

of the old ballads and other records of the national feelings and traditions that had come from the fourteenth century.

But in the fifteenth the chronicles are full of it, and exhibit it in forms the most grave and imposing. Dangerous tournaments, in some of which the chief men of the time, and even the kings themselves, took part, occur constantly, and are recorded among the important events of the age.<sup>15</sup> At the passage of arms near Orbigo, in the reign of John the Second, eighty knights, as we have seen, were found ready to risk their lives for as fantastic a fiction of gallantry as is recorded in any of the romances of chivalry; a folly, of which this was by no means the only instance.<sup>16</sup> Nor did they confine their extravagances to their own country. In the same reign, two Spanish

knights went as far as Burgundy, professedly in \* 225 \* search of adventures, which they strangely mingled with a pilgrimage to Jerusalem; seeming to regard both as religious exercises.<sup>17</sup> And as late as the time of Ferdinand and Isabella, Fernando del Pulgar, their wise secretary, gives us the names of several distinguished noblemen personally known to himself, who had gone into foreign countries, "in order," as he says, "to try the fortune of arms with any cavalier that might be pleased to adventure it with them, and so gain honor for themselves, and the

<sup>15</sup> I should think there are accounts of twenty or thirty such tournaments in the Chronicle of John II. There are many, also, in that of Alvaro de Luna; and so there are in all the contemporary histories of Spain during the fifteenth century. In the year 1428, alone, four are recorded; two of which involved loss of life, and all of which were held under the royal auspices.

<sup>16</sup> See the account of the Passo Honroso already given, to which add the accounts in the Chronicle of John II. of one which was attempted in Valladolid, by Rui Diaz de Mendoza, on occasion of the marriage of Prince Henry, in 1440, but which was stopped by the royal order, in consequence of the serious nature of its results. (Crónica de Juan el II., Ann. 1440, c. 16.)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Ann. 1435, c. 3.

fame of valiant and bold knights for the gentlemen of Castile."<sup>18</sup>

A state of society like this was the natural result of the extraordinary development which the institutions of chivalry had then received in Spain. Some of it was suited to the age, and salutary; the rest was knight-errantry, and knight-errantry in its wildest extravagance. When, however, the imaginations of men were so excited as to tolerate and maintain, in their daily life, such manners and institutions as these, they would not fail to enjoy the boldest and most free representations of a corresponding state of society in works of romantic fiction. But they went further. Extravagant and even impossible as are many of the adventures recorded in the books of chivalry, they still seemed so little to exceed the absurdities frequently witnessed or told of known and living men, that many persons took the romances themselves to be true histories, and believed them. Thus, Mexia, the trustworthy historiographer of Charles the Fifth, says, in 1545, when speaking of "the Amadis, Lisuartes, and Clarions," that "their authors do waste their time and weary their faculties in writing such books, which are read by all, and believed by many. For," he goes on, "there be men who think all these things really happened, just as they read or hear them, though the greater part of the things themselves are sinful, profane, and unbecoming."<sup>19</sup> \* And Castillo, \* 226 another chronicler, tells us gravely, in 1587, that Philip the Second, when he married Mary of England, only thirty-three years earlier, promised that if

<sup>18</sup> Claros Varones de Castilla, Titulo XVII. He boasts, at the same time, that more Spanish knights went abroad to seek adventures than there were foreign knights who came to Castile

and Leon; a fact pertinent to this point.

<sup>19</sup> Historia Imperial, Anvers, 1561, folio, ff. 123, 124. The first edition was of 1545.

King Arthur should return to claim the throne, he would peaceably yield to that prince all his rights; thus implying, at least in Castillo himself, and probably in many of his readers, a full faith in the stories of Arthur and his Round Table.<sup>20</sup>

Such credulity, it is true, now seems impossible, even if we suppose it was confined to a moderate number of intelligent persons; and hardly less so when, as in the admirable sketch of an easy faith in the stories of chivalry by the innkeeper and Maritornes in Don Quixote, we are shown that it extended to the mass of the people.<sup>21</sup> But before we refuse our assent to the statements of such faithful chroniclers as Mexia, on the ground that what they relate is impossible, we should recollect that in the age when they lived, men were in the habit of believing and asserting, every day, things no less incredible than those recited in the old romances. The Spanish Church then countenanced a trust in miracles, as of constant recurrence, which required of those who believed them more credulity than the fictions of chivalry; and yet how few were found wanting in faith! And how few doubted the tales that had come down to them of the impossible achievements of their fathers during the seven centuries of their warfare against the Moors, or the glorious traditions of all sorts, that still constitute the charm of their brave old chronicles, though we now see, at a glance, that many of them are as fabulous as anything told of Palmerin or Launcelot!

But, whatever we may think of this belief in the romances of chivalry, there is no question that in Spain, during the sixteenth century, there prevailed a

<sup>20</sup> Pellicer, note to Don Quixote, Parte I. c. 13. See also Vol. II., *post*, p. 139, with note 17.

<sup>21</sup> Parte I. c. 32.

passion for them such as was never known elsewhere. The proof of it comes to us from all sides. The poetry of the country is full of it, from the romantic ballads that still live in the memory of the people,\* up to the old plays that have ceased to be \* 227 acted, and the old epics that have ceased to be read. The national manners and the national dress, more peculiar and picturesque than in other countries, long bore its sure impress. The old laws, too, speak no less plainly. Indeed, the passion for such fictions was so strong, and seemed so dangerous, that, in 1553, they were prohibited from being printed, sold, or read, in the American colonies; and, in 1555, the Cortes earnestly asked that the same prohibition might be extended to Spain itself, and that all the extant copies of romances of chivalry might be publicly burned.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The abdication of the emperor happened the same year, and prevented this and other petitions of the Cortes from being acted upon. For the laws here referred to, and other proofs of the prevalence and influence of the romances of chivalry down to the time of the appearance of Don Quixote, see Clemencin's Preface to his edition of that work. But one of the proofs to which he refers is so much to my present purpose, that it is worth ampler consideration than he gives to it;—I mean the magnificent pageant offered to Charles V. by his sister, the Queen of Hungary, at Bins, in Flanders, in 1549. It is minutely described by Calvete de Estrella, in his "Viage del Principe Don Felipe," ec., Anvers, folio, 1552, ff. 188–205, and was undoubtedly a most extraordinary and brilliant embodiment of the spirit of knight-errantry by the principal personages then at her court. The chief show—at which Luis Capata, author of the *Carlo Famoso*, and Luis de Avila, the historian, were both present—occupied two days, and set forth an enchanted castle, in which fair dames and brave knights were imprisoned by a false magician, but from which they

were freed by other and more fortunate knights; Philip, afterwards Philip II., being their leader, and fighting out the adventure, as it should appear, not without danger to his sacred person. A suffering queen, a damsel in distress, a dwarf, enchantments, duels, tournaments, and encounters of all sorts, were not wanting, and were so managed as to make a sort of epic whole of the pageant, ending with the disappearance of the magic castle as its grand catastrophe. In short, it was a tale of chivalry acted out before the first potentate of Europe, for his amusement; and such a tale, too, that if Don Quixote had been there to witness the gorgeous exhibition, he would have held it, not without show of reason, to be a living justification of all his mad fancies about knight-errantry. Francesillo de Zuñiga, in his burlesque chronicle, addressed to Charles V., says (Chap. LXXV.), that the emperor witnessed on one occasion tournaments and adventures just as they are related in the *Amadis de Gaula*. Perhaps the wise court fool said this in ridicule of the *Fiestas de Bins*, but I think he refers to some earlier pageant of the same sort.

And, finally, half a century later, the happiest work of the greatest genius Spain has produced bears witness on every page to the prevalence of an absolute fanaticism for books of chivalry, and becomes at once the seal of their vast popularity, and the monument of their fate.

## \* CHAPTER XIII. \* 228

FOURTH CLASS.—DRAMA.—EXTINCTION OF THE GREEK AND ROMAN THEATRES.—RELIGIOUS ORIGIN OF THE MODERN DRAMA.—EARLIEST NOTICE OF IT IN SPAIN.—HINTS OF IT IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.—MARQUIS OF VILLENA.—CONSTABLE DE LUNA.—MINGO REVULGO.—RODRIGO COTA.—THE CELESTINA.—FIRST ACT.—THE REMAINDER.—ITS STORY.—CHARACTER, AND EFFECTS ON SPANISH LITERATURE.

THE DRAMA.—The ancient theatre of the Greeks and Romans was continued under some of its grosser and more popular forms at Constantinople, in Italy, and in many other parts of the falling and fallen empire, far into the Middle Ages. But, under whatever disguise it appeared, it was essentially heathenish; for, from first to last, it was mythological, both in tone and in substance. As such, of course, it was rebuked and opposed by the Christian Church, which, favored by the confusion and ignorance of the times, succeeded in overthrowing it, though not without a long contest, and not until its degradation and impurity had rendered it worthy of its fate, and of the anathemas pronounced against it by Tertullian and Saint Augustin.<sup>1</sup>

A love for theatrical exhibitions, however, survived the extinction of these poor remains of the classical drama; and the priesthood, careful neither to make itself needlessly odious, nor to neglect any suitable method of increasing its own influence, seems early to have been willing to provide a substitute for the popular amusement it had destroyed. At any rate, a

<sup>1</sup> A Spanish Bishop of Barcelona, in the seventh century, was deposed for merely permitting plays with allusions to heathen mythology to be acted in his diocese. (Mariana, Hist., Lib. VI. c. 3.)