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* CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PROVENÇAL AND COURTLY SCHOOL IN CASTILIAN LITERATURE. — PARTLY INFLUENCED BY THE LITERATURE OF ITALY. — CONNECTION OF SPAIN WITH ITALY, RELIGIOUS, INTELLECTUAL, AND POLITICAL. — SIMILARITY OF LANGUAGE IN THE TWO COUNTRIES. — TRANSLATIONS FROM THE ITALIAN. — REIGN OF JOHN THE SECOND. — TROUBADOURS AND MINNESINGERS THROUGHOUT EUROPE. — COURT OF CASTILE. — THE KING. — DON ENRIQUE DE VILLENA. — HIS ART OF CARVING. — HIS ART OF POETRY. — HIS LABORS OF HERCULES.

THE Provençal literature, which appeared so early in Spain, and which, during the greater part of the period when it prevailed there, was in advance of the poetical culture of nearly all the rest of Europe, could not fail to exercise an influence on the Castilian, springing up and flourishing at its side. But, as we proceed, we must notice the influence of another literature over the Spanish, less visible and important at first than that of the Provençal, but destined subsequently to become much wider and more lasting; — I mean, of course, the Italian.

The origin of this influence is to be traced far back in the history of the Spanish character and civilization. Long, indeed, before a poetical spirit had been re-awakened anywhere in the South of Europe, the Spanish Christians, through the wearisome centuries of their contest with the Moors, had been accustomed to look towards Italy as to the seat of a power whose foundations were laid in faith and hopes extending far beyond the mortal struggle in which they were engaged; not because the Papal See, in its political capacity, had then obtained any wide authority in

Spain, but because, from the peculiar exigences and trials of their condition, the religion of the Romish Church had nowhere found such implicit and faithful followers as the body of the Spanish Christians.¹

In truth, from the time of the great Arab invasion down to the fall of Granada, this devoted people had rarely come into political relations with the rest of Europe. Engrossed and exhausted by their wars at home, they had, on the one hand, hardly been at all the subjects of foreign cupidity or ambition; and, on the other, they had been little able, even when they most desired it, to connect themselves with the stirring interests of the world beyond their mountains, or to attract the sympathy of those more favored countries which, with Italy at their head, were coming up to constitute the civilized power of Christendom. But the Spaniards always felt their warfare to be peculiarly that of soldiers of the Cross; they always felt themselves, beyond everything else and above everything else, to be Christian men contending against misbelief. Their religious sympathies were, therefore, constantly apparent, and often predominated over all others; so that, while they were little connected with the Church of Rome by those political ties that were bringing half Europe into bondage, they were more connected

¹ A learned pamphlet, designed to show the entire independence of the Spanish church of the See of Rome till after the capture of Toledo in 1085, and the continued independence of the Spanish government since, — even in the time of Philip II., who never permitted any papal interference with his royal prerogatives, — was published at Darmstadt in 1843, by J. Ellendorf, entitled "Die Stellung der Spanischen Kirche zum Römischen Stuhle." Dr. Ellendorf might have added to his goodly array of facts the extraordinary

threat of Ferdinand the Catholic, in 1508, to deny all obedience to the Pope, if the Pope should persist in certain measures infringing the rights of the Spanish crown. The strong language of Ferdinand to his ambassador at Rome was, "Estamos muy determinados si su Santidad *no revoca luego* el Breve y los Autos por virtud del fechos de *le quitar la obediencia de todos los reynos de las coronas de Castilla y Aragon.*" Quevedo, Obras, 1794, Tom. XI. p. 4. See *post*, Chap. XXIV. note 4.

with its religious spirit than any other people of modern times; more even than the armies of the Crusaders whom that same church had summoned out of all Christendom, and to whom it had given whatever of its own resources and character it was able to impart.

To these religious influences of Italy upon Spain were early added those of a higher intellectual culture. Before the year 1300, Italy possessed at least five universities; some of them famous throughout * 315 Europe, and attracting * students from its most distant countries. Spain, at the same period, possessed not one, except that of Salamanca, which was in a very unsettled state.² Even during the next century, those established at Huesca and Valladolid produced comparatively little effect. The whole Peninsula was still in too disturbed a state for any proper encouragement of letters; and those persons, therefore, who wished to be taught, resorted, some of them, to Paris, but more to Italy. At Bologna, which was probably the oldest, and for a long time the most distinguished of the Italian universities, we know Spaniards were received and honored, during the thirteenth century, both as students and as professors.³ At Padua, the next in rank, a Spaniard, in 1260, was made the rector, or presiding officer.⁴ And, no doubt, in all the great Italian places of education, which were easily accessible, especially in those of Rome and Naples,

² The University of Salamanca owes its first endowment to Alfonso X., 1254; but in 1310 it had already fallen into great decay, and did not become an efficient and frequented university till some time afterwards. Hist. de la Universidad de Salamanca, por Pedro Chacon. Semanario Erudito, Madrid, 1789, 4to, Tom. XVIII. pp. 13, 21,

etc. Chacon, who died in 1585, was a learned man, and is a good authority. Literatura Española. . . . en el Prefacio de N. Antonio, 1787, p. 74, note.

³ Tiraboschi, Storia della Letteratura Italiana, Roma, 1782, 4to, Tom. IV. Lib. I. c. 3; and Fuster, Biblioteca Valenciana, Tom. I. pp. 2, 9.

⁴ Tiraboschi, ut sup.

Spaniards early sought the culture that was either not then to be obtained in their own country, or to be had only with difficulty or by accident.

In the next century, the instruction of Spaniards in Italy was put upon a more permanent foundation by Cardinal Carillo de Albornoz; a prelate, a statesman, and a soldier, who, as Archbishop of Toledo, was head of the Spanish Church in the reign of Alfonso the Eleventh, and who afterwards, as regent for the Pope, conquered and governed a large part of the Roman States, which, in the time of Rienzi, had fallen off from their allegiance. This distinguished personage, during his residence in Italy, felt the necessity of better means for the education of his countrymen, and founded, for their especial benefit, at Bologna, in 1364, the College of St. Clement, — a munificent institution, * which has subsisted down to our own * 316 age.⁵ From the middle of the fourteenth century, therefore, it cannot be doubted that the most direct means existed for the transmission of culture from Italy to Spain; one of the most striking proofs of which is to be found in the case of Antonio de Lebrixa, commonly called Nebrissensis, who was educated at this college in the century following its first foundation, and who, on his return home, did more to advance the cause of letters in Spain than any other scholar of his time.⁶

⁵ Tiraboschi, Tom. IV. Lib. I. c. 3, sect. 8. Antonio, Bib. Vetus, ed. Bayer, Tom. II. pp. 169, 170. Gibbon (chap. LXX.) calls Cardinal Albornoz "a consummate statesman," and adds, in a note, "he restored by his arms and counsels the temporal dominion of the Popes." His college was certainly a monument of his wisdom, and long did good service to the cause of learning. I visited it in 1856, and obtained there a slight pamphlet on its fortunes, en-

titled "Cenni storici dell' almo collegio maggiore di San Clemente della nazione Spagnola in Bologna," 1855, pp. 16. The venerable *Collegio* was nearly extinguished in the time of the first Napoleon; but, though it was revived in 1819, under the auspices of Spain, it seemed to be in a sleepy state when I went through its large halls and pleasant gardens.

⁶ Antonio, Bib. Nova, Tom. I. pp. 132-138.

Commercial and political relations still further promoted a free communication of the manners and literature of Italy to Spain. Barcelona, long the seat of a cultivated court,—a city whose liberal institutions gave birth to the first bank of exchange, and demanded the first commercial code of modern times,—had, from the days of James the Conqueror, exercised a sensible influence round the shores of the Mediterranean, and come into successful competition with the enterprise of Pisa and Genoa, even in the ports of Italy. The knowledge and refinement brought back by its ships, joined to the spirit of commercial adventure that sent them forth, rendered Barcelona, therefore, in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, one of the most magnificent cities in Europe, and carried its influence not only quite through the kingdoms of Aragon and Valencia, of which it was, in many respects, the capital, but into the neighboring kingdom of Castile, with which that of Aragon was, during much of this period, intimately connected.⁷

* 317 *The political relations between Spain and Sicily were, however, earlier and more close than those between Spain and Italy, and tended to the same results. Giovanni da Procida, after long preparing his beautiful island to shake off the hated yoke of the French, hastened, in 1282, as soon as the horrors of the Sicilian Vespers were fulfilled, to lay the allegiance of Sicily at the feet of Peter the Third of Aragon, who, in right of his wife, claimed Sicily to be a part of

⁷ Prescott's Hist. of Ferdinand and Isabella, Introd., Section 2; to which add the account of the residence in Barcelona of Carlos de Viana, in Quintana's Life of that unhappy prince (Vidas de Españoles Célebres, Tom. I.), and the very curious notice of Barcelona in Leo Von Rözmital's Ritter-Hof-und-Pilger-

Reise, 1465-1467, Stuttgart, 1844, 8vo, p. 111. The first book with a date known to have been printed in Spain appeared at Barcelona, 1468. (See ante, Chap. XVII. note 21.) But a press does not seem to have been regularly established there till later.

his inheritance, as heir of Conradin, the last male descendant of the imperial family of the Hohenstauffen.⁸ The revolution thus begun by a fiery patriotism was successful; but from that time Sicily was either a fief of the Aragonese crown, or was possessed, as a separate kingdom, by a branch of the Aragonese family, down to the period when, with the other possessions of Ferdinand the Catholic, it became a part of the consolidated monarchy of Spain.

The connection with Naples, which was of the same sort, followed later, but was no less intimate. Alfonso the Fifth of Aragon, a prince of rare wisdom, and much literary cultivation, acquired Naples by conquest in 1441, after a long struggle;⁹ but the crown he had thus won was passed down separately in an indirect line through four of his descendants, till 1503, when, by * a shameful treaty with France, and by the * 318 genius and arms of Gonzalvo of Córdoba, it was again conquered and made a direct dependence of the Spanish throne.¹⁰ In this condition, as fiefs of the crown of Spain, both Sicily and Naples continued subject kingdoms until after the Bourbon accession; both

⁸ Zurita, Anales de Aragón, Zaragoza, 1604, folio, Lib. IV. c. 13, etc.; Mariana, Historia, Lib. XIV. c. 6;—both important, but especially the first, as giving the Spanish view of a case which we are more in the habit of considering either in its Italian or its French relations.

⁹ Schmidt Geschichte Aragoniens im Mittelalter, pp. 337-354. Heeren, Geschichte des Studiums der Classischen Litteratur, Göttingen, 1797, 8vo, Tom. II. pp. 109-111. One who knew Alfonso well, and was a competent judge, declared him to be "unicus doctorum hominum cultor suæ tempestatis" (Bart. Facius de Rebus Gestis ab Alphonso, etc., Lugduni, 1560, fol., p. 181.) The conquest of Naples is described by Fazio in the same work; and Bayle (Ed. 1740, Tom. III. p. 461) has an

interesting life of Alfonso, who was really a great man, and a man of cultivation beyond his age. Mariana (Lib. XXII. c. 13, Ed. 1780, Tom. II. p. 419) is profuse in his admiration of him, but is mistaken in supposing his death to have been accelerated by grief for that of Fazio, because Fazio survived Alfonso several years. Alfonso V. was the seventh in descent from Alfonso el Sabio, and had all his great ancestor's love of letters. One odd proof of it is mentioned by Cabrera, who says that when the Paduans claimed to have found the remains of Livy, Alfonso sent for one of the bones, and obtained it at a great price. (De Historia para entenderla y para escribirla, 1611, f. 8.)

¹⁰ Prescott's Hist. of Ferdinand and Isabella, Vol. III.

affording, from the very nature of their relations to the thrones of Castile and Aragon, constant means and opportunities for the transmission of Italian cultivation and Italian literature to Spain itself.

But the language of Italy, from its affinity to the Spanish, constituted a medium of communication perhaps more important and effectual than any or all of the others. The Latin was the mother of both; and the resemblance between them was such that neither could claim to have features entirely its own: *Facies non una, nec diversa tamen; qualem decet esse sororum*. It cost little labor to a Spaniard to make himself master of the Italian. Translations, therefore, were less common, from the few Italian authors that then existed worth translating, than they would otherwise have been; but enough are found, and early enough, to show that Italian authors and Italian literature were not neglected in Spain. Ayala, the chronicler, who died in 1407, was, as we have already observed, acquainted with the works of Boccaccio.¹¹ A little later we are struck by the fact that the "Divina Commedia" of Dante was twice translated in the same year, 1428; once by Febrer into the Catalan dialect, and once by Don Enrique de Villena into the Castilian. Twenty years afterwards, the Marquis of Santillana is complimented as a person capable of correcting or surpassing that great poet, and speaks himself of Dante, of Petrarch, and of Boccaccio, as if he were familiar with them all.¹² But the name of this great nobleman brings

¹¹ See *ante*, p. 162.

¹² "Con vos que emendays las Obras del Dante," says Gomez Manrique, in a poem addressed to his uncle, the great Marquis, and found in the "Cancionero General," 1573, f. 76. b.; — words which, however we may interpret them, imply a familiar knowledge of Dante,

which the Marquis himself yet more directly announces in his well-known letter to the Constable of Portugal. (Sanchez, Poesias Anteriores, Tom. I. p. liv.) But Manrique becomes very extravagant afterwards, when, mourning the death of the Marquis, he says that, compared with him, Dante was a fool: —

us at once to the times of John the Second, * when the influences of Italian literature and * 319 the attempt to form an Italian school in Spain are not to be mistaken. To this period, therefore, we now turn.

The long reign of John the Second, extending from 1407 to 1454, unhappy as it was for himself and for his country, was not unfavorable to the progress of some of the forms of elegant literature. During nearly the whole of it, the weak king himself was subjected to the commanding genius of the Constable Alvaro de Luna, whose control, though he sometimes felt it to be oppressive, he always regretted, when any accident in the troubles of the times threw it off, and left him to bear alone the burden which belonged to his position in the state. It seems, indeed, to have been a part of the Constable's policy to give up the king to his natural indolence, and encourage his effeminacy by filling his time with amusements that would make business more unwelcome to him than the hard tyranny of the minister who relieved him from it.¹³

Among these amusements, none better suited the humor of the idle king than letters. He was by no means without talent. He sometimes wrote verses. He kept the poets of the time much about his person, and more in his confidence and favor than was wise. He had, perhaps, even a partial perception of the advantage of intellectual refinement to his country, or at least to his court. One of his secretaries or scribes, to please his master and those nearest to the royal in-

En las metras, el Dante
Ante el se mostrava necio.

I cite this to show how deplorably bad was the taste of those rude times.

¹³ Mariana, Historia, Madrid, 1780,

fol., Tom. II. pp. 236-407. See, also, the very remarkable details given by Fernan Perez de Guzman, in his "Generaciones y Semblanzas," c. 33.

fluence, made, about the year 1449, an ample collection of the Spanish poetry then most in favor, comprising the works of above fifty authors.¹⁴ Juan de Mena, the most distinguished poet of the time, was his official chronicler, and the king sent him documents and directions, with great minuteness and an amusing personal vanity, respecting the manner in which the history of his reign should be written; while Juan de Mena, * on his part, like a true courtier, sent his verses to the king to be corrected.¹⁵ His physician, too, who seems to have been always in attendance on his person, was the gay and good-humored Ferdinand Gomez, who has left us, if we are to believe them genuine, a pleasing and characteristic collection of letters; and who, after having served and followed his royal master above forty years, sleeping, as he tells us, at his feet, and eating at his table, mourned his death as that of one whose kindness to him had been constant and generous.¹⁶

Surrounded by persons such as these, in continual intercourse with others like them, and often given up to letters to avoid the solicitation of state affairs, and to gratify his constitutional indolence, John the Second made his reign, though discreditable to himself as a prince, and disastrous to Castile as an independent state, still interesting by a sort of poetical court which he gathered about him, and important, as it gave an impulse to refinement perceptible afterwards through several generations.

There has been a period like this in the history of nearly all the modern European nations, — one in

¹⁴ Cancionero de Baena, con notas y Comentarios. Madrid, 1851, 8vo. See *post*, Chap. XXIII.

¹⁵ See the amusing letters in the "Centon Epistolario" of Fern. Gomez

de Cibdareal, Nos. 47, 49, 56, and 76; — a work, however, whose authority will hereafter be called in question.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Epistola 105.

which a taste for poetical composition was common at court, and among those higher classes of society within whose limits intellectual cultivation was then much confined. In Germany such a period is found as early as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; the unhappy young Conradin, who perished in 1268, and is commemorated by Dante, being one of the last of the princely company that illustrates it. For Italy, it begins at about the same time, in the Sicilian court; and, though discountenanced both by the spirit of the Church and by the spirit of such commercial republics as Pisa, Genoa, and Florence, — no one of which had then the chivalrous tone that animated, and, indeed, gave birth to this early refinement throughout Europe, — it can still be traced down as far as the age of Petrarch.

* Of the appearance of such a taste in the * 321 South of France, in Catalonia, and in Aragon, and of its spread to Castile under the patronage of Alfonso the Wise, notice has already been taken. But now we find it in the heart of the country and even in the North, extending, too, into Andalusia and Portugal, full of love and knighthood; and though not without the conceits that distinguished it wherever it appeared, yet sometimes showing touches of nature, and still oftener a graceful ingenuity of art, that have not lost their interest down to our own times. Under its influence was formed that school of poetry which, marked by its most prominent attribute, has been sometimes called the school of the *Minnesingers*, or the poets of love and gallantry;¹⁷ a school which either

¹⁷ *Minne* is the word for *love* in the "Nibelungenlied," and in the oldest German poetry generally, and is applied occasionally to spiritual and religious affections, but almost always to the love connected with gallantry. There has been a great deal of discussion about its etymology and primitive