 1530, and perhaps earlier. (Nic. Antonio, Bib. Nov., Tom. II. p. 251.) In France, it was printed in 1496 (Ebert, No. 19175), and in England by Wynkyn de Worde. See Thoms, Romances, London, 1828, 12mo, Vol. I. p. v.

¹⁰ Who this Hierónimo de San Pedro was is a curious question. The Privilegio declares he was a Valencian, alive in 1554; and in the Bibliothecas of Ximeno and Fuster, under the year 1560, we have Gerónimo Sempere given as the name of the well-known author of the "Carolea," a long poem printed

in that year. But to him is not there attributed the "Caballería Celestial"; nor does any other Hierónimo de San Pedro occur in these collections of lives, or in Nicolas Antonio, or elsewhere that I have noted. They are, nevertheless, I think, one and the same person, the name of the poet being sometimes written Sempere, Sencet Pere, etc. The first Part, or the "Pié de la Rosa fragante," was also published at Antwerp in 1554, by Martin Nucio. In the Preface the author intimates that he had some difficulty in writing the Castilian, because it was not his native language. This and other circumstances leave little doubt that the "Carolea" and the "Caballería Celestial" were written by one and the same person. Gayangos notes a Jheronim Sempere, a merchant of Valencia, who presided at a poetical festival there in 1533.

striking stories in the Old Testament, down to the time of the good King Hezekiah, told as the adventures of a succession of knights-errant. The Second Part is divided, according to a similar conceit, into "The Leaves of the Rose"; and, beginning where the preceding one ends, comes down, with the same kind of knightly adventures, to the Saviour's death and ascension. The Third, which is promised under the name of "The Flower of the Rose," never appeared, nor is it now easy to understand where consistent materials could have been found for its composition; the Bible having been nearly exhausted in the two former parts. But we have enough without it.

Its most remarkable allegory, from the nature of its subject, relates to the Saviour, and fills seventy-four out of the one hundred and one "Leaves," or chapters, that constitute the Second Part. Christ is represented in it as the Knight of the Lion; his twelve Apostles, as the twelve Knights of his Round Table; John the Baptist, as the Knight of the Desert; and Lucifer, as the Knight of the Serpent;—the main history being a warfare between the Knight of the Lion and the Knight of the Serpent. It begins at the manger of Bethlehem, and ends on Mount Calvary, involving in its progress almost every detail of the Gospel history, and often using the very words of Scripture. Everything, however, is forced into the forms of a strange and revolting allegory. Thus, for the temptation, the Saviour wears the shield of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and rides on the steed of Penitence, given to him by Adam. He then takes leave of his mother, the daughter of the Celestial Emperor, like a youthful knight going out to his first passage at arms, and proceeds to the waste and desert country, where he is

sure to find adventures. On his approach, the Knight of the Desert prepares himself to do battle; but, perceiving who it is, humbles himself before his coming prince and master. The baptism *of * 222 course follows; that is, the Knight of the Lion is received into the order of the Knighthood of Baptism, in the presence of an old man, who turns out to be the Anagogic Master, or the Interpreter of all Mysteries, and two women, one young and the other old. All three of them enter directly into a spirited discussion concerning the nature of the rite they have just witnessed. The old man speaks at large, and explains it as a heavenly allegory. The old woman, who proves to be Sinagoga, or the representation of Judaism, prefers the ancient ordinance provided by Abraham, and authorized, as she says, by "that celebrated Doctor, Moses," rather than this new rite of baptism. The younger woman replies, and defends the new institution. She is the Church Militant; and, the Knight of the Desert deciding the point in her favor, Sinagoga goes off full of anger, ending thus the first part of the action.

The great Anagogic Master, according to an understanding previously had with the Church Militant, now follows the Knight of the Lion to the desert, and there explains to him the true mystery and efficacy of Christian baptism. After this preparation, the Knight enters on his first adventure and battle with the Knight of the Serpent, which in all its details is represented as a duel,—one of the parties coming into the lists accompanied by Abel, Moses, and David, and the other by Cain, Goliath, and Haman. Each of the speeches recorded in the Evangelists is here made an arrow-shot or a sword-thrust; the scene on the pinnacle of the

temple, and the promises made there, are brought in as far as their incongruous nature will permit; and then the whole of this part of the long romance is abruptly ended by the precipitate and disgraceful flight of the Knight of the Serpent.

This scene of the temptation, strange as it now seems to us, is, nevertheless, not an unfavorable specimen of the entire fiction. The allegory is almost everywhere quite as awkward and unmanageable as it is here, and often leads to equally painful and disgusting absurdities. On the other hand, we have occasionally proofs of an imagination that is not ungraceful; just as the formal and extravagant style

* 223 * in which it is written now and then gives token that its author was not insensible to the resources of a language he, in general, so much abuses.¹¹

There is, no doubt, a wide space between such a fiction as this of the Celestial Chivalry and the comparatively simple and direct story of the Amadis de Gaula; and when we recollect that only half a century elapsed between the dates of these romances in Spain,¹² we shall be struck with the fact that this space was very quickly passed over, and that all the varieties of the romances of chivalry are crowded into a comparatively short period of time. But we must not forget that the success of these fictions, thus suddenly obtained, is spread afterwards over a much longer period. The earliest of them were familiarly known in Spain during the fifteenth century, the sixteenth is thronged with them, and, far into the seventeenth, they were

¹¹ It is prohibited in the Index Expurgatorius, Madrid, 1667, folio, p. 863.

¹² I take, as in fairness I ought, the date of the appearance of Montalvo's Spanish version as the period of the

first success of the Amadis in Spain, and not the date of the Portuguese original; the difference being about a century.

still much read; so that their influence over the Spanish character extends through quite two hundred years. Their number, too, during the latter part of the time when they prevailed, was large. It exceeded seventy, nearly all of them in folio; each often in more than one volume, and still oftener repeated in successive editions;—circumstances which, at a period when books were comparatively rare and not frequently reprinted, show that their popularity must have been widely spread, as well as long continued.¹³

This might, perhaps, have been, in some degree, expected in a country where the institutions and feelings of chivalry had struck such firm root as they had in Spain. For Spain, when the romances of chivalry first appeared, * had long been peculiarly * 224 the land of knighthood. The Moorish wars, which had made every gentleman a soldier, necessarily tended to this result; and so did the free spirit of the communities, led on, as they were, during the next period, by barons, who long continued almost as independent in their castles as the king was on his throne. Such a state of things, in fact, is to be recognized as far back as the thirteenth century, when the Partidas, by the most minute and painstaking legislation, provided for a condition of society not easily to be distinguished from that set forth in the Amadis or the Palmerin.¹⁴ The poem and history of the Cid bear witness yet earlier, indirectly indeed, but very strongly, to a similar state of the country; and so do many

¹³ There is an important discussion on the books of chivalry, by Don Pascual de Gayangos, in the Biblioteca de Autores Espanoles, Tom. XL. 1857, Discurso preliminar, with an ample bibliographical catalogue of the Libros de Caballerias, pp. LXIII—LXXXVII. Both

are full of information and instruction.

¹⁴ See the very curious laws that constitute the twenty-first Title of the second of the Partidas, containing the most minute regulations; such as how a knight should be washed and dressed, etc.