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# Periods of European Literature

EDITED BY

PROFESSOR SAINTSBURY

VI.

THE LATER RENAISSANCE

# PERIODS OF EUROPEAN LITERATURE.

EDITED BY PROFESSOR SAINTSBURY.

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*“The criticism which alone can much help us for the future is a criticism which regards Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result.”*

—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

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THE  
LATER RENAISSANCE

BY

DAVID HANNAY

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE general rules by which this series is governed have been fully stated by the Editor in the first published volume, *The Flourishing of Romance and the Rise of Allegory*. It will therefore not be necessary for me to do more than endeavour to justify the particular application of them in this book. Mr Saintsbury has fully recognised the magnitude of the task which has to be overcome by the writer who should undertake to display "intimate and equal knowledge of all the branches of European Literature at any given time." Nobody could be more conscious of his insufficiency to attain to any such standard of knowledge than I have had occasion to become in the course of executing the part of the plan intrusted to me. Though I hope my work has not been shirked, I still cannot venture to boast of "intimate and equal knowledge" of all the great bulk of litera-

ture produced during the later sixteenth century. Happily so much as this is not required. Some ignorance of—or at least some want of familiarity with—the less important, is permitted where the writer is “thoroughly acquainted with the literature which happened to be of greatest prominence in the special period.” I must leave others to decide how far my handling of the Spanish, English, and French portions of the subject can be held to excuse my less intimate familiarity with the Italian and Portuguese. The all but unbroken silence of Germany during this period made it unnecessary to take account of it. Modern Dutch and modern Scandinavian literature had hardly begun; such Scottish poets as Scott and Montgomerie are older than their age. These and other things, on the principles of the series, fall into the previous or the next volume.

Although the reasons for the course taken with the literature of Spain are given in the text, they may be repeated here by way of preliminary excuse. It has been decided to treat the Spaniards as an example of the overlapping necessary to the satisfactory carrying out of a series in periods. I have begun with them earlier than with others, have ended with them later, and have as far as space permitted treated them as a whole. For this there is what appears to me to be a sound critical reason. Although Spain undoubtedly belongs to Europe, yet there is in her something which is not quite European. The

Spaniards, though they have always been, and are, vigorous and interesting, have a certain similarity to some oriental races. This is not the place for an essay on the Spanish national character. The comparison is only mentioned as a justification for pointing out that, like some oriental races, the Spaniards have had one great period of energy. At no time have they been weak, and to-day they can still show a power of resistance and a tenacity of will which promise that if ever the intellect of the nation revives, they will again play a great part in the world. But it is none the less a matter of fact that, except during their one flowering time, they have not been what can be called great. From the fifteenth century till well into the seventeenth, those defects in the national character, which have kept the Spaniards stationary and rather anarchical, were in abeyance. The qualities of the race were seen at work on a vast stage, doing wonderful things in war, colonisation, art, and letters. Yet the very reason that the Spaniard was then exercising his faculties to the full extent to which they would go, gives a complete unity to his Golden Age. It cannot be divided in any other than a purely arbitrary way. England and France were destined to grow and develop after the Later Renaissance. Tasso and Bruno were the last voices of a great Italian time. But Spain suspended the anarchy of her middle ages at the end of the fifteenth century, gathered force, burst upon

the world with the violence of a Turkish invasion, flourished for a space, and then sank exhausted at the end of a hundred and fifty years.

It may be thought that too little attention has been paid to the Portuguese. I will not venture to assert that the criticism is ill founded. Still I shall plead by way of excuse that what the lesser Peninsular nation did in literature was hardly sufficiently original to deserve fuller notice in a general survey of a very fertile period. Sà de Miranda and his contemporaries, even Camoens and his follower Corte-Real, were after all little more than adapters of Italian forms. They were doing in kindred language what was also being done by the Spanish "learned poets." In Camoens there was no doubt a decided superiority of accomplishment, but the others seem to me to have been inferior to Garcilaso, Luis de Leon, or Hernan de Herrera. And this "learned poetry" is in itself the least valuable part of the literature of the Peninsula. In what is original and important, the share of the Portuguese is dubious or null. They have a doubtful right to the *Libros de Caballerías*. They have a very insignificant share in the stage, and no part in the *Novelas de Pícaros*. Barros and the other historians were men of the same class as the Spaniards Oviedo or Gómara. For these reasons, I have thought it consistent with the scheme of the book to treat them as very subordinate.



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# THE LATER RENAISSANCE.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE LATER RENAISSANCE IN SPAIN.

THE UNITY OF SPANISH LITERATURE—LIMITS OF TREATMENT—A PREVAILING CHARACTERISTIC—THE DIVISION INTO NATIVE AND IMITATIVE—THE INHERITANCE FROM THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY—SPANISH VERSE—THE “CANCIONEROS”—THE ROMANCES—THE “ROMANCEROS”—THE QUALITY OF THIS POETRY—SPAIN AND ITALY—THE “DIÁLOGO DE LA LENGUA”—PROSE OF THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY—THE INFLUENCE OF THE INQUISITION.

THE Literature of Spain, of which the Portuguese is the little sister, or even at times the echo, stands apart. In this fact lies the excuse for the division adopted in this volume. There is at first sight something arbitrary in beginning a survey of Literature of the later Renaissance with a book written at the close of the fifteenth century. To carry the story on till the close of the

*The unity of Spanish Literature.*

seventeenth may well appear to be a violation of proportion. The Renaissance even in Italy was not in its later stages in 1500, and it is far behind us when we get to the years in which Boileau, Molière, and Racine were writing in France, while Dryden was the undisputed prince of English poets and prose-writers. Yet there is good critical reason for making a wide distinction between the one period of literary greatness of the Peninsula and those stages in the history of the Literatures of England, France, or Italy, which belong to the time of the later Renaissance. It is this—that we cannot, without separating things which are identical, divide the literature of Spain and Portugal in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The years between the appearance of the *Shepherd's Calendar* and the death of Shakespeare form a period possessing a character of its own in the history of our poetry, our prose, and our drama. It is still more emphatically true that French literature, between the rise of the Pléiade and the death of Mathurin Regnier, is marked off sharply, both from what had gone before and what was to follow. But we cannot draw a line anywhere across the Spanish drama, poetry, or prose story of the great time and say, Here an old influence ended, here a new one began. We have to deal with the slow growth, very brief culmination, and sudden extinction of a brilliant literature, which came late and went early, and which for the short time that it lasted is one and indivisible. It grew up partly from native roots, partly under an influence imparted by Italy; attained its full stature



in the early years of the seventeenth century; then "withered, fell into puerile ravings, and died," with the close of the Austrian dynasty.

As, then, the Golden Age of Spain is one, we are justified in taking it as a whole, even though we appear to violate the harmony of the arrangement of the series to which this volume belongs. *Limits of treatment* And this division of the matter imposes an obvious limitation on the treatment to be adopted. Spanish literature is, in one sense, exceedingly rich. During the century and a half, or so, of its vigour, it produced a vast number of books, and the catalogue of its authors is very long. Don Nicolas Antonio, the industrious compiler of the *Biblioteca Hispana*, has calculated the number of mystic and ascetic works (of which some are among the best of Spanish books) at over three thousand. The fecundity of its theatre is a commonplace; the fluency of its poets is boundless; the bulk of its prose stories is considerable; its historians are many, and not a few are good. It is needless to add that much was written on law, theology, and the arts which has value. In dealing with all this mass of printed matter in the space at our disposal, it is clearly necessary to remember the injunction, "il faut savoir se borner."

We must, to begin with, leave aside all that is not primarily literature, except when it can be shown to have influenced that which is. Again, even in dealing with our proper subject, we must submit to limits. It is manifestly necessary to omit scores—

may, hundreds—of minor names. But that is not all. In making a survey of a fertile literature in a brief space, we are always obliged to go by kinds and classes rather than by individual writers. But in Spanish literature this is more especially true.

In the course of an introduction to a translation of Shakespeare's plays by Señor Clarke, Don Juan Valera (himself the author of stories both Spanish and good) has made a complaint, which is of the nature of an unconscious confession. He has lamented that the characters of Spanish drama are so little known. An artist, so he says, has only to paint a young man in a picturesque dress on a rope-ladder, with a beautiful young woman on a balcony above him, and all the world recognises Romeo and Juliet. If he takes his anecdote from Lope and Calderon, nobody will be able to guess what it is all about. With less than his usual good sense, Señor Valera accounts for the obscurity into which the world has been content to allow the characters and scenes of the Spanish drama to fall, by the political decadence of his country at the end of the seventeenth century. Yet the passing away of Spain's greatness has not prevented Don Quixote and Sancho from being familiar to the whole world. If anecdote pictures are to be the test, Cervantes has no reason to fear the rivalry of the English dramatic poet. There is less of Spanish pride than of its ugly shadow, Spanish vanity, in Don Juan Valera's explanation. The Drama of Spain, brilliant as it was within its limits, is not universally known, because it does not

*A prevailing characteristic.*

give what we find in Cervantes, and in boundless profusion in Shakespeare, characters true to unchanging human nature, and therefore both true and interesting to all time. It is mainly a drama of situation, and of certain stock passions working through personages who are rarely more than puppets. We may say the same of the prose stories, whether *Libros de Caballerías*, or *Novelas de Pícaros*—Books of Chivalry, or Tales of Rogues. They all have the same matter and the same stock figures. They differ only in the degree of dexterity with which the author has used his material. In the poetry of Spain we see two influences at work—first, the Italian Renaissance, which ruled the learned poetry of the school of Garcilaso; and then the native “romance” or ballad poetry, which held its ground beside the more varied and splendid metres imitated from abroad. Each of these, within its own bounds, is very uniform, and the works of each school vary only according to the writer’s greater or less mastery of what he uses in common with all others. Such a literature is manifestly best treated by classes and types. Cervantes, indeed, stands apart. His greatness is not a towering superiority but a difference of kind. It is as individual as the greatness of Velasquez in painting.

These two influences, the foreign and the native, divided Spanish literature of the Golden Age between them in very different proportions. To the first is owing the whole body of its learned poetry, and part of its prose. To the second belong all the “deliveries of the Spaniard’s

*The division  
into native and  
imitative.*

self," as they may be called in a phrase adapted from Bacon, the prose tale, the ballad, the drama, and the ascetic works of the so-called mystics. These are the genuine things of Spanish literature, and in them the Spaniard expressed his own nature. It was very shrewdly noted by Aarsens van Sommelsdyck, a Hollander who visited Spain in the later seventeenth century, that however solemn the Spaniard may be in public, he is easy and jocular enough in private. He is very susceptible to what is lofty and noble, capable of ecstatic piety, of a decidedly grandiose loyalty and patriotism, endowed with a profound sense of his own dignity, which nerves him to bear adversity well, but which also causes him to be contumaciously impenetrable to facts when they tell him he must yield or amend his ways. With all that, and perhaps as a reaction from all that, he can enjoy crude forms of burlesque, can laugh over hard realistic pictures of the sordid side of life, and delights in rather cynical judgments of human nature. The lofty and the low have their representations in his literature, in forms easily traced back to the middle ages. About the third quarter of the sixteenth century it might have appeared to a superficial observer that the native element was overpowered by the foreign. But the triumph of the "learned" literature was in show, not in reality.

✓ The book already alluded to as marking the starting-point of the Golden Age is the once famous *Celestina*, a long story in dialogue, of uncertain authorship and age. It was written at some time between the con-

quest of Granada and the end of the fifteenth century. Precision is in this case of no importance, since the true descendants of the *Celestina* were the Picaresque stories. Its first successor was the *Lazarillo de Tormes*, which, though no doubt written earlier, appeared in or about 1547. Then at an interval of fifty years came the *Beacon of Life—Atalaya de la Vida*—better known as *Guzman de Alfarache*, of Mateo Aleman, and from him sprang the great Rogue family. But while the Picaresque novel was gathering strength, all the more slowly because it was not an imitation, the classic school of poetry had blossomed, and was already showing signs of decadence. The drama, another purely native growth, had risen by degrees alongside the prose tale, and reached its full development at about the same time. Both are intrinsically of far greater value than the learned verse. Yet since their maturity came later, they may be postponed while the story of the school of Garcilaso is told.

Before entering upon that, it is necessary to say something of the conditions which the “new poetry” and the influence of the Renaissance found before them when they began to influence Spain. The fifteenth century had not been barren of literature. King John II. (1407-1454) had collected round him a school of Court poets whose chief was Juan de Mena. Although the last representatives of this school resisted the innovations of Boscan and Garcilaso as unpatriotic, it was itself entirely foreign in origin—being, in truth, little more

*The inheritance  
from the fif-  
teenth century.*

than an echo of Provençal and early Italian poetry. Juan de Mena, the Prince of Poets of his time, wrote long allegorical poems in imitation of Dante, and was perhaps not uninfluenced by the French *rhétoriciens*. Indeed the earlier leaders of the school made no secret of their debt. The Marquis of Santillana, a contemporary of King John, candidly says, in a letter to the Constable of Portugal, that he sought the origin of poetry in the *Gai Saber* of Provence. The troubadours, when driven from France, had found refuge in the dominions of Aragon, and had there given rise to a school of imitators. The connection of Aragon with Italy was close. Dante found translators, and Petrarch imitators, among the Catalan poets of Valencia, and from thence their influence spread to Castile.

✓ Juan del Encina, who in 1496 prefixed a brief *Ars Poetica* to one of those collections of lyric verse called *Cancioneros*, and who was himself a poet of the Court school, confessed that he and his brother verse-writers had conveyed largely from the earlier Italians. Moreover, he made this the main ground of their claim to be considered poets. It was not till the next century, and until the last representatives of this school found themselves opposed by the Italian influence, that they began to claim to be essentially Spanish.

What there was of really Spanish in their verse must be allowed to have been mainly the impoverishment of the original models. The Spaniard

*Spanish verse.*

has always been recalcitrant to the shackles imposed by complicated and artful forms of verse, and there is a natural tendency in him to drift at all times

to his native trochaic assonants of eight syllables. His language, admirable when properly handled for prose, wants the variety of melody required for poetry. Impatience of the difficulties of metre is another name for the want of a due sense of the beauty of form. Indeed it is not by its form that Spanish literature has been distinguished. Given, then, a people who had very little faculty for delicate verse, and a language which wanted both the wealth of the Italian accent and the flexibility of the French, and it is easy to see what was likely to be the end of the Provençal and Petrarchian influence in the Court school. Its poetry, never more than an echo, sank into mechanical verse-making—mostly in eight-syllabled couplets, relieved by a broken line of four. The inborn preference of the Spaniard for loose metres gradually gained the upper hand. No doubt fine verses may be picked out from the bulk of the writings of the troubadour school of Castile. The *rhythmus de contemptu mundi*, known as the *coplas de Manrique*, which has been made known to English readers by Mr Longfellow, is even noble in its rigid gravity. But the merit lies not in the melody of the verse, which soon becomes monotonous. It is in this, that the *coplas* give us perhaps the finest expression of one side of the Spaniard. They are full of what he himself calls in his own untranslatable word *el desengaño*—that is to say, the melancholy recognition of the hollowness of man's life, and "the frailty of all things here"—not in puling self-pity, but in manly and pious resignation to fate and necessity.

This old or troubadour school did not give up the field to the new Italian influence without a struggle.

*The Can-  
cioneros.*

Its models continued to be imitated nearly all through the sixteenth century. It was praised and regretted by Lope de Vega and Cervantes. Boscan and Garcilaso found an opponent and a critic in Cristobal de Castillejo, a very fluent verse-writer, a most worthy man, and a loyal servant of the house of Austria, who died in exile at Vienna in 1556. El buen de Castillejo—the good Castillejo, as he is commonly called, with condescending kindness—was an excellent example of the stamp of critic, more or less common in all times, who judges of poetry exclusively by his own stop-watch. He condemned Boscan and Garcilaso, not for writing bad poetry, but for not writing according to what he considered the orthodox model. The new school not unnaturally retorted by wholesale condemnation of the old. When Hernan, or Fernan, de Herrera published his edition of Garcilaso in 1572, he was rebuked for quoting Juan del Encina in the commentary. A pamphleteer, believed to have been no less a person than the Admiral of Castile, whose likeness may be seen in the National Portrait Gallery among the ambassadors who signed the peace at the beginning of the reign of James I., laughed at Herrera for quoting as an authority one who had become a name for a bad poet. This was pedantry as bad as Castillejo's, and represented an opinion never generally accepted by the Spaniards. They continued to read the collections of ancient verse called *Cancioneros*, even when



the new school was at the height of its vigour. The *Cancioneros Generales* of Hernan del Castillo, the great storehouse of the poetry of the fifteenth century, was reprinted, with some changes, no less than nine times between 1511 and 1573. The extreme rarity of copies of these numerous editions proves that they must have been well thumbed to pieces by admiring readers. Yet they constitute no inconsiderable body of literature. The modern reprint issued (unfortunately only to its own members) by the Sociedad de Bibliófilos Españoles is in two weighty volumes.

In this *Cancionero* there are two elements, destined to very different fates. Hernan del Castillo included

*The romances.*

eighteen *romances* in his collection, and they reappeared in subsequent editions.

The importance of this word in Spanish literature seems to call for some definition of its scope. The word "romance" bore originally in Spanish exactly the same meaning as in other tongues descended from the Latin. It was the vernacular, and to write *en romance* was to write Castilian, Galician, or Catalan.

"Ni romance ni romano"—neither Romance nor Roman—is a phrase bearing more or less the meaning of our "neither rhyme nor reason." But little by little, by use and wont, it came about the end of the sixteenth century to be applied exclusively to the form of verse dearest and most native to the Spaniard, the already mentioned trochaic eight-syllable assonant metre. As the ancient ballads are mainly, though not exclusively, written in this form, they are called *romances*. Yet to write *romances* does not necessarily mean to write

ballads, but only to write in that metre, whether in the dialogue of a play or in long narrative poems, or for any other purpose.

The assonant metre, as is well known, is not peculiar to Spain. It may well have been imported into Castile from France by those churchmen to whom the country owes so much of its architecture, what learning it had, and its civilisation when it began to revive from the merely martial barbarism produced by the Moorish conquest. But if the Spaniard did indeed take the assonant metre from his French teachers, he soon subjected it to that process which all forms of verse are apt to undergo in his hands. He released it from shackles, and gave it a freedom amounting to licence. The *romance* is a loose-flowing rhythm, in which the rhyme is made by the last accented vowel. Sometimes the same vowel is used line after line until it is exhausted. More commonly the assonant comes in alternate lines. As a rule there is no division into stanzas, but the verse runs on till the speech is ended, or the tale is told. To this there are, however, exceptions, and the *romance* is divided into *redondillas*—that is, roundels or staves of four lines, assonanced either alternately, or the first with the fourth and the second with the third, or into *quintillas* of five lines, with an assonant in three. The recalcitrance of the Spaniard to all limitations in verse-making has caused him to give a very wide range indeed to the assonant. The vowel *u* is allowed to rhyme with *o*, and *i* with *e*, though they have a very different sound and force. The Spaniard, again, allows a diphthong to be assonant

to a vowel, although he pronounces both the vowels in his diphthongs. It will be seen that such verse as this can be written with extreme facility. Indeed it is a byword in Spain that nothing is easier than to write *romances*—badly. The difficulty, in fact, is to avoid writing them in prose; and it is no small one, when the ear of a people finds a rhyme in so faint a similarity of sound, and in a language in which the accent is at once so pronounced and as little varied. It is not, I trust, superfluous to add that in Castilian, which we call Spanish, there is a marked accent in the last syllable of words ending in a consonant, on the penult of words ending in a vowel, while a limited number of words are *esdrújulo*—that is, accented on the antepenult. The addition of a syllable to form the plural, or of the adverbial termination *mente*, does not alter the place of the accent. These rules, though nowise severe, are not rigidly followed. Not infrequently the assonant rhyme falls into the full or consonant rhyme, while the *liesse* or stave formed on one vowel, and its equivalents, is broken by a line corresponding to nothing. Even the rule requiring the use of eight syllables is applied with restrictions,—an accented syllable at the end counts as two, while two unaccented syllables rank only as one. It must be acknowledged that this metre is unsatisfactory to an ear attuned to the melody of English poetry. In our language it renders hardly a tinkle. When we have become accustomed to it in Castilian—and until we do it tantalises with a sense of something wanting—its highest virtue seems to be that it keeps the voice of

the speaker in a chanted recitative. It is more akin to numbered prose than to verse.

However incomplete the *romance* may seem to us, to the Spaniard it is dear. When *romances* were not being well written in Spain, it was because nothing was being written well. The metre not only held its ground against the court poetry of the fifteenth century, but prevailed against the new Italian influence. Here as in other fields the Spaniard was very tenacious of the things of Spain. To find a parallel to what happened in Spain we must do more than suppose that the *Pléiade* in France, or Spenser and his successors in England, had failed to overcome the already existing literary schools. It was as if the ballad metres had won a place even on the stage. No Spanish Sir Philip Sidney need have apologised for feeling his heart stirred by those ballads of the *Cid*, or of the *Infantes de Lara*, which answer to our *Chevy Chase*. They were strenuously collected, and constantly imitated, all through the sixteenth and well into the seventeenth century. So far were they from falling into neglect, that they were first able to shake the slowly withering poetry of the troubadour school, and then to fill a long series of collections, known, in the beginning, as *Cancioneros*, or *Libros*, or *Sylvas de Romances*, but finally as *Romanceros*. Much bibliographical learning and controversy has collected about these early editions. Even if I could profess to be competent to speak on such matters, they would have no proper place here. From the point of view of the literary historian, the interesting

The Roman-  
ceros

fact is that at a time when classic, or at least new influences, born of the Renaissance, were carrying all before them in France and England, and in Italy had long ago definitively conquered, the Spaniards did not wholly part with their inheritance from the Middle Ages.

The few ballads, and fragments of ballads, printed by Hernan del Castillo in 1511, proved so popular that an editor was tempted to form a special collection. The place and date of this first ballad-book proper are both significant.<sup>1</sup> It appeared at Antwerp in or about 1546—that is to say, three years or so after the first edition of the poems of Boscan and Garcilaso. The editor was one Martin Nucio. Antwerp, be it observed, was always a great publishing place for Spanish books, a fact which may be accounted for, not only by the political connection between Spain and the Low Countries, the number of Spaniards employed there in various capacities, as soldiers, officials, or traders, and the then extensive use of their language, but also by the superiority of the Flemish printers. That same carelessness of form which is found in the Spaniard's literature followed him in lesser arts, where neatness of handling was more necessary than spirit and creative faculty. He was, at any rate in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, rarely a good engraver, and hardly ever a good printer. The

<sup>1</sup> The fullest collection of Spanish ballads is that of Duran in the *Biblioteca de Ribadeneira*; but the best are in the *Rosa de Romances* of Wolf and Depping, ed. 1844-1846, with notes by Don A. Alcalá Galiano.

*Cancionero de Romances*, brought out, it may be, primarily for the pleasure of the Spaniards scattered over Flanders and Germany, was soon reprinted in Spain, by one Estéban de Najera, at Sarragossa. These contemporary collections are not quite identical, but essentially the same. This *Cancionero*, or *Sylva, de Romances* met with a reception which proved how strong a hold his indigenous verse had on the Spaniard. Three editions, with corrections and additions, appeared by 1555. The latest of these was not reprinted until well into the next century. In the meantime other editors had followed Nucio and Najera. A *Romancero* in nine parts appeared at places so far distant from one another as Valencia, Burgos, Toledo, Alcalá, and Madrid, between 1593 and 1597. This again grew into the great *Romancero General* of 1604-1614, wherein there are a thousand ballads.

In so far as this great mass of verse is really an inheritance from the Middle Ages, it does not belong to the subject of this book. All that it is necessary to do here is to note the fact that it did survive, and did continue to exert an influence. But nothing is more doubtful than the antiquity of the vast majority of the *romances*. The best judges have given up the attempt to class them by age, and indeed that must needs be a hopeless task where poems have been preserved by oral tradition alone, and have therefore been subject to modification by every succeeding generation. The presence of very ancient words is no proof of antiquity, since they may

*The quality of  
this poetry.*

be put in by an imitator. Neither is the mention of comparatively recent events, or of such things as clocks or articles of commerce only known in later times, of itself proof that the framework of the ballad was not ancient when it took its final shape. The *Romances* were collected very much in the style of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, and we all know with what facility remains of popular poetry are found when there is a demand for them, when no critical tests are applied, and when the searchers are endowed with a faculty for verse-writing. The Moorish ballads have been called old, and yet nothing is more certain than that they were the fruits of a literary fashion of the later sixteenth century. The Moor, like the Red Man, became a picturesque figure only when he ceased to be dangerous. Another class of the ballads, those called of chivalry, are full of references showing that the writers were acquainted with Ariosto, and cannot have been written before the middle of the century at the earliest. Where the *romance* is identical in subject with, and very similar in language to, a passage in the great chronicle of Alfonso the Wise, or other unquestionably mediæval work preserved in writing of known antiquity, it may be accepted as ancient. Where that test cannot be applied, it is safer not to think that the ballad is older than the sixteenth century. In some cases the inspiration can be shown to have been French. The subject of the *Molinero de Arcos*, a popular ballad existing in several versions, was taken from a well-known French farce, *Le Meunier d'Arleux*.

It is very necessary, when judging this great body of verse, to stand on our guard against certain besetting fallacies. There is always a marked tendency in collectors to excuse what is grotesque on the ground that it is ancient, and to pardon what is bad on the ground that it is popular. The Spanish ballads have suffered from the too great zeal with which modern editors have reprinted what was accepted by the indiscriminate taste of first collectors. Many of the ballads belong to the class of *romances de ciegos*—i.e., “blindmen’s ballads”—which were doggerel at all times. Others are not above the level of the poets’ corner of not over-exacting newspapers. Even in the best, the intention and the first inspiration are commonly far better than the expression. The Spaniard’s slovenliness of form is found here as elsewhere. Lockhart, in the preface to his adaptations, has rebuked the Spaniards for “neglecting old and simpler poets,” who wrote the romances, in favour of authors “who were at the best ingenious imitators of classical or Italian models.” He has himself, however, subjected those he selected for translation into English to a treatment which conveys a severe and a just critical judgment. A comparison between his ballads and the originals will show that he occasionally, though very rarely, weakened a forcible phrase. Now and again there are signs that his knowledge of Spanish was not deep. He writes, “So spake the brave Montanez,” as if that had been the name of the Lord of Butrago, whereas *montanes* (mountaineer) was a common old Spanish equivalent for noble, a custom



due to the belief that the old Castilian aristocracy drew its "blue blood," shown by its grey or blue eyes, from the Visigoths, who held the mountains of Asturias against the Moors. The Lord of Butrago was a historical personage, and the head of the house of Mendoza. But if a few faults of this kind can be found, there are to be set off against them a hundred passages in which he has suppressed a redundancy or replaced the purely prosaic original by poetry. A very good test case is to be found in the last verse of the Wandering Knight's song—which stands thus in Lockhart:—

"I ride from land to land,  
I sail from sea to sea;  
Some day more kind I fate may find,  
Some night kiss thee."

What can be more pretty or more fit? but it is not in the *Cancionero de Romances*, where the words stand:—

"Andando de Sierra en Sierra  
Por orillas de la mar,  
Por provar si en mi ventura  
Ay lugar donde avadar;  
Pero por vos, mi señora,  
Todo se ha de comportar."

"Wandering from hills to hills by the shore of the sea, to try whether my fortune will give me a ford; but for you, my lady, all things are to be endured," is the bald literal meaning, which, though it is at least as old as 1555, and is simple enough, is also, unfortunately, bathos. And this is very far from being

a solitary example. The result is, that Lockhart's ballads give an unduly high estimate of the originals to those who only know the English *rifacimento*. A reader who refuses to be enslaved by authority will find that he is constantly compelled to make allowances for the faults which Lockhart was in the fortunate position of being able to correct—for redundancies, for lines of mere prose, for vulgarities, for flat, spiritless endings. He will often feel that he is reading mere repetitions in a popular form, written by painfully uninspired authors, whose too frequent use of stock literary phrases shows that they were far from the simplicity attributed to the ballad-maker. It is true that poetic feeling, and some poetic matter in the shape of traditional stories, is to be found in the *romances*, but, as it were, in solution. Nor is it to be denied that it is to the honour of a people when it clings to a national form of verse, and to its own traditions. Yet neither good poetic intention nor the most respectable patriotism will make inferior execution anything but inferior even in national ballads. It is unquestionably unjust to find fault with a body of professedly unlearned writers because they show the defects of men who have not a severe literary training. But the claim made for the Spanish *romances* is that they express the natural feelings of a poetic people with simplicity: it is quite fair to answer that the great mass of them belong to a time of high literary cultivation; that they show signs of being the work of its inferior writers; that, even at their best, their loose metrical form—far looser as it is than our own

ballad stanza—permitted them to be written by persons who could not have mastered even doggerel rhyme; and that they are too often wanting in the direct, simple, passionate expression by which the rudest genuine poet can force his way to the realm of poetry.

It was a real, but in all probability an inevitable, misfortune that the best poetic faculty in Spain during *Spain and* the sixteenth century neglected the native *Italy.* metre, and turned for inspiration “to the sweet and stately measures of the Italian poesie.” An Italian influence, as has been already pointed out, was no new thing in Spain, and as the sixteenth century drew on it was sure to be felt again. Italy, indeed, was full of Spaniards. They were numerous at the papal Court, and the wars for Naples brought them in greatly increased numbers. Until the close of the fifteenth century those who settled in the southern kingdom were mainly drawn from Aragon. A great change came with the reign of Ferdinand the Catholic. He claimed Naples by right of his inherited crown of Aragon, but he fought for it with the forces, and the arms, of Castile. Isabel was tenacious of her rights as queen of the greater kingdom, but she was scrupulous in fulfilling her wifely duty to comfort her husband. She supported him with her own subjects. After her death he was regent, except for the short period during which he was displaced by his worthless son-in-law, Philip the Handsome. Thus the Castilians came more directly in contact with Italy and Italian civilisation than they had ever done before. They abounded as

soldiers, as diplomatists, lay and ecclesiastical, and as administrators. Some among them were sure to feel the artistic and literary influences of that many-sided time. The way was prepared in Spain by the alliance between the crowns of Castile and Aragon, which could not give the country administrative unity, but did give an internal peace. It was a time of expansion and vigour. Isabel had favoured learning. Her favourite scholar, Antonio de Lebrija—better known by the Latinised form of his name as Nebrissensis—drew up a Castilian grammar and dictionary. The language came rapidly to maturity, and was in fact full grown at the beginning of the sixteenth century. This speedy maturity, though perhaps not for the good of the language in the end, was natural. Castilian, in spite of a large admixture of Arabic words, is so thoroughly Latin that little was needed to fit it for literary purposes when once the study of classical models was seriously begun—much as the art of printing came quickly to perfection because the early typographers had beautifully executed manuscripts before them as models.

The early sixteenth century in Spain was not barren in prose-writers, mostly didactic, and also for the most part imitators of the Italians. Francisco de Villalobos, of whom little is known except that he was doctor to Ferdinand the Catholic and the Emperor Charles V., and Fernan Perez de Oliva of Córdoba (1492-1530), are the best remembered of the class. But the *Problems* of the first, and the treatise on the *Dignity of Man* of the second, are mainly notable as examples

of the growing wish to write Castilian for serious purposes.<sup>1</sup>

But a more interesting proof of the care the Spaniards were giving to their language is to be found in the *Diálogo de la Lengua*<sup>2</sup>—*Talk about our* ✓  
The Spanish *Language*, as it may be freely but not in-  
tongue. accurately translated. This little book appears to have been written about, and perhaps a little after, 1530, but was not printed till Mayans included it in his  
The Diálogo *Orígenes de la Lengua Castellana* in the last  
de la Lengua. century. There is strong internal evidence to show that it was the work of one Juan de Váldez, ✓  
 a Spaniard belonging to the colony settled in Naples, a Castilian by birth, and a member of the doubtfully orthodox society collected round Vittoria Colonna. Juan de Váldez himself is included in the short list of Spanish Protestants, and his heterodoxy accounts for the length of time during which his work remained in manuscript. He smelt of the fagot, as the French phrase has it. All who possess even a slight acquaintance with the literary habits of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are aware that we must not draw from the fact that work remained in manuscript the deduction that it was little known. The *Diálogo de la Lengua* was never quite forgotten. It is in itself somewhat disappointing, being altogether narrower in scope and less ambitious in aim than

<sup>1</sup> For Villalobos see *Biblioteca de Ribadeneira*, B. xxxvi. There is a modern edition of Perez de Oliva. Madrid, 1787.

<sup>2</sup> *Orígenes de la Lengua Castellana*. Mayans y Siscar. Madrid, ed. of 1873.

Joachim du Bellay's *Défense et Illustration de la Langue française*, published in 1549. Much of it is devoted to nice points in the use of words, while the scholarly, perhaps also the patriotic, leanings of Váldes led him to assume the untenable position that the few Greek colonies on the Mediterranean coast of Spain had spread the use of their language all over the country before it was displaced by the Latin. But though the *Diálogo* is not, like the *Défense*, a great literary manifesto, and though its learning is at times fantastic, it has some intrinsic interest, and no small value as a piece of evidence. That exceedingly difficult literary form the dialogue is very fairly mastered. The four speakers—two Spaniards and two Italians—who take part in the conversation have a distinct dramatic reality, and the tone of talk, familiar, occasionally even witty in form, but serious in substance, is well maintained. The scheme is that three of a party of four gentlemen who are spending a day at a villa on the Bay of Naples join in a friendly conspiracy to draw the fourth, whose name, by the way, is Váldes, into expounding to them, before they take horse to return to the city, how a cultivated man ought to speak and write Castilian. The doctrine of Váldes differs significantly from the lesson enforced by Joachim du Bellay. He does not call upon his countrymen to go forth to the conquest of the haughty Greeks and Romans. On the contrary, it is his contention that although the vocabulary requires refining, and the grammar needs to be better fixed, the language is already as fit for every purpose

of literature as the Italian, or even as the classic tongues. With the pride of a genuine Spaniard he seeks his examples in the *refranes*, the proverbs and proverbial phrases. He makes free use of the collection formed in the fifteenth century by the Marquess of Santillana, who gathered the traditional sayings "from the old women sitting round the hearth." Váldes may be held to have given evidence in support of his own belief in the maturity of the language. The Castilian of the *Diálogo* has very little in it that is antiquated, and where it differs from the modern tongue it is in being more terse and manly. His literary doctrine, which is rather indicated than expounded, would have commended itself to our Queen Anne men. To be simple and direct, to avoid affectation, to prefer at all times the natural and straightforward way of saying what you have to say—that is the advice of Juan de Váldes. Withal, he has no squeamish dislike of the common, when, as in the case of his beloved proverbs, it is also pure Spanish. The principles of Váldes might have been fatal to a stately and embroidered eloquence (of which Castilian has in any case no great store), but they would preserve a literature from the affected folly of Góngorism on the one hand, and from the grey uniformity of general terms, which was the danger incident to the classic literature of the eighteenth century.

Váldes, who cited Garcilaso with praise, would not have agreed in many things with Cristobal de Castillejo, but he would have applauded his saying that Castilian is friendly to a "cierta clara brevedad"—to

a certain lucid brevity. We shall be better able to judge later whether the recognition of this truth does not lead directly to agreement with Mr Borrow, when he says that Spanish Literature is not wholly worthy of the language. Lucid brevity is certainly not the quality to be noted in Spanish prose-writers of what we may call the time of preparation—the earlier sixteenth century. The quality may indeed be found in an eminent degree in the writings of Spaniards who were not men of letters—in the despatches of Cortes, or in the numerous extant narratives of soldiers or priests who were eye-witnesses of the wars of Italy, of the sack of Rome, or of the conquest of America. It would be easy to make an excellent collection of stories of adventure from their letters, which would show the masculine force and the savoury quality of Castilian. But these were men of the sword, or churchmen as adventurous as they—not men of letters who knew by what devious paths the Muses should be approached. The prose-writers of this epoch as a class need not detain us in what must be a brief outline portrait of Spanish literature. There is, however, one exception in Antonio de Guevara, the Bishop of Mondoñedo (*d.* 1545), who is best known to us as the author of the once famous *Golden Epistles*, if only for the sake of the influence he may have had on Lyly.<sup>1</sup> Guevara wants, indeed, the quaint graceful fancy, and also the oddity of the

<sup>1</sup> The early editions and translations of Guevara are very numerous. The passages spoken of in the text will be found in *Biblioteca de Ribadeneyra, Obras de Filósofos*.



English writer; but it is possible that his sententious antithetical style had some share in producing euphuism. Guevara is also worth notice as an early, though not the earliest, example of the pretentiousness and the tendency to wordy platitude which have been so fatal in Spanish literature. He had knowledge both of books and the world, and some command of sarcasm. These qualities were, however, swamped in the "flowing and watery vein" of his prose style. No writer ever carried the seesaw antithetical manner to a more provoking extent. To make one phrase balance another appears to have been his chief aim, and in order to achieve this end he repeated and amplified. In his own time, when whatever was at once sound as moralising, learned, and professedly too good for the vulgar was received with respect, Guevara had a wide popularity both in Spain and abroad. To-day he is almost unreadable, and for a reason which it is easy to make clear. It is known that La Fontaine took the subject of the *Paysan du Danube* from the *Golden Epistles* indirectly if not directly. Spaniards may be found to boast that there is nothing in the fable which is not in their countrymen. This is partly true, but it is stated in the wrong way. The accurate version is that there is nothing in Guevara's prose which is not in La Fontaine's verse, but that it is said in several hundred times as many words, and that the meaning (not in itself considerable) is smothered in tiresome digressions and amplifications.

A few words, and they need be very few, on the in-

fluence of the Inquisition seem not out of place in a history of any part of Spanish life in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They are even to be justified by the fact that its oppressive influence has been called on to account for the withering of the national will and intelligence, which dried up the very sources of literature. The prevalence of the destructive affectation called Góngorism has been excused by Mr Ticknor on the ground that men were driven back on mere playing with words because the Inquisition made thinking dangerous. But we are met at once by the problem of the Sufi pipkin. It is hard to tell which is potter and which is pot. Did the Spanish intellect wither because the Inquisition wrapped it in over-tight swaddling-clothes? or did the Spaniard first create and then submit to this repressive institution because he had little tendency to speculation? To judge by what went before and by what has come after the Inquisition, the second reading of the riddle is at least as plausible as the first. However that may be, it is difficult to see how the Inquisition is to be made responsible for the carelessness of form and the loquacious commonplace, which are the main defects of Spanish prose and verse, while it may fairly claim to have helped to preserve Spanish literature from one grave fault so visible in parts of our own. The Holy Office, which allowed Lope de Vega to write *La Esclava de su Galan*, would not have punished him for writing an *As You Like It*. Since it suffered Cervantes to create *Don Quixote*, it would not have

burnt the author of a *Novela de Pícaros*, who had made his hero as real as Gil Blas. The Inquisition was no more responsible for the hasty writing of Lope than for his undue complacence towards the vices of his patron the Duke of Sessa. A literature which could produce *La Vida es Sueño*, *El Condenado por Desconfiado*, and the *Mágico Prodigioso*, had all the freedom necessary to say the profoundest things on man's passions and nature in the noblest style. It was his own too great readiness to say "This will do," and not the Inquisition, which prevented Tirso de Molina from making *La Venganza de Tamar* as perfect in form all through as it is in one scene. The Church had no quarrel with perfection of form. It had, indeed, a quarrel with mere grossness of expression, and would certainly have frowned on many so-called comic scenes of our own Elizabethan plays. This was a commendable fastidiousness of taste not peculiar to the Spanish Church. The Spaniard may not be always moral, but he has seldom been foul-mouthed. In this, as in other respects, the Church spoke for the nation; but it was the effective administrative instrument which could coerce an offending minority into decency—and that we may surely count to it for righteousness.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE SPANISH LEARNED POETS.

THE STARTING-POINT OF THE CLASSIC SCHOOL—THE NATURAL INFLUENCE OF ITALY—PREVALENCE OF THE CLASSIC SCHOOL—ITS ARISTOCRATIC SPIRIT—WHAT WAS IMITATED FROM THE ITALIANS—ITS TECHNIQUE AND MATTER—ARTIFICIALITY OF THE WORK OF THE SCHOOL—BOSCAN—GARCILASO—THEIR IMMEDIATE FOLLOWERS—THE SCHOOLS OF SALAMANCA AND SEVILLE—GÓNGORA AND GÓNGORISM—THE EPICS—THE ‘ARAUCANA’—THE ‘LUSIADS.’

MR TICKNOR has made the very just remark, that the manner of the introduction of the later Italian influence into Spanish poetry enables us to see for once in a way exactly, when and at whose instigation a literary revolution was begun. The story is told by the best possible authority, by Juan Boscan, who was one of the leaders of the movement, in the long letter to the Duchess of Soma, which is printed as a preface to the second book of the collected works of himself and his friend Garcilaso de la Vega, published at Barcelona in 1543.<sup>1</sup> En (to give him his native title) Juan Boscan

<sup>1</sup> I have used the first edition of Boscan, Barcelona, 1543, but have seen mention of a modern reprint by William J. Knapp, Madrid, 1875.

Almogaver was a Catalan of a noble family and of good estate. The date of his birth is uncertain, but it probably fell in the last years of the fifteenth century. He died in 1540 at Perpignan, where he had gone in discharge of his duty as *ayo*, or tutor, to that formidable person the great Duke of Alva. The story has been often told, but must needs be repeated in every history of Spanish literature. Boscan, who had already written verse in the old forms of the previous century, was a cultivated gentleman who had served in Italy, and had there acquired a good knowledge of the language. This he afterwards turned to account in a translation of Castiglione's *Courtier*, which was considered by the Spaniards as not inferior to the original, and had great popularity. In 1526 he attended the Court at Granada, and there met Andrea Navagiero the Venetian ambassador. Navagiero urged him to write "in the Italian manner." Boscan turned the advice over in his mind during his long ride back to Barcelona, and finally decided to act on it, though not without doubts, and not until he had been encouraged by a friend. This was the far more famous Garcia Laso de la Vega, whose names, according to a not uncommon custom, were combined into Garcilaso.<sup>1</sup> He was born in 1503 of a very ancient house of nobles of Toledo, and was killed by being hurled from a ladder while leading a storming-party at Frèjus in 1536. Little is known of their friendship, and indeed it would seem that

<sup>1</sup> *Tesoro del Parnaso Español* of Quintana, 41-51. *Biblioteca de Ribadeneyra*, vol. xxxii.

they cannot have seen much of one another, for Boscan spent most of his life on his estate or at Court, whereas Garcilaso, who was first a page and then soldier to Charles V., lived, in common with all who followed "the conquering banners" of the emperor, on the march or on shipboard, from the Danube to Tunis.

It would unquestionably be an error to conclude from the exact manner of its beginning that there would have been no Spanish imitation of Italian models if Boscan had not met Navagiero at Granada in 1526. Garcilaso, Diego de Mendoza, Gutierre de Cetina, and others, would no doubt have begun to write pastorals, epistles, and *canzones* "in the Italian manner" in any case. Allowing for the strength of the Italian influence of the day, the close kinship of the two languages, the frequent intercourse between the peoples, the ease with which Castilian could be run into a Tuscan mould, this was inevitable. Yet the story not only gives a curious incident in literary history, but it is characteristic of the classic poetry of Spain. Boscan we see took to playing with the foreign metres as a mere exercise of ingenuity, and as an amusement for his leisure. He implies that Garcilaso acted on the same motives as himself. With such a beginning there was an obvious danger that the Spaniards would work as mere pupils and produce only school exercises.

The ample following found by these two is itself a proof that Navagiero's advice and Boscan's docility were hardly necessary. It needed only an accident

to provoke the literary activity of the Italianate Spaniards gathered round the emperor, in the Court of Rome, at Naples, and at home, where the "learned" men were all readers of Italian and of Latin. Greek was never much read in Spain, though a few of her scholars were good Hellenists. The ambition of the poets of the school of Boscan and Garcilaso is shown by their favourite epithet of praise—the word *docto*. The literal sense is "learned," but educated expresses its true meaning more accurately. It did not necessarily imply much more than this, that the poet was familiar with Horace as well as with Sannazzaro and Ariosto, which, at a time when Latin was the language of education and diplomacy, and Italian was the language of society, hardly amounted to learning, in the full sense of the word. The seed fell on well-prepared soil. A quick and copious harvest sprang up, which for a time overshadowed all other forms of literary growth. The second half of the sixteenth century was the time of the learned poets of Spain. The school lasted, indeed, into the seventeenth century, but it had produced its best work before 1600.

The origin of this poetry would of itself lead us to expect to find it composed of imitators who produced more or less ingenious school exercises. Its works are extant to show that the expectation would be well founded. Again, we should expect to find that it was always much more of a society fashion than a manifestation of the real qualities of the Spaniard in literature, and here also

*Its aristocratic spirit.*

experience will be found to confirm expectation. It was an aristocratic school, not perhaps quite so indifferent to appearing in print as some others have been, but still not uncommonly satisfied to leave its work in manuscript. These poets could afford to be indifferent to publication, since they did not thereby injure their fame in the only world to which they appealed. They were careless of the great unlearned public, whose tastes favoured the *romances* and the theatre. Manuscript copies sufficed for their own limited society. Luis de Leon, for instance, was the recognised chief of the Castilian learned poets in his lifetime, yet his works were not printed till they were brought out, forty years after his death, by Quevedo, in the idle hope of converting his countrymen from Góngorism by the sight of better examples, while Góngora was able to found a school of affectation by his influence, and yet his poems were not published during his lifetime. The learned poets did not expect to find readers among the *vulgo*, the common herd, of whose *brutez*, or bestial stupidity, they habitually spoke in a very high and mighty fashion. This attitude of superiority was not peculiar to the learned poets of Spain. It was habitual with the school of Ronsard, and indeed common to the whole Renaissance, which was emphatically scholarly and aristocratic. But though the pretensions of Spain's learned poets were not different from those of the Italian, the Frenchman, or the Englishman, they were less fully justified. These very self-conscious "children of the Muses" were not so superior to the vulgar herd



of writers of *romances* and *coplas* in poetic inspiration as to be entitled to look down upon them, on the strength of a certain mechanical dexterity acquired from foreigners by imitation.

The question what exactly it was that the innovators of the sixteenth century took from their Italian masters is easier to put than to answer. The mere imitation of Italian models was in itself no novelty. Cristobal de Castillejo denied the claim of the new school to originality in the writing of hendecasyllabics. They had, he said, already been written by Juan de Mena. So they had, and by Ausias March and other poets of the Catalan school also. The Marquess of Santillana had written sonnets on the Petrarchian model; the *ottava rima* and tercets were not unknown to the Court school of Castile or to the Catalans. The canzone had been written in Spain by imitators of the earlier Italian poetry. What then remained for the innovators to take? If we look at the names only, and the bare skeleton of the verse, little indeed; but when the manner of the execution is considered, a great deal. The Italian hendecasyllable, which the Spaniards allowed to be the original of their own line of eleven syllables, and of the line of ten with an accent on the final syllable, had become very monotonous in their hands. The *cæsura* fell with unvarying regularity after the fourth syllable. The innovators learnt to vary the pause, and thereby to give a new melody to the verse. It remained to them also to be more slavish in imitation than their pre-

What was imitated from the Italian.

decessors had been. This slavishness was shown by the establishment of the *endecasílabo plano*, with the unaccented vowel termination as alone legitimate. Castilian abounds in *vocablos agudos*, in masculine rhymes, and was not under the same necessity as Italian to prefer the softer form. The Spanish poets were, we may suppose, influenced by the fact that the accented ending had become associated with comic verse among the Italians, and yet by submitting to a limitation which was not justified by the genius of their language, they began by impoverishing their poetic vocabulary, and they did it in pure unintelligent imitation. The restriction was not accepted without reluctance. Rengifo, who is the Spanish Puttenham<sup>1</sup>—the author, that is to say, of the standard work on the mechanism of verse written in Spain in the close of the sixteenth century—even puts in a plea for the *verso agudo*. He had good authorities to support him, for Garcilaso had dared to end a line with the word *vestí*. Boscan, who, however, is not accepted by the Spaniards as of unimpeachable authority, had been so left to himself as to end on *nació*, while Diego de Mendoza had done the evil thing “a thousand times.” According to the stop-watch of the new school this was wrong, and all three were duly pilloried for their

<sup>1</sup> The *Arte Poética Española*, which goes under the name of Juan Diaz Rengifo, a schoolmaster of Ávila, is believed to have been written by his brother Alfonso, a Jesuit. With the addition of a dictionary of rhymes, it became the handbook of Spanish poetasters, a numerous tribe. It appeared at Salamanca in 1592.

offences in the *Egemplar Poético*—i.e., *Ars Poetica*—of Juan da la Cueva.<sup>1</sup>

Yet Juan de la Cueba or Cueva (the *b* and *v*, being very similar in Spanish pronunciation, were constantly written for one another before the spelling was fixed) was a man not unworthy of attention. His life is covered by the obscurity common to the men of letters of the time, and on the whole more dense in Spain than elsewhere. But we know that he lived in Seville during the latter half of the sixteenth century. His *Egemplar Poético*, though not considered as above reproach in form by Spanish critics, undoubtedly contains the orthodox poetic creed of the school, and is therefore of authority. Nothing is more striking or, when the future of poetry in the two countries is considered, more significant, than the contrast between the three verse epistles of Don Juan de la Cueva, and the *Apologie for Poetrie* of Sir Philip Sidney. The *Egemplar* is in tercets, and the *Apologie* in fresh youthful prose; but the work of the Englishman is all on fire with the very soul of poetic feeling, while the work of the Spaniard is a cold didactic treatise of the most mechanical kind. Sir Philip committed himself to the heresy that the essential of poetry is in the matter, the passion, and the intention, while the verse is an accident. Don Juan is spotlessly correct on the one point on which Sir Philip is heterodox. On the many on which our countryman goes to the root of the matter, the Sevil-

<sup>1</sup> The *Egemplar Poético* is the first piece quoted in vol. viii. of the *Parnaso Español* of Sedaño, 1774.

lian is worse than wrong. He drops no single word to show that he thinks them worthy of consideration. A few general platitudes are to be found inculcating the wisdom of consulting your genius, the excellence of consistency and decency, the duty of despising the *profanum vulgus*, the folly of applying the metres and language proper to kings and great persons to the doings of common people. Then having cleared the way, he proceeds to the things really of necessity for a poet,—as that no *cancion* should contain more than fifteen stanzas; that a *sestina* is rhymed *a b c, c b a*, and that its lines ought to end in nouns and never in verbs; that three adjectives are more than enough for any substantive; that an *agudo* at the end of a hendecasyllable is the abomination of desolation; that the letter *l* is useful for sweetness; that *r* comes in with good effect “when violent Eurus opposes his rush with horrid fury to powerful Boreas”; and that *s* suits with soft sleep and savoury repose (“al blando sueño y al sabroso sosiego”), for he did not scorn alliteration’s artful aid.

It would be trivial to insist on the *Ejemplar Poético* if the author had been an insignificant man, or if the bulk of Spanish classic poetry showed that he spoke only for himself. But Juan de la Cueva has an honourable place in the history of Spanish dramatic literature among the forerunners of Lope de Vega. When he comes to write upon the comedy he rises at once above the level of mechanism and commonplace. He ceases to be a mere schoolboy to the Italians, and roundly vindicates the right of his

countrymen to reject the Senecan model, to be alive, Spanish, and original on the stage, in defiance of all the rules and all the doctors. The theatre was to imitate nature, and to please. Poetry was to imitate the Italians, and satisfy the orthodox but minute critic. That is the sum and substance of Juan de la Cueva's teaching, and therein lies the explanation of the impassable gulf which separates the Spanish drama—a very genuine thing of its kind—from Spanish classic poetry—a school exercise, redeemed from time to time by a note of patriotism or of piety.

When poetry is approached in this spirit its matter is likely to be as merely imitative as its form.

*Artificiality of the work of the school.* Spanish classic poetry did not escape this fate, and there is only too much truth in the taunt of "sterile abundance" which has been thrown at it. We meet continually with the exasperating, nameless, characterless shadow of a lady whose "threads of gold" (which the rude vulgar call her hair) cruel hard tyrant Love has used to enchain the lamenting poet, whose sorrows just fill the correct number of stanzas. The pastoral raged. The same Tirsis and the same Chloe repeat many hundreds of times identical things in a landscape which has flowers but no flower, trees but no tree, and is withal most manifestly sham in arid, rocky Spain. Spanish critics have complained that their classic poets so seldom touched on the life of their time,—but that is a small matter. They have—piety and patriotism apart—little human reality of any kind. Love according to

an Italian literary pattern, varied by platonism learnt from the Florentines, is the staple subject. Don Marcelino Menendez, the most learned of contemporary Spanish critics, has said, when controverting Ticknor's theory that the Inquisition was accountable for the prevalence of Góngorism, that the real explanation of that disaster lies elsewhere. Europe, he says, was invaded in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by a sham middle age and a sham antiquity, which could end in nothing but verbal follies. One does not recognise the truth of this judgment in the case of France and England, but it has force as applied to Spain.

A general estimate of a school must always be difficult to justify except by a profusion of quotation, which is impossible here. We can do no more than leave it to be accepted or rejected by those who can control it by a knowledge of the original, and proceed to give such a sketch of the history of Spanish classic poetry as our limits allow.<sup>1</sup> It falls naturally under two heads—the Lyric and the Epic—and in both the presence of the Italian model is constant. The leading form in lyric poetry is the *cancion* in hendecasyllables with *quebrados*—that is, broken lines of seven syllables.

<sup>1</sup> This seems the most convenient place to note that fairly ample specimens of Spanish literature will be found in the very useful collection known as the *Biblioteca de Aribau*, or *de Ribadeneira*—seventy-one somewhat ponderous volumes printed with middling skill on poor paper. The texts are the best where few are really good, and the introductions of value. It is well indexed. I prefer to make my references to this rather than to earlier editions or better editions published by societies, and therefore not easily accessible in this country.

But the *Epístola* in tercets, imitated from the *capitolo* of the Italians, is very common. The song proper is wholly absent. There is no "Come unto these yellow sands," no voice of Ariel in Spanish poetry. The Spaniard does not sing; he chants.

Of the two chiefs of the school, Boscan ranks mainly by virtue of the example he set. He was somewhat

*Boscan.*

harshly condemned by his follower, Herrera, for hanging jewels robbed from the classics and Italians on his own robe of frieze. The charge of plagiarism is not easily rebutted, for Boscan certainly took his goods where he found them in Virgil or Horace. As for the quality of his robe, it is undoubtedly of the nature of frieze. What strikes the reader most in Boscan is a certain worldly good sense, more like our own Queen Anne men than the poetry of a sixteenth-century school at its beginning. His most quoted piece, an *Epístola* addressed to Diego de Mendoza, is eminently rational prose disguised in verse, avowing a most heterodox affection for his wife (his whole tone to women is thoroughly modern), and a quite unpoetic liking for a good supper by a blazing fire of logs at the end of a day in the open air. But we note also the maturity of the language, in spite of a certain awkwardness due to the writer's want of skill. This same premature and fatal maturity is even more conspicuous in Garcilaso, who was more

*Garcilaso.*

master of his pen. In the small body of his verse, and the one fragment which remains of his prose—a letter to his friend's wife praising her good taste for enjoying the *Courtier* of

Castiglione—there is hardly a word or phrase which has become antiquated. This classic poetry was born with an old head on young shoulders, and had no youth. His finished form earned and kept for Garcilaso the rank of Prince of Castilian poets. In the latter part of the century he was twice edited—once at Salamanca in 1577 by the Humanist, Francisco Sanchez, called, from the name of his native town, Las Brozas, el Brocense, and best known as the author of the *Minerva*; and then at Seville by Hernan de Herrera. The edition of Herrera has a commentary on a large scale, and is of considerable value for the history of Spanish poetry; but it set an example which was followed to an excess of tiresome pedantry by the editors of Góngora and Camoens. It led to a famous and not unamusing literary quarrel. The Castilian critics, who were banded in support of their own man, Sanchez, fell on Herrera with some justice for his inappropriate display of scholastic pedantry, and most unjustly for ignorance of Castilian. No Castilian will ever readily allow that an Andalusian (which Herrera was) speaks the language quite correctly. Of the matter of Garcilaso's verse it may be said that it is pastoral, or gentlemanlike, and melancholy. The Spaniard finds, no doubt, a charm in the mere language, which of itself is enough; but even to him there may be suspected to be some tedium in this obvious determination to get a stool to be melancholy on. It is not the melancholy of Jorge Manrique, who is saddened by those eternal sorrows, death of kin and friends and the burden of life, but the melancholy of



a gentleman who is imitating a model to pass the time in winter quarters. But the so-called *Lira* or ode, in lines of seven syllables mixed with hendecasyllabics, addressed "To the flower of Gnidus" is elegant. It is in stanzas of five lines, rhyming the first with the third, the second, fourth, and fifth together, and enforces the well-known lesson, "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," for the instruction of a young lady at Naples who had not favoured the suit of one of the poet's friends.

Only a very full history of Spanish literature could afford to dwell on Ferdinand de Acuña (Ferdinand, Fernando, Fernan, and Hernan are all forms of the same name, employed according to taste or local usage), who was a Portuguese noble in the service of Charles V., a soldier of distinction, a writer of Castilian verse, and a copious translator from the classics; or Gutierre de Cetina, a soldier best known by a graceful madrigal;<sup>1</sup> or many others whom it would be a barren display to name; but Diego Hurtado de Mendoza is too strong a man to be passed in a crowd. He is chiefly famous as a man of action—as a soldier who governed Siena for Charles V., and a diplomatist who represented the emperor in a very military fashion at the Council of Trent. In literature he ranks chiefly as the undoubted author

<sup>1</sup> A very interesting study of this phase of Spanish poetry, and some account of its writers, will be found in the introduction written by M. Alfred Morel-Fatio to his reprint of a *Cancionero General* of 1535, in his *L'Espagne au XVI<sup>me</sup>. et au XVII<sup>me</sup>. Siecle.* Heilbronn, 1878.

of a history of the revolt of the Moriscoes, and as the possible, though doubtful, author of the *Lazarillo de Tormes*. Diego de Mendoza (1503 - 1575) was a younger son of the Count of Tendilla, head of one of the many titled branches of his famous house—the Douglasses of Spain. He was the direct descendant of the Marquess of Santillana, and through him of that Lord of Butrago who sacrificed his life for the king at the battle of Aljubarrota.<sup>1</sup> His poetry was

*Their  
immediate  
followers.*

the relaxation of a great noble who broke through the rules in a fashion well calculated to horrify such critics as Juan de la Cueva. But Don Diego had fire enough in him to burn up a wilderness of correct poets of that order. Sometimes it flamed out with little regard to decency. But in happier moments—as, for instance, in the ode to Cardinal Espinosa—he could strike that note of a haughty, or even arrogant patriotism, which is the finest in Spanish poetry. Even in his case we have examples of the same premature maturity noted in Boscan. One of his epistles addressed to this very writer begins by the Horatian “*Nil admirari*”—an excellent maxim, perhaps, but chilling in the first youth of a poetry. Mendoza wrote not only in the Tuscan, but the native metres, couplets, and ✓ *glosas*. The *glosa* is a favourite exercise of verse-making ingenuity with the Spaniard. It consists in taking any stanza of whatever number of lines, and building on it a poem of the same number of stanzas

<sup>1</sup> *Parnaso Español* of Sedaño, vol. vii.; and *Ribadeneyra*, vol. xxxii.; *Poetas Líricos de los Siglos*, xvi., xvii.

as there are lines. Each must end in one of the lines of the foundation stanza taken in their order. They must be brought in without violence, and the whole must be a variation on the theme of the stanza quoted. Diego de Mendoza outlived Charles V., and spent his last years in exile at Granada, incurred by a too great promptitude in resenting impertinence within the precincts of the Court.

It has been the custom to divide the poets of Spain into the Castilian and the Andalusian, or those of Salamanca and those of Seville. The division is somewhat arbitrary, and corresponds to very little distinction in tone, method, or language among the writers, or at least so it seems to a foreigner who compares Luis de Leon with Hernan de Herrera, though the first is counted as the chief of the school of Salamanca, and the second as the chief of the school of Seville. Both wrote the same fine Castilian, both were good scholars, and there was the same intense religious feeling, the same high patriotism, in both. Luis Ponce de Leon (1528-1591), as if to show how artificial this distinction is, was born at Granada, which is one of the sub-kingdoms of Andalusia.<sup>1</sup> He was an Augustine friar, and occupied two important chairs in succession at Salamanca. Between 1572 and 1576 he was imprisoned by the Inquisition. The charge made against him was that he had translated the *Song of Solomon*, which,

<sup>1</sup> *Biblioteca de Ribadencera*, vol. xxxvii., contains the work of Luis de Leon, both prose and verse, together with a selection from the papers of his trial before the Inquisition.

*The two schools  
of Salamanca  
and Seville.*

at a time when the Reformers were making an active use of the Bible in the vernacular tongues against the Church, was a serious offence. The leader of the attack on him was the Dominican Melchior Cano, of whose *De Locis Theologicis* Dr Johnson wrote, "Nec admiror, nec multum laudo." It is a well-known story of Luis de Leon that when the verdict of the Holy Office was given in his favour, and he was allowed to resume his lectures, he began where he had left off, and with the words, "As we were saying yesterday, gentlemen." His poetry may be divided into that part which is inspired by Horace, and that which is inspired by the Bible. It is perhaps only natural that he should appear to more advantage when he is paraphrasing the description of a perfect wife from the *Proverbs of Solomon* than when he is endeavouring to adapt the *lira* of Garcilaso to some theme obviously taken because it bore a certain resemblance to the subject of one of the odes of Horace. These imitations of the classic models were not confined to the graver and more reflective parts of his originals. Luis de Leon, though a churchman of undoubted piety, wrote amatory poems. The *coplas* in the old Spanish metres called *A una Desdeñosa*—to a scornful lady—are on exactly the same subject as the already named *Flor de Gnido* of Garcilaso. Whether he was following the classics and learned poets of his own country, or paraphrasing the Psalms, Luis de León was always a master of the very purest Castilian; while his reflective poems—the *Noche Serena*, for instance, or the ode which imitates the *Beatus Ille* of Horace—are something more

than mere exercises of ingenuity. It was his reputation as a stylist which secured the publication of his poems forty years after his death. Luis de Leon himself seems to have considered them only as amusements for his leisure. But in 1631 Quevedo brought out the first edition, in order to counteract the growing taste for Góngorism.

The poet who has the honour to rank as a stylist among the Spaniards, next to, if not on an equality with Garcilaso, is Hernan de Herrera of Seville (1534-1597), a churchman of whose life almost nothing is known with certainty.<sup>1</sup> As usual, he published little during his life, and much of his manuscript was lost by an accident after his death. The remainder was published by his friend the painter Pacheco in 1619. Spaniards, if asked to name the pieces of verse in their language which display the greatest measure of force and dignity, would certainly quote the famous odes on the battles of Lepanto and Alcázar el-Quebir, together with the sonnet in honour of Don John of Austria. The vigour of these verses is unquestionable, and if it cannot be claimed for them that they display any great originality of form, they are animated by a fine spirit of patriotism. Herrera, too, had a sense of the merits of compression, which is not common with his countrymen. He worked at the language in an artistic spirit.

Once more, as in the case of the immediate followers of Garcilaso, we must pass over the names of all but the chiefs very lightly.<sup>2</sup> The Aragonese brothers

<sup>1</sup> *Biblioteca de Ribadencyra*, vol. xxxii.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is again to *Ribadencyra*, vols. xxxii., xlii.

Lupercio and Bartolomé de Argensola, who may be classed among the poets of Castile; Francisco de Figuerola, who spent nearly all his life in Italy; Rioja, the poet of flowers, and the author of a moral poem on the Ruins of Italica (a Roman colony near Seville), inspired by Joachim du Bellay; Arguijo, and many others, must be passed over in silence. It is proper to note, however, that whatever anybody else was doing at this time, Lope de Vega did in as great quantities as men who did nothing else. But there will be occasion to speak of Lope elsewhere. For the present he must make room for the writer whom some have claimed as the most genuine lyric poet of Spain, and who bears the discredit of having flooded the literature of his country with a ruinous affectation.

- ✓ Don Luis de Argote y Góngora, who habitually used the second of these names, which was his mother's, *Góngora and Góngorism.* was a Cordovese, born in 1561.<sup>1</sup> He was educated at Salamanca, followed the Court for some years, and was attached to the Duke of Lerma. He took orders, and received a benefice when advanced in life, and died in his native city in 1627. His evil fame, based on the invention of the particular form of bad literature called after him Góngorism, is greater than his good, which yet has some foundation. His *romances* on stories of captives among Barbary pirates, and of wars on the frontiers, are among the best of their kind. Among his earlier poems on the Tuscan models there are some which possess the lyric cry with a degree of intensity very

<sup>1</sup> *Biblioteca de Ribadencyra*, vol. xxxii.

rare among the Spaniards. The third *cancion*, for instance, contains a singularly passionate and admirably worded variation, on the theme of Shakespeare's forty-fourth sonnet, "If the dull substance of my flesh were thought." But it was not for this, the work of his earlier years, that the reputation of Góngora has been spread over the world, but because he, to steal an image from Carlyle, swings in chains on the side of Parnassus, as the inventor of "El Culteranismo" or "Góngorism." At some period in his life he began to write in this style. Hostile critics say he did so because he could not attract sufficient attention by writing with sanity. Admirers have asserted that he had a literary ambition to improve the poetic language of Spain, to make it, in fact, more *culto*—✓ more cultivated. The question what exactly Góngorism was, will be best answered by an example. Here, for instance, is a passage from the *Pyramus and Thisbe*, a short poem, published in 1636 by his admirer Cristobal de Salazar Mardones, with a wordy commentary of incredible pomposity, and futility. The English translation is put below the Spanish on the Hamiltonian system, and the reader is begged to observe that the inversions and transpositions are only a little more violent in English than in Spanish:—

Piramo fueron y Tisbe,  
*Pyramus they were and Tisbe,*  
 Los que en verso hizo culto  
*Those who in verse made<sup>1</sup> polished*

<sup>1</sup> "Made" is the past tense of the verb. The order is "made to leave," which is shown by the inflection in Spanish.

El Licenciado Nason  
*The Licentiate Naso*  
 Bien romo ó bien narigudo  
*Maybe snub, maybe beak*  
 Dejar el dulce candor  
*To leave the sweet white*  
 Lastimosamente obscuro  
*Lamentably dark*  
 Al que, túmulo de seda,  
*Of that which, tomb of silk,*  
 Fue de los dos casquilucios  
*Was of the two feather-heads*  
 Moral que los hospedó  
*Mulberry which gave them shelter*  
 Y fue condenando al punto  
*And was condemned at once*  
 Si del Tigris no en raizes  
*If by the Tigris not in root*  
 De los amantes en frutos.  
*By the lovers in fruit.*

Don Cristobal de Salazar Mardones explains in prose, and with copious references to Ovid, *Meta.*, lib. iv., that what this means is that the mulberry-tree was not torn up by the roots as a punishment by the Tigris, but was coloured by the blood of the lovers. The reader will see at once that this is puerile nonsense, and that it is a mere trick. It is also a very old trick. When Thiodolf of Hvin, whose verse riddles adorn the *Heimskringla*, wrote of a certain king—

"Now hath befallen  
 In Frodi's house  
 The word of fate  
 To fall on Fiolnir;  
 That the windless wave  
 Of the wild bull's spears  
 That lord should do  
 To death by drowning,"—



he was writing in "góngorina especie"—that is, in what was to be the manner of Góngora. The whole secret lay, as Lope de Vega, indeed, pointed out, in never calling anything by its right name, and in transposing words violently. Given a great deal of bad taste, and a puerile mania for making people stare, and the thing is easily accounted for. In such conditions it may be thought clever to call mead which men drink out of horns "the windless wave of the wild bull's spear," or to describe a mulberry-tree as a tumulus of silk, though the mistake was incomparably more excusable in Thiodolf of Hvin than in Góngora, and the Norseman seems on the whole to have been the least silly of the two. The comparison which has been made between Góngorism and our own metaphysical school is too favourable to the Spaniards, in whom there was absolutely nothing but juggling with words.

This folly spread as rapidly as the imitation of Italian models had done. It was in vain that Lope argued against it for common-sense. He was himself conquered. Quevedo,<sup>1</sup> who attacked it, was driven to worse straits, for he endeavoured to resist it by means of another affectation, the *conceptista*, or conceited style, which is more like our "metaphysical" manner, but never had the popularity of Góngorism. The founder of this school of affectation was Alonso de Ledesma of Segovia (1552-1623). The poems which Quevedo published under the name of the Bachiller

<sup>1</sup> *Biblioteca de Ribadeneira*, vols. xxiii., xlvi., lxix. There is a very pretty edition of Quevedo in eleven octavo volumes, by Sancha, Madrid, 1791, which is occasionally met with.

Francisco de la Torre were meant to reinforce Luis de Leon, and were free from either kind of fault ; but the learned poetry of Spain had not vitality enough to throw off the disease. Góngorism became the literary taste of the day, and was soon traceable everywhere.

The great mass of epics, or so-called epics,<sup>1</sup> which form the non-lyric side of the learned poetry of Spain, belong with rare exceptions, if not with  
*The Epics.* only one exception, to the domains of bibliography and curiosity. I have to confess that I do not speak with any personal knowledge of the *Carolea* of Hierónimo Sempere, published in 1560, or many others, and with only a slight acquaintance with the *Carlo Famoso* of Don Luis de Zapata. This second poem, published in 1565, is in 50 cantos, and contains 40,000 verses. The subject is the history of the Emperor Charles V., and it may stand here as a specimen of the whole class to which it belongs. The *Carlo Famoso* is essentially prose, disguised in such *ottava rima* stanzas as any one who had once acquired the trick could probably write as easily as prose pure and simple. If Don Luis de Zapata, who had served the emperor, had been content to tell us of what he saw in prose, he would probably have left a readable, and perhaps a valuable, book. But, unfortunately, he felt called upon to build the lofty rhyme, in imitation of Ariosto, and this brought with it the necessity for supernatural machinery, which the Don Luis de

<sup>1</sup> Vols. xvii. and xix. of the *Biblioteca de Ribadeneyra* contain not only all, but more than all, that is entitled to survive of this portion of Spanish literature.

Zapatas of all countries are very ill qualified to handle. The ease with which verses of a kind are written in Spanish, the influence of a fashionable model, and the prestige attaching to the writing of verse, led to the production of innumerable volumes on historical subjects of what would fain have been poetry if it could. Some of this mass of writing is not without merit, the *Elegies of Famous Men of the Indies*—*Elegias de Varones Ilustres de Indias*—of Juan de Castellanos<sup>1</sup> is readable enough, and has some historical value. Juan de Castellanos, whose dates of birth and death are unknown, was an old soldier turned priest, who in common with many others could in a fashion write *ottava rima* stanza. He seems to have thought that “Elegy” meant much the same thing as “Eulogy,” and his *Elegias* are, in fact, a history of the conquest of America by the Spaniards, carried down to 1588. It is only a fragment, but even so, it fills a crown octavo volume of 563 pages in double columns. Of course there are by the side of work of this kind imitations of the Italian epic serious or humorous, which have no pretensions to a historical character. Here it was only to be expected that Lope de Vega would be among the most fluent and the most conspicuous, for it may be repeated that he tried his hand at whatever others were doing. The epics in the Italian form being popular, he wrote several; and as he had an unparalleled command of facile verse which always stopped short of becoming bad, he is never unreadable, though, as he was also only

<sup>1</sup> *Biblioteca de Ribadeneyra*, vol. iv.

a very superior *improvisatore*, his poems never quite compel reading. The subject of the *Dragontea*—the last cruise and death of Sir Francis Drake in 1594—is so much more attractive to an Englishman than the *Angelicas* and *Jerusalem Conquistadas*, taken from Ariosto and Tasso, that one is perhaps prejudiced in its favour. And yet it seems to me to have a certain vitality not present in the rest, and to be by no means inferior to them in other respects.<sup>1</sup>

The partiality of his countrymen and the too good-natured acquiescence of foreigners have given the name of epic to the *Araucana* of Alonso de The Araucana. Ercilla.<sup>2</sup> The author was a very typical Spaniard of his century. He was born in 1533, and came to England as page to Philip of Spain at the time of his marriage with Mary Tudor. It was from England that he sailed to Chili for the purpose of helping in the suppression of the revolt of the Araucans, which became the subject of his poem. While on service he was condemned to death for drawing his sword on a brother officer. The sentence was remitted, but Ercilla resented it so bitterly that he entirely omitted the name of his general, the Marquis of Cañete, in his poem. He returned to Spain in 1565, and passed the remainder of his life, until his end in 1595, partly in endeavouring to secure a reward from the king for his services, and partly in compiling his great *Araucana*. It appeared

<sup>1</sup> *Biblioteca de Ribadeneyra. Obras no dramaticas de Lope de Vega*; also, *Obras Sueltas*. Madrid, 1776-1779.

<sup>2</sup> *Biblioteca de Ribadeneyra*, vol. xvii.

in three parts in 1569, 1575, and 1590. The story told by himself, that he wrote it on pieces of leather and scraps of paper during his campaign, applies, therefore, only to the first part. It is only by a figure of speech that the *Araucana* can be described as an epic. Ercilla said that he found courage to print it because it was a true history of wars he had seen for himself. The first part is almost wholly occupied with the skirmishes of the Araucan war. In the later parts he was tempted to provide a proper epic machinery, but the change is only a proof of the tyranny of a fashion. Ercilla was a good handicraftsman of *ottava rima* stanzas, he wrote very fine Castilian, and his poem has unquestionable vitality. Yet it is, after all, hybrid. At its best it is a superior version of the *Varones Ilustres* of Castellanos, at its weakest an echo of the Italians. The literature of the world would have been richer, not poorer, if Ercilla had written memoirs on the model of his French contemporary Monluc.

The Italian influence which produced the learned poetry of Spain had its effect on Portugal also. The Portuguese remember Francisco de Sa de Miranda (1495-1558) as the first who began to shape their language for literary purposes, and the work was continued by Antonio Ferreira and Pedro de Andrade Caminha, his younger contemporaries and followers. My own knowledge of these writers is small, but as far as it goes it leads me to believe that Southey's sound literary judgment had as usual led him right when he said that, "They rendered essential service

to the language of their country, and upon that their claims to remembrance must rest.”<sup>1</sup> They are interesting in fact as examples of a general literary movement which started in Italy, and prevailed over all Western Europe. Southey did not note, and Portuguese writers have naturally not been forward to confess, how near Portugal came to having no modern literature in her own tongue. One of the two founders of the Spanish Italianate school was a Catalan who left the tongue of Muntaner and Ausias March to write Castilian. Had the political union of Spain and Portugal been a little closer, it is very possible that Portuguese would have shared the fate of Catalan. It would not have ceased to be spoken, but it would no longer have been the language of government and literature. Even as it was, Castilian had in Portugal something of the pre-eminence which mediæval French had had among neighbouring peoples. Portuguese who wrote their own tongue also wrote Castilian—even Camoens is in the list of those who used both languages. But the unity of the Peninsula was destined never to be completed, and Portuguese has escaped falling into the position of a dialect. Before the close of the sixteenth century it was illustrated by a poem which has at any rate “a world-wide reputation.”

It becomes the critic and historian of literature to approach works of great fame, which he  
*The Lusíads.* cannot himself regard with a high degree of admiration, in a spirit of diffidence, or even of

<sup>1</sup> Article on Portuguese Literature in the *Quarterly* for May 1809.

humility. I have to confess my own inability to feel the admiration other, and no doubt better, judges have felt for the *Lusiads*.<sup>1</sup> The pathetic circumstances of the life of the author, Luiz da Camoens (1524?-1580), are well known, and have perhaps served to prejudice the reader in favour of the poem. He was a Portuguese gentleman who served in the East Indies, who was ruined by shipwreck, and who ended his life in extreme misery in Lisbon. The foundation of the *Lusiads* is supplied by the famous voyage of Vasco da Gama round the Cape of Good Hope; but Camoens has worked in a great deal from Portuguese history, and the epic is written in honour of the people, not of the navigator. The matter is noble, but the execution is (of course I speak under correction) feeble. The merit of epic completeness and proportion which has been claimed for the *Lusiads* is not great in a writer who had Virgil to copy, and to whom the voyage of Gama supplied a coherent narrative, if not exactly a plot. It cannot be denied—and no one need wish to deny—that Camoens wrote his own language with great purity, and with that softness bordering, and sometimes more than bordering, on the namby-pamby, which the Portuguese love. He has a real tenderness, and a fine emotional sentimentality, while his patriotism is undeniable. But in spite of these merits, which at the best are fitter for the lyric

<sup>1</sup> The general reader cannot do better than make his acquaintance with the *Lusiads* in Mr Aubertin's translation, which gives the Portuguese text opposite the English version.

than the scope of the epic, the *Lusiads* suffer from the fatal defects of prolixity and commonplace, both in language and thought. The supernatural machinery is an example of childish imitation. Camoens has introduced the heathen mythology together with the sacred names of his own religion. The Portuguese poet had many precedents for the combination, but he is not strong enough to make us endure its essential absurdity. The *Lusiads* has, in fact, the defect of all the learned poetry of the Peninsula—that it is very much of a school exercise. He saw his heathen gods and goddesses in Virgil, and transferred them bodily to his own Christian poem, not because they had any fit place there, but because they were ordered to be provided in the “receipt for making an epic poem.”<sup>1</sup>

The reader who compares the *Lusiads*, not with the *Faërie Queen*, which belongs to a very different mansion in the house of literature, but with the masterpieces of the class to which it really belongs, the purely literary epic, done by an accomplished writer according to rule, is, it may be, liable to be rendered impatient by the loud calls made on him for extreme

<sup>1</sup> Whether because the subject is maritime, or in consequence of our long trading and fighting alliance with Portugal, the *Lusiads* has been translated into English with an almost curious persistence. Sir Richard Fanshawe made a very quaint version in the middle of the seventeenth century. The flowing, and extremely free, translation of Mickle proved lucrative to its author as late as 1776. In our time Mr Aubertin has translated it closely, and Sir Richard Burton has given a version both of the *Lusiads* and of the minor poems which is admirably fitted to introduce the English reader—to the translator.



admiration. He finds stanza following stanza of smooth, but somewhat nerveless, *ottava rima*, full of matter which might equally well be expressed in prose, and would not then appear to differ essentially from much of Hakluyt's voyages. Now and then he will find incidents—the vision of the Spirit of the Cape, for example, and the episode of the island of Love—where the intention to be poetical is visible enough, but which do not come of necessity, and have no consequences. A tender lyric spirit there is, and that is what is most truly poetical and genuine in Camoens. And of that again there are better and more spontaneous examples in his sonnets. On the whole, one has to come to the conclusion that he was a real poet, though of no wide scope, who could express a certain tenderness and melancholy in forms he had learnt from the Italians, but who owes his great name mainly to the fact that he is the only man his country can quote as worthy to rank with the great poets of the world. Therefore he has a whole nation to sing his praise, and nobody is concerned to contradict.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Obras de Camoens.* Lisbon, 1782-1783.

## CHAPTER III.

THE GROWTH AND DECADENCE OF THE  
SPANISH DRAMA.

THE NATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE SPANISH DRAMA—THE FIRST BEGINNINGS OF THE RELIGIOUS PLAYS—THE STARTING-POINT OF THE SECULAR PLAY—BARTOLOMÉ DE TORRES NAHARRO—LOPE DE RUEDA—LOPE DE VEGA'S LIFE—HIS INFLUENCE ON THE DRAMA—THE CONDITIONS OF THE WORK—CONTEMPORARIES AND FOLLOWERS OF LOPE—CALDERON—CALDERON'S SCHOOL.

THE dramatic literature of Spain was, like our own, purely national. The classic stage had no influence on it whatever; the contemporary theatre of Italy very little, and only for a brief period in the earlier years. There were in

*The national character of the Spanish drama.*

Spain translators both of the Greek and Latin dramatic literature, while her scholars were no less ready than others to impress on the world the duty of following the famous rules of Aristotle. But neither the beauty of the classic models, nor the lessons of scholars, nor even the authority of Aristotle—though it was certainly not less regarded in the last country which clung to the scholastic philosophy than elsewhere—

had any effect. It would be too much to say that they were wholly neglected. Spanish dramatic writers were, on the contrary, in the habit of speaking of them with profound respect. Cervantes, in a well-known passage of *Don Quixote*, reproaches his countrymen for their neglect of the three unities; and Lope de Vega, who more than any other man helped to fix the Spanish comedy in its disregard of the unities of time and place, and its habitual contempt for the rules that the comic and tragic should never be mingled in one piece, or that great personages should never be brought on except with a due regard to their dignity, avowed that he saw what was right, and confessed its excellence. He even boasted that he had written no less than six orthodox plays. But Cervantes, in the little he wrote for the stage, never made his practice even approach his precept, while nobody has ever been able to find of which of his plays Lope was speaking when he said that he had observed the unities. It has even been supposed that when he made the boast, he was laughing at the gentlemen to whom he addressed his *Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias* (New Art of Writing Comedies). Not a little ingenuity has been wasted in attempts to discover what both meant. The good sense of Don Marcelino Menendez<sup>1</sup> has found by far the most acceptable explanation of the mystery, and it is this,—that Cervantes, Lope, and their contemporaries had a quite sincere theoretical admiration for the precepts of Aristotle, or what were taken to be such by the commentators, but that in practice they obeyed their own

<sup>1</sup> *Historia de las Ideas Estéticas en España.*

impulses, and the popular will, though not without a certain shamefaced consciousness that it was rather wicked in them. Spanish dramatists, in fact, treated the orthodox literary doctrine very much as the ancient Cortes of Castile were wont to treat the unconstitutional orders of kings,—they voted that these injunctions were to be obeyed and not executed—"obedidas y no cumplidas," thereby reconciling independence with a respectful attitude towards authority. Some were bold enough to say from the first that the end of comedy was to imitate life, and that their imitation was as legitimate as the Greek. This finally became as fully established in theory as it always had been in practice. Nothing is more striking than the contrast between the slavishness of Spanish learned poetry and the vigorous independence of the native stage.

There was little in the mediæval literature of Spain to give promise of its drama of the later sixteenth and earlier seventeenth centuries. Spaniards had mysteries, and they dramatised the lessons of the Church as other nations did; but they had less of this than most of their neighbours, and very much less than the French. In the earlier years of the sixteenth century there was a perceptible French influence at work in Spain.<sup>1</sup> The *San Martinho* of Gil Vicente, a Portuguese, who wrote

*The first beginnings of the religious plays.*

<sup>1</sup> *Autos Sacramentales* in *Biblioteca de Ribadeneira*. The introduction by Don Eduardo Gonzalez Pedroso gives the early history of these religious plays in Spain, but with scarcely sufficient recognition of the fact that they were common to all western Europe.

both in his native tongue and in Castilian, is a moral play like many in mediæval French literature. It is on the well-known story of Saint Martin and the beggar, is written in flowing verse, and breaks off abruptly with a note that the performers must end with psalms, for he had been asked to write very late, and had no time to finish. The *Farsa del Sacramento de Peralforja*, which, from a reference to the spread of the Lutheran heresy, seems to belong to the years about 1520, betrays a French model by its very title. Farce had not the meaning it acquired later. The personages are Labour, Peralforja, his son, Teresa Jugon, Peralforja's sweetheart, the Church, and Holy Writ. The subjects are the foolish leniency of Labour to his son, and its deplorable effects (a favourite theme with French writers of *farses* and moralities), the sorrows of the Church, who is consoled by Holy Writ. These two rebuke Labour for his weakness, and induce Peralforja to amend his ways. There is nothing here particularly Spanish—nothing which might not be direct translation from the French. The religious play was destined to have a history of its own in Spain; but its earlier stage is marked by little national character. Even the *Oveja Perdida* (the Lost Sheep), written, or at least revised and recast, by Juan de Timoneda about 1570, which long remained a stock piece with the strolling players, is a morality on the universal mediæval model. The Lost Sheep is of course the human soul, led astray by carnal appetite, and rescued by Christ the Good Shepherd. The other characters are Saint Peter, the Archangel Michael, and

the Guardian Angel. Except that it has an elaborate introduction, divided between an *Introit* to Ribera, the Patriarch of Antioch and Archbishop of Valencia, before whom it was played, and an *Introit* to the people, it does not differ from the *San Martinho* or the *Farsa Sacramental de Peralforja*.

It has been customary to treat the *Celestina* as the foundation, or at least an important part of the foundations, of the Spanish secular drama. This curious story in dialogue is indeed called a "tragi-comedy," and it most unquestionably proves that its author, or authors, possessed the command of a prose style admirably adapted for the purposes of comedy. But the Spanish is a poetic, not a prose drama. The qualities which redeem the somewhat commonplace love-story of Calisto and Melibœa, and the tiresome pedantry of much of the *Celestina*, its realism, and its vivacious representation of low life and character, are seldom found on the Spanish stage. We shall do better to look for the starting-point of the comedy of Lope de Vega in the *Eclogas* of Juan del Encina, who has been already mentioned as one of the last lights of the troubadour school.<sup>1</sup> The model here is obviously the little religious play of the stamp of Vicente's *San Martinho*, modified by imitation

<sup>1</sup> An accessible and still most useful account of the early Spanish drama is to be found in the first volume of Ochoa's *Tesoro del Teatro Español*, which gives the introduction and catalogue of Don Leandro de Moratin, Paris, 1836; but the standard authority is Schack's *Geschichte der Dramatischen Literatur und Kunst in Spanien*, Berlin, 1845-46. Yet, here and always, the English reader cannot do better than follow Mr Ticknor.

of the classic Eclogue. The personages, generally shepherds, are few, the action of the simplest, and the verse somewhat infantile, though not without charm. Yet the mere fact that we have in them examples of an attempt to make characters and subjects, other than religious, matter of dramatic representation, shows that they were an innovation and a beginning. Juan del Encina, who was attached in some capacity to the Duke of Alva of his time, wrote these Eclogues to be repeated for the amusement of his patrons by their servants. It does not appear that they were played in the market-place, or were very popular. During the first half of the sixteenth century the Church endeavoured to repress the secular play. The struggle was useless, for the bent of the nation was too strong to be resisted. It conquered the Church, which, before the end of the century, found itself unable to prevent the performance of very mundane dramas within the walls of religious houses. Yet for a time the Inquisition was able to repress the growth of a non-religious drama at home. The working of the national passion for the stage, and for something other than pious *farsas*, is shown in the *Josefina*<sup>1</sup> of Micael de Carvajal. This long-forgotten work, by an author of whom nearly nothing is really known, was performed apparently for, and by, ecclesiastics at Valencia about 1520. It is on the subject of Joseph and his Brethren, is a religious play, but has divisions, and a machinery obviously adapted from the

<sup>1</sup> Published by the Sociedad de Bibliófilos Españoles, 1870.

Latin, if not the Greek model. There are four acts, a herald who delivers a prologue to the first, second, and third, a chorus of maidens at the end of each. The dialogue has life, and there is a not unsuccessful attempt at characterisation in the parts of the brothers and of Potiphar's wife. At the close comes the *Villancico*, a simple form of song hovering towards being a hymn, which was obligatory at the close of the religious play. The *Josefina* had no progeny, and is to-day mainly interesting as an indication of the struggle of the national genius to find its true path. We cannot say even that of the few direct imitations of the classic form produced by the Spaniards. Such works as the *Nise Lastimosa*—the Pitiabie Agnes—a strictly Senecan play on the story of Ines de Castro, first written in Portuguese by Ferreira, and then adapted into Castilian by Gerónimo Bermudez, a learned churchman, and printed in 1577, are simply literary exercises. They show that the influences which inspired Jodelle, and Garnier in France, were not unfelt in Spain; but there, as in England, the national genius would have none of them. In Bermudez himself the imitation of Seneca was forced. The *Nise Lastimosa* has a continuation called the *Nise Laureada*. The first, which ends with the murder of Agnes, is correct; but in the second, which has for subject the vengeance of the king, he throws aside the uncongenial apparatus of messenger and chorus, and plunges into horrors, to which the story certainly lent itself, with the zest of his contemporary Cristobal de Virues, or our own Kyd.



The true successors of Juan del Encina were to be found during the reign of Charles V. in the Spanish colony at Rome. The Spanish proverb has it that the Devil stands behind the cross—  
*Bartolomé de Torres Naharro.* “tras la cruz está el diablo”—and the Spaniards who lived under the shadow of the papal Court enjoyed a licence which they would have missed under the eye of the Inquisition. One of them, Bartolomé de Torres Naharro, who lived and wrote in the early years of the century, is sometimes counted the father of the Spanish stage. He was the author of a number of comedies, published in Seville in 1520 under the title of *Propaladia*, which deal with the favourite subjects of comedy, love intrigues, and the tricks of lovers, *rufianes*—i.e., bullies—soldiers in and out of service, and so forth, types which he had many chances of observing at Rome when all Italy was swarming with Spanish *bisoños*, the wandering fighting men who were mercenaries when any prince would employ them, and vagabonds at other times. Naharro had considerable *vis comica*, and a command of telling fluent verse. His personages have life, and if his plays have touches of obscenity, which is not common in Spain, and brutality, which is less rare, his time must be taken into account. But Naharro, though a genuine Spaniard, lived too near the Italians not to be influenced by Machiavelli and Ariosto. His plays mark only a short step forward to the fully developed comedy of Lope. The *Propaladia* was soon suppressed by the Inquisition, not because it contained heresy, but for a freedom of language in regard to ecclesi-

astical vices which would have passed unrebuked in the previous century, but had become of very bad example after the Reformation had developed into a formidable attack on the Church. The form of his comedy was not that finally adopted by the Spaniards. It was in five acts, with the *introito* or prologue.

A truly popular national drama was hardly likely to arise among courtiers and churchmen. It needed a

*Lope de Rueda.* chief who looked to the common audience

as his patron, and who also had it in him to begin the work on lines which literature could afterwards develop. Spain found such a leader in

Lope de Rueda (*floruit* 1544?-1567?). Little is known of his life, but that little is more than is known with certainty of some contemporary men of letters. He was a native of Seville, and originally a goldbeater by trade. It may be that he acquired his taste for the stage by taking part in the performance of religious plays, which were always acted by townsmen or churchmen. The separation of the actor from the amateur, if that is the right word to apply to the burghers and peasants of the Middle Ages who appeared on the stage partly for amusement and partly from piety, on the one hand, and from the mere juggler, minstrel, or acrobat on the other, was going on in France and England. The same process was at work in Spain. By steps of which we can now learn nothing, Lope de Rueda became in the fullest sense a playwright and actor-manager. He strolled all over Spain. Cervantes, who had seen him, has immortalised his simple theatre—the few boards which formed

the stage, the blanket which did duty as scenery, and behind which sat the guitar-player who represented the orchestra, the bags containing the sheepskin jackets and false beards forming the wardrobe of the company. The purely literary importance of Lope de Rueda's work is not great. That part of it which survived is inconsiderable in bulk, and shows no advance on Naharro. He was not an ignorant man. The Italian plays were certainly known to him, and he wrote pure Castilian. But his chief contribution to the form of Spanish dramatic literature was the *paso* or passage, a brief interlude, generally between "fools" or "clowns" in the Shakespearian sense, frequently introduced between the acts of a regular comedy. The monologue of Lance over his dog, or the scene between Speed and Lance with the love-letter, in the third act of the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, would serve as *pasos*. But Lope de Rueda's chief claim to honour is that he fairly conquered for the Spanish stage its place in the sun. He hung on no patron, but set his boards up in the market-place, looking to his audience for his reward. When he died, in or about 1567, the theatre was a recognised part of Spanish life. If he had not much enriched dramatic literature, he had provided those who could with a place in which they were free to grow to the extent of their intrinsic power. It is pleasant to know that he had his reward. He seems to have been a prosperous man, and Cervantes speaks with respect of his character. The fact that he was buried in the Cathedral of Córdoba is a proof that he was not

considered a mere "rogue and vagabond," but had at least as good a position as an English actor who was the queen's or the admiral's "servant." As Lope de Rueda was nobody's servant, we may fairly draw the deduction that the Spanish stage had a more independent position than our own.

The school of Lope de Rueda, as they may be called with some exaggeration, must be allowed to pass under his name. The most memorable of them The followers of Lope de Rueda. was Juan de Timoneda, already named as the author, or adapter, of the *Oveja Perdida*. He was a bookseller of Valencia, who died at a great age, but at some uncertain date, in the reign of Philip II. Juan de Timoneda published all that were published of the plays of Lope de Rueda, and in his capacity of bookseller - publisher was no doubt helpful to literature. But as a man of letters he was mainly an adapter, and his plays are echoes of Naharro and Rueda, or were conveyed from Ariosto. The sap was now rising, and the tree began to bear fruit in more than one branch. Spain as it then was, and as it long remained, was rather a confederation of states than a state. There was no capital in the proper sense of the word. Charles V. had never rested, and had spent much of his life out of Spain. Philip II. did indeed fix his Court at Madrid, or in the neighbourhood, but it was not until the close of his life that the society of a capital began to form about him. In the earlier years of his reign the capitals of the ancient kingdoms were still centres of social, intellectual, and artistic activity, nor did they fall wholly to the level of pro-

vincial towns while any energy remained in Spain. Thus as the taste for the stage and for dramatic literature grew, it was to be expected that its effects would be seen in independent production in different parts of the Peninsula. The writers who carried on the work of Lope de Rueda, and who prepared the way for Lope de Vega, were not "wits of the Court," or

*The dramatists of Seville and Valencia.* about the Court. They were to be found at Seville and Valencia. Juan de la

Cueva, the author of the *Ejemplar Poético*, was a native of the capital of Andalusia. To him belongs the honour of first drawing on the native romances for subjects, as in his *Cerco de Zamora*—‘Siege of Zamora’—a passage of the *Cid* legend, and of first indicating, if not exactly outlining, the genuine *Comedia de Capa y Espada* in *El Infamador*—‘The Calumniator.’ In Valencia Cristobal de Virues (1550—?) wrote plays less national in subject but more in manner. He did once join the well-meaning but mistaken band which was endeavouring to bind the Spanish stage in the chains of the Senecan tragedy; but, as a rule, he wrote wild romantic plays, abounding in slaughter, under classic names. This was an effort which could not well lead anywhere to good, but at least it testifies to the vitality of the interest felt in the stage; and Valencia has this claim to a share in the development of the Spanish drama, that for a short time it sheltered, encouraged, and may have helped to determine, the course of the Phœnix of wits, the Wonder of Nature, the fertile among all the most fertile, the once renowned, the then un-

justly depreciated, but the ever-memorable Lope de Vega.

If a writer is to be judged by his native force, his originality, the abundance of his work, the effect he produced on the literature of his country, and his fame in his own time, then Lope, to give him the name by which he was and is best known to his countrymen, must stand at the head of all Spain's men of letters.<sup>1</sup>

If it is a rule admitting of no exception that the critic or historian of literature should have read all his author, then I at least must confess my incapacity to speak of this famous writer. Yet, encouraged by a firm conviction that there never lived nor does live, or at any future period will live, anybody who has achieved or will achieve this feat,—being, moreover, persuaded, for reasons to be given, that it is not necessary to be achieved, I venture to go on.

Lope Felix de Vega Carpio came of a family which originally belonged to the "mountain," the hill country of northern and north-western Spain, which never submitted to the Moor. His father was "hidalgo de ejuicatoria,"—that is, noble by creation,—but his mother was of an old family, and both came from the valley of Carriedo in Asturias. He was

*Lope de Vega's  
life.*

<sup>1</sup> *Biblioteca de Ribadencyra*, vols. xxiv., xxxiv., xli., lii., give the best modern texts of 120 of Lope de Vega's comedies, including, not very properly, the *Dorotea*; but the Spanish Academy has begun a portentous edition, in quarto, of his whole work. The first volume contains a life by Don C. A. de la Barrera, founded largely on the poet's numerous extant letters. The *Obras Sueltas*—i.e., non-dramatic works of Lope—are to be found in a desirable form published at Madrid from the excellent press of Francisco de Sancha in 21 vols., 1776-79.

born at Madrid on 25th November 1562. His life is known with exceptional fulness, partly because many passages of his works are avowedly biographical, partly because a number of his letters, addressed to his patron in later years, the Duke of Sessa, have been preserved. It would be better for Lope's reputation if he had been more reticent, or his patron more careless. As it is, we know not only that he passed a stormy youth, but that in his later years he was an unchaste priest. His father died when he was very young, and he was left to the care of an uncle, the Inquisitor Don Miguel de Carpio. The Jesuits had the honour of educating him, among the many famous men trained in their schools. It is recorded by his biographers, and we can believe it, that he was very precocious. At five he could read Latin, and had already begun to write verses. After running away in a boyish escapade, he was attached as page to Gerónimo Manrique, Bishop of Ávila, who sent him to the University of Alcalá de Henares, the native town of Cervantes. From the account given of his youth in the excellently written dialogue story *Dorotea*, he appears to have been a mercenary lover, even according to the not very delicate standard of his time. His adventures were unsavoury, and not worth repeating. It is enough that, both before he took orders and in later life when he was tonsured and had taken the full vows, he presented a combination, not unknown at any time or in any race, but especially common on both sides in the seventeenth century, of intensity of faith with the most complete moral laxity.

He alternated between penance and relapses. After leaving Alcalá he was for a time attached to the Duke of Alva, the grandson of the renowned governor of the Low Countries. For him he wrote the pastoral *Arcadia*, which deals with the duke's amours. He married, but marriage produced no effect on his habits. He was exiled to Valencia for two years, in consequence of obscure troubles arising, he says, from "jealousy." Shortly after his return to Madrid his wife died, but he continued to give cause for "jealousy," and other troubles sent him off to join the Armada. From that campaign of failure and suffering he had the good fortune to return in safety, and he bore it so well that he wrote at least a great part of a long continuation of Ariosto, called *The Beauty of Angelica*, during the voyage. After his return to Madrid in 1590 he was again married, and again marriage made little difference. In 1609 he became a priest. During his later years he was attached, not apparently as a servant but as a patronised friend, to Don Pedro Fernandez de Córdoba, first Marquess Priego, and then Duke of Sessa,—a very dissolute gentleman of literary tastes, belonging to the famous house which had produced the Great Captain, Gonsalvo de Córdoba. He died at the age of seventy-three in 1635.

A poet who could venture on so great an enterprise as a continuation of Ariosto amid all the distractions of the Armada cannot have wanted for confidence in himself, nor was he likely to have an idle pen. The productiveness of Lope was

*His influence  
on the drama.*



indeed enormous. He may be said to have tried every literary form of his time, from the epic on the Italian model down to the romance. In bulk, the life-work of an industrious journalist might be about equal to his surviving writings. And Lope was no mere journalist. His execution of everything he touched has a certain interest. If space allowed, there would be something to say of his religious poem on *San Isidro* and his sonnets, serious and burlesque. But space does not allow, and we must consider him here chiefly in his great and dominant character of dramatist, remembering always that he was a man of many-sided ability, and that the average cleverness of his non-dramatic work goes far to justify the admiration of his countrymen in his time, and the place they have never ceased to give him as, with the one exception of Cervantes, the chief of their literature. The number of his plays has remained a wonder and a legend. Eighteen hundred *comedias* and four hundred *autos sacramentales* is the figure given on fair authority as his total life-work for the stage. He himself confesses to two hundred and nineteen pieces as early as 1603, and in 1624 to one thousand and seventy. An eyewitness has recorded that he once wrote five plays in fifteen days; and that on another occasion, having undertaken to collaborate with two friends in a comedy, he finished his share of the work before breakfast, though it was one act out of three, and wrote some other verse into the bargain. Nor are these stories, incredible as they sound, altogether beyond belief.

They could be accepted without hesitation if the writing of Lope de Vega were all imitative and bad. But that is far from being the case. Over and above the fact that he sometimes—as in the *Dorotea*, for example—wrote an admirable style, he was the creator of a literary form. Lope de Vega was the real creator of the Spanish *comedia*, a word which must not be understood to mean only comedy, but stage-play of every kind. Others prepared the way, and some collaborated in the ending of the work, but the merit is none the less his. Without Lope there could have been no Calderon, who found the form ready made to his hands. That a writer of so much productiveness, and so little concentration, would have many faults will be easily understood. Finish was not to be expected from him, nor profundity. There would inevitably be much that was hasty and careless, much repetition, much taking of familiar situations, much use of stock characters, and a great deal of what the French call the *à peu près*—the “that is good enough”—instead of the absolutely best, which is not to be attained except by thought and the labour of the file. He must have been prepared to do whatever would please an uncritical audience, as indeed Lope candidly avowed that he was. In short, he might be expected to have all the weaknesses of the class which Carlyle defined as “the shallow vehement,” and they would be the more conspicuous because he lived in a time of learning, but of no great criticism, because he was a beginner, and not least because he belonged to a people who have always been indifferent

to finish of workmanship. But with all this, for which a narrow criticism of the stamp of Boileau's would have condemned him utterly, Lope had the one thing necessary, which is creative faculty. The quality of his plays will be best shown later on, when we treat of the Spanish stage as a whole. For the present it is enough to deal with the more mechanical side of his workmanship. Before his time Spanish play-writers had hesitated between the classic division into five acts and a tentative division into four. One early and forgotten writer, Avendaño, took three. Lope, not without the co-operation of others, but mainly by his example, established this last as the recognised number of *jornadas*—acts—for a Spanish play. The choice was made for a definite reason. In the *Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias*—a verse epistle written to a friend who had asked him to justify his works before the critics who held by the classic rules—Lope laid it down that the first act should introduce the characters and knit the intrigue; the second lead to the crisis, the *scène à faire* of French dramatic critics; and the third wind all up. He formulated the great secret of the playwright's craft, which is that the audience must always know what is going to happen, but never exactly how it is going to be brought about. They must never be left in a puzzling doubt as to the meaning of what is going on, and yet must always be kept in a pleasing uncertainty as to what is about to happen next. This supposed a very real unity of action, compatible with plot and underplot, but not with two independent plots. For the unities

of time and place he cared as much, and as little, as our own Elizabethans.

Not even Lope's fertility and activity could have been equal to the production of two thousand two hundred plays, of which all, or even a majority, were executed in conformity with his own standard. Such a piece of construction as the *Dama Melindrosa* cannot have been one of the five plays written in fifteen days. There is a great deal in Lope's literary baggage which is mere scribbling, meant to please an audience for an afternoon. Though the Spaniards loved the theatre much, they were not numerous enough in the towns to supply many audiences, and they clamoured for new things. To meet this demand, every Spanish dramatist who wished to stand well with the managers was compelled to produce a great deal of what may be called journalism for the theatre, the mere rapid throwing together of acceptable matter, which might be love-adventures or the news of the day, historical stories or religious legend, in stock forms. The stage was not only all the literature of the mass of the people, but all the newspapers, and all the "music-hall" side of their amusements too. In all cases the comedy was accompanied by interludes of the nature of music-hall "turns," *loas*, *pasos*, or *entremeses*—brief scenes of a comic kind, songs, and, above all, dances. The *patio* or court—that is, the pit—filled by the poorest, most numerous, and most formidable part of the audience, who stood, and who were addressed in compliment as the Senate or the musketeers, and were known in actors' slang as the

*The conditions  
of the work.*

*chusma* — *i.e.*, the galley-slaves — would not endure to be deprived of their dances. So the most truly famous comedy would hardly have escaped the cucumbers with which the “grave Senate” expressed its disapproval, if it had been presented without “crutches” in the form of the dance, the song, or the farcical interlude. Thus it inevitably followed that the playwright was often called upon to supply what was in fact padding to fill up the intervals between the popular shows. And this Lope supplied, besides writing the *entremeses*, *mojigangas*, *saynetes* — all forms of brief farce. Such work could not well be literary. His reputation, and indeed the reputation of the Spanish drama, has suffered because matter of this kind was not allowed to die with the day for which it was written. During his later years, and the better part of the life of his successor, Calderon, the drama held its place at Court. Plays were frequently first given before the Court (which at that time, and at all festivals, meant substantially every lady and gentleman in Madrid), before reaching the public theatre. This audience demanded a higher level of work, and the best *comedias* were probably written for it. Yet the drama made its way to the palace, and was not originally directed to the king and courtiers. It came as Lope de Vega had shaped it, and so remained in all essentials. The metrical form was fixed by him: the *silvas* or *liras* — lyric verse in hendecasyllabic and seven-foot lines — for the passionate passages, the sonnet for soliloquies, the *romance* for narrative and dialogue, the *redondillas* or roundelays

of assonant and consonant verse, are all enumerated by him in the *Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias*. And what he did for the secular play he did for the religious. *The Voyage of the Soul*, given in his prose story, *El Peregrino en Su Patria*, is an *Auto Sacramental* as complete as any of Calderon's. Whatever the Spanish drama has to give us was either found undeveloped by Lope de Vega, and perfected in shape by him, or was his invention. Other men put their mark on their versions of his models, or showed qualities which he wanted, but nobody modified the Spanish drama as he had built it in any essential. He was, as far as any single man could be, the creator of the dramatic literature of his country; and even though Tirso de Molina was greater in this or that respect, Alarcon had a finer skill in drawing a character, Calderon a deeper poetic genius,—though he might have cause to envy this man's art or that man's scope,—yet he must remain the chief of one of the very few brilliant and thoroughly national dramatic literatures of the world.

This predominance of the *Luca fa presto* of literature may have been a misfortune, though when the conditions are remembered, and the innate indifference of the Spaniard to artistic finish is allowed for, an inevitable one. We must accept it and its consequences. One of them is this, that after Lope de Vega there could be no room for historical development on the Spanish stage. Calderon was a different man writing the same drama. There is no such difference between these two as between Shakespeare and

Ben Jonson ; and nowhere in Spanish dramatic literature is there anything answering to the contrast between the Elizabethan and the Restoration stages. The division often made between the school of Lope and the school of Calderon is very arbitrary. It is largely a matter of date. The earlier men are classed

*Contemporaries  
and followers  
of Lope.*

with the first, and the later with the second. To find a distinction between them it is necessary to insist on mere matters of detail, or on such purely personal differences of genius and character as must always be found where there is life among a large body of men. The rule of a literary as of a political despot may cramp as well as support. It is possible that if they had not been overshadowed by the Marvel of Nature his contemporaries might have developed with more freedom. None of them may seem to have suffered more from the consecration of hasty writing than Gabriel Tellez (1570 ?-1648), known in literature as the Maestro Tirso de Molina, a churchman, who died as head of a religious house at Soria. Tirso de Molina may be said ✓ to live on the universal stage of the world as the first creator of Don Juan.<sup>1</sup> One of his plays, *The Vengeance of Tamar,* contains a scene of very high tragic power—that in which the outraged sister waits veiled outside the tent prepared by Absalom for the slaughter of his brother. She has a long double-edged dialogue with the offender, full of warnings of doom intelligible to the audience, but misunderstood by him, and when

<sup>1</sup> All the writers mentioned in this paragraph will be found under their names in the *Biblioteca de Ribadeneira*.

he has gone to his fate her soliloquy is a fine example of the legitimate dramatic use of the chorus. There is a certain quiet in this scene, a reserve, and an appeal not to the mere passion for seeing something going on, but to the emotions of pity and terror, which is rare indeed on the amusing, but too often noisy and shallow, Spanish stage. Calderon, using the freedom of a Spanish dramatist, conveyed the whole act into his *Hairs of Absalom*. One is inclined to think that the playwright who first rough-hewed the universally true character of Don Juan might, if he had felt called upon to finish as well as to imagine and sketch, have also given us the finished type of the debauchee whom the pursuit of his own pleasure has made a violator and brute, all the more odious because there is on him an outward show of gallantry and high-breeding. Tirso's *Marta la Piadosa*—'The Pious Martha'—has been most absurdly compared to *Tartuffe*. It is the story of a lively young lady who affects a passion for good works and a vow of charity in order to escape a disagreeable marriage, and is in other respects the usual *comedia de capa y espada*. Yet there is a power of characterisation in it, a liveliness and a genial humanity, which need little to be the most accomplished comedy. But it misses of what it might have reached, and we may say that it failed because his audience, and the taste of his time, called upon Tirso for nothing better than hasty work. In Guillen de Castro (1569-1631), again, the friend of Lope at Valencia, we find the same contrast between a vigorous original force of imagination, with great powers of presentment, and a sudden drop



into what no doubt pleased the "musketeers," but is now only worth looking at because it did. His *Youth of the Cid*, which up to a certain point supplied Corneille with more than a model, falls to puerile miracle and ends incoherently. Juan Ruiz de Alarcon reached very high comedy. His *Verdad Sospechosa* — 'The Doubted Truth' — has had a great progeny on the stage of the world. All the romancing liars — they who lie not for sordid ends but by imagination, and from a love of shining, or getting out of the immediate difficulty — who follow one another on all theatres, may claim descent from his hero. But Alarcon was not popular, and he also could be hasty. The list of names might easily be swollen in a country which counted its known dramatic writers at certain periods by sixties and seventies, but nothing would be gained for the understanding of the school by the repetition.<sup>1</sup>

Although he cannot be said to have developed or even modified the form of dramatic literature in Spain, Calderon was too considerable a man to be allowed to pass with a school.<sup>2</sup>

Pedro Calderon de la Barca Barreda Henao y Riaño, Knight of the Order of Santiago, Priest, Honorary Chaplain of his Majesty, and our Lords the

<sup>1</sup> Whoever wishes to gain an original knowledge of the dramatists of this time may be referred to vols. xliii. and xlv. of the *Biblioteca de Ribadeneira*, with their introductions and catalogues by Don Ramon Mesonero Romanos.

<sup>2</sup> Not the best but the most accessible edition of Calderon's plays is that of J. J. Keil, Leipzig, 1827. Don Eugenio Hartzenbusch has edited him for the *Biblioteca de Ribadeneira*, vols. vii., ix., xii., xiv., and lviii.

New Kings of the Cathedral of Toledo—to give him all his names and titles—was a native of *Calderon*. Madrid, “though from another place he took his name, an house of ancient fame.” The splendour of his pedigree was perhaps exaggerated by the partiality of friends. It is a point on which the Spaniard has all the reverence of the Scotsman. Yet he was undoubtedly a noble, and “came from the mountain,” as indeed did all Spain’s greatest men in letters and art. His long life, which lasted from 1600 to 1681, unlike Lope’s, was honourable, but is otherwise little known. We are told that he served as a soldier in his youth, but in a time of truce when not much service was to be seen. From one of the few certain passages in his life it appears that he was not slow to draw his sword on sufficient provocation. He had once to take sanctuary after chasing an actor through the streets of Madrid sword in hand. The man had stabbed Calderon’s brother in the back, and the excuse was held to be good. For the rest, the poet’s life was peaceful and prosperous. He was educated by the Jesuits and at Salamanca, was known as a writer when he was twenty, and after the death of Lope de Vega, he became the acknowledged chief of Spanish dramatists. Philip IV. greatly favoured and employed him. Calderon was, in fact, as much the king’s poet as Velasquez was his painter. By the favour of the king he also was admitted into the Order of Santiago, which might bring with it a commandery and a revenue. In the revolt of Catalonia in 1640, when the king went to the army, Cal-

deron joined the other knights who rendered their military service under the royal banner. At the age of fifty-one he took orders. This was not always a proof of a sincere vocation, for Swift's saying, that it was easier to provide for ten men in the Church than one out of it, was even truer of Spain than of England. But Calderon's sincerity need not be doubted. He appears to have given up writing directly for the theatre after taking orders, but continued to produce plays for the Court which were repeated in public. During the latter half of his life he preferred to devote himself to the *autos sacramentales*, which he had an exclusive right to supply to the town of Madrid. No dramatic author of the time seems to have been so indifferent to the fate of his plays. A few were printed by his brother, but he himself published none, though he was continually vexed by piracies, and by learning that rubbish had been presented in his name to provincial audiences. In his old age he drew up a list of his genuine plays at the request of the Duke of Veragua, the representative of Columbus. From the letter sent with the list we learn that there were two noted pests of the Madrid theatre, one known as Great, and the other as Little, Memory. The first could remember a whole play (one supposes it must have been *taliter qualiter*) after hearing it once, the other after hearing it two or three times, and the two gained a dishonourable livelihood by poaching for piratical managers. As many dramas reached the press by their exertions, the wretched state of the text is easily accounted for. When Great or Little Memory

was at a loss he put in his own trash. Even in Calderon's genial and peaceful old age this outrage moved him to bitterness. Yet he never edited his plays. His executor, Don Juan de Vera Tasis, who published the first edition after his death, was unfortunately a partisan of the detestable *estilo culto*, and is suspected of having inserted some very bad examples of this vicious affectation. Between the indifference of the poet and the insufficiency of the editor the text has suffered greatly. Calderon's high estimate, not perhaps so much of his own *autos* as of the sanctity of work written for a religious purpose, is shown by the fact that he did publish some of them, lest they should suffer the same misuse as his plays.

The reputation of Calderon has suffered from the opposite evil to that which has injured Lope's. The Phoenix of Geniuses has been punished in modern times for the wild overpraise of his own, by some neglect. German criticism has treated him as a mere amuser. Calderon, on the other hand, has been the victim of the incontinence in praise of the Schlegels, who were determined to make another, and a better, Shakespeare if they could not find one. Many readers who had formed an idea of him at second hand have probably suffered a severe shock on becoming acquainted with his work.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For an example see the *Spanish Drama* by Mr G. H. Lewes, 1846, a shrewd piece of criticism by one who was a good judge of a play. But Mr Lewes was too manifestly excited to revenge his own once excessive confidence in Schlegel on Calderon. Don M. Menendez's *Calderon y su escuela*, a series of lectures delivered in 1881, is a very sound piece of criticism.

No reader should expect to find a world poet in Calderon, who was a Spaniard of the Spaniards. No

*His limitations.* more intensely national poet ever wrote,

and it is for that he must be read and appreciated. Moreover, he is a Spaniard of the seventeenth century, when the monarchical sentiment was at its height, and when all life was permeated by a religion in which the creed had, in Mr Swinburne's phrase, replaced the decalogue. His conception of honour (we shall come back to the point of honour as a motive for Spanish plays) is that of his time — thoroughly oriental. It was not the sentiment which nerves a man against fear of consequences, and enables him to resist the temptation to do what is dishonourable, or, better still, makes him incapable of feeling it, but the fixed determination not to allow the world the least excuse for saying that somebody has done something to you which renders you undignified or ridiculous. As has been already said, he added nothing to the formal part of Spanish dramatic literature, not even to the *auto*. He was too much affected by the Góngorism of his early manhood, for even the most partial of editors cannot throw all, or even the most, of the errors in that style found in his plays on Don Juan de Vera Tasis.

Yet with his limitations Calderon was a considerable poet, and a very skilful master of the machinery of the

*His qualities.* Spanish comedy. When not misled into Góngorism he wrote magnificently, and there are lyric choral passages in the *autos* which Mr Ticknor rightly praised as worthy of Ben Jonson's

masques. Indeed not a little of his work is identical in purpose with the masque, though different in form. As a Court poet he was called upon to write for the entertainment of the king and the courtiers, and to supply theatrical shows at royal marriages, births of princes, and so forth. There was no intrinsic novelty here, for Calderon did but give the high-bred Spaniard of the Court a finer poetic version of the dances, songs, and bright short pieces under various names, which delighted the humbler Spaniard in the *patios*. The intensely national sentiment which he expresses may strike us at times as a little empty, but is high and shining, and lends itself to a certain stately treatment which he could give. The romantic sentiment was strong in Calderon, and even in the most purely Spanish trappings that is not remote from us. A poet who dealt not inadequately with great passions could hardly help sometimes piercing through the merely national to the universal, though it must be acknowledged that his characters rarely utter the individual human saying, and that he was far too fond of long casuistical amplifications, which are almost always frigidly pedantic, and not rarely bombastical. The most quoted passage in all his work, the lines which close the second act of *La Vida es Sueño*, gain by being taken apart from their context:—

“Que es la vida? Un frenesi :  
 Que es la vida? Una ilusion,  
 Una sombra, una ficcion  
 Y el mayor bien es pequeño  
 Que toda la vida es sueño  
 Y los sueños sueño son.”

“ We are such stuff  
As dreams are made of, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.”

It is a fine poetic reflection, well fitted to stand beside the yet more beautiful lines of the *Tempest*, but it is not wise to approach the play in the hope that all of it will be found at the same level.

As in the case of Lope, though not to the same extent, the critic who is severely limited in space must be content to speak in general terms of much of Calderon's work. It would be interesting to take *El Mágico Prodigioso* ('The Wonder-working Magician'), *El Mayor Monstruo los Zelos* ('Jealousy the greatest Monster'), and *La Puente de Mantible* ('The Bridge of Mantible'), and show what has been added in any of them—or a score of others which it were as easy to name—to the unchanging framework of the Spanish play. In the *Mágico Prodigioso*, for instance, perhaps the most generally known of Calderon's greater dramas, which has been ineptly enough compared to *Faust*, we have, in addition to the usual machinery of *dama*, *galan*, and *gracioso*, a story of temptation by the devil. Looked at closely, it is a tale told for edification, and for the purpose of showing what a fool the devil essentially is. He is argued off his legs by Cyprian the hero at the first bout, beaten completely by stock arguments to be found in text-books. His one resource is to promise Cyprian the possession of Justina, and he signally fails to keep his word. The false Justina he has created to satisfy the hero turns to a skeleton at once, and Cyprian becomes a Christian because he discovers that the devil is unable to give him posses-

sion of a woman, and is less powerful than God, which he knew by the fiend's own confession at the beginning. It is an edifying story to all who accept the premisses and the parade of scholastic argument, and are prepared to allow for the time, the nation, and the surroundings.

Calderon wound up and rounded off the historical development of the Spanish drama so completely that The school of Calderon. little need be said of his school, which indeed only means contemporaries who wrote Lope's drama with Calderon's style. Yet Moreto was a strong man, and to him also belongs the honour of having put on the stage an enduring type, the Lindo Don Diego, who was the ancestor of our own Sir Fopling Flutter, of Lord Foppington, and of many another theatrical dandy. Francisco de Roxas, too, has left a point-of-honour play, not unworthy of his master, *Del Rey Abajo, Ninguno*—'From the King downwards, Nobody.' One feature common to all the later writers for the old Spanish stage may be noticed. It was their growing tendency to re-use the situations and plots of their predecessors. Moreto was a notable proficient in this, and Calderon himself did as much. It seems as if a theatre which dealt almost wholly with intrigue and situation had exhausted all possible combinations and could only repeat. When men began to go back in this fashion the end was at hand. Calderon, less fortunate than Velasquez, outlived the king who was their common patron, and saw with his own eyes the decadence of Spain. Beyond him there was only echo, and then dotage prolonged into the eighteenth century.



## CHAPTER IV.

## FORMS OF THE SPANISH DRAMA.

THE PREVAILING QUALITY OF THE SPANISH DRAMA—TYPICAL EXAMPLES—‘LA DAMA MELINDROSA’—‘EL TEJEDOR DE SEGOVIA’—‘EL CONDENADO POR DESCONFIADO’—THE PLAYS ON “HONOUR”—‘A SECRETO AGRAVIO SECRETA VENGANZA’—THE “AUTO SACRAMENTAL”—THE “LOA”—THE ‘VERDADERO DIOS PAN’—‘LOS DOS HABLADORES.’

THERE may well seem to be something over-bold, even impudent, in the attempt to give an account of the different kinds of Spanish drama in one brief chapter. Its abundance alone would appear to render the effort vain, and the common elaborate classification of the plays into heroic, romantic, religious, of “cloak and sword,” and so forth, seems to imply the existence of a number of types distinct from one another, and calling for separate treatment. Yet though I cannot hope to be exhaustive, it is, in my opinion, possible to be at least not wholly inadequate. The task is materially facilitated by the great uniformity of the Spanish drama. No matter what the name may be, the action is much the

*The prevailing quality of the Spanish drama.*

same, and the characters do not greatly vary. It has been said that Calderon's personages are all like bullets cast in a mould; and though this, as is the case with most sweeping assertions, fails to take notice of the exceptions, it has much truth, and may ✓ be applied to others. The Spanish drama is above all a drama of action, conducted by fixed types. Juan de la Cueva had said in a spirit of prophecy that the artful fable was the glory of the Spanish stage, and Lope appeared in good time to prove him right. The types who move in the action are the *Dama*, the *Galan*, the *Barba*, and the *Gracioso*—the Lady, the Lover, the Old Man, and the Clown. They have the stage to themselves in the *comedia de capa y espada*. This phrase, when translated into French or English, has an air of romance about it which is somewhat mis- ✓ leading. The cloak and sword were the distinctive parts of the dress of the private gentleman. *Caballero de capa y espada* was the man about town of our own Restoration plays, who is neither great noble, churchman, nor lawyer. The *comedia de capa y espada* was then the genteel comedy of Spain. But the *Dama*, the *Galan*, the *Barba*, and the *Gracioso* figure in every kind of play, even in those of religion. ✓ By these is meant the stage drama turning on some religious motive, and not the *auto sacramental*, which was a mystery differing from those of the Middle Ages only in this, that it was written by men of letters on whom, and on whose art, the Renaissance had had its influence. In the Romantic plays there is more passion, and the sword is more often out of its scabbard, but we find the same

types, the same general action. Spain produced a certain number of plays approaching our own comedy of humours. These are the *comedias de figuron*. *La Verdad Sospechosa* and the *Lindo Don Diego* are the best known examples. But here again the "humour"—the *figuron*—is placed in the midst of the stock types and the customary action.

To show what these types and this action were in general terms would be easy enough, but perhaps a better, and certainly a more entertaining, method is to take half-a-dozen typical plays, and to give such an

*Typical* analysis of them as may enable the reader  
*examples.* to appreciate for himself that skilful construction of plot at which the Spaniards aimed, and to judge how far it is true that however much the subject differed, the *dramatis personæ* did not greatly vary. For this purpose it is not necessary to take what is best but what is most characteristic. I have selected as an example of the comedy of lively complicated action the *Dama Melindrosa*, which may be translated 'My Lady's Vapours,' by Lope de Vega; as a romantic play, the *Tejedor de Segovia*—'The Weaver of Segovia,'—by Juan Ruiz de Alarcon; as a religious play, the *Condenado por Deseonfiado*—'Damned for want of Faith'—of Tirso de Molina; for the play which has "honour" for its motive, the *A Secreto Agravio Secreta Venganza*—'A Secret Vengeance for a Hidden Wrong'—of Calderon. The *Dama Melindrosa* draws a little towards the *comedia de figuron*, but it is none the less a perfect specimen of the cloak-and-sword comedy, and a good example of Lope. It is chosen also because

it possesses a plot sufficiently entangled to show the Spanish *enredo* (*i.e.*, tangle), and yet not so complicated as to be obscure in the telling. Specimens of the romantic, and religious, play might have been easily found in Calderon, but to show the general quality of a literature, we must not confine ourselves to the greater men. There remain the *auto sacramental*, and the short interludes, which under various names surrounded, and enlivened, the *comedia*. For the first we must go to Calderon, and none seems more fit to show what the Renaissance had done with these survivals of the Middle Ages than the *Verdadero Dios Pan*—‘The True God Pan.’ For an example of the smaller pieces we can take the *Dos Habladores*—‘The Two Chatterers’—of Cervantes, who excelled in this, and only in this, dramatic form.<sup>1</sup>

Belisa, the Dama Melindrosa, the lady with the vapours, of Lope’s comedy, is the daughter of a rich widow, Lisarda, and she has a brother, Don Juan. The brother spends his nights serenading ladies, in company with his friend Eliso, and lies in bed till midday. Belisa has hitherto refused all the husbands proposed by her mother, giving more or less fantastical reasons in each case, and is a very airy whimsical young person. In the first scene of the play Lisarda confides her troubles with her children to her brother Tiberio, the *barba*—beard, or old

<sup>1</sup> Those who wish to make a closer acquaintance with the minor forms of the Spanish play may be referred to the *Entremeses, Loaas, y Jácaras*, of Don Luis Quiñones de Benavente (— ?-1652), edited by Don C. Rosell in the *Libros de Antaño*. Madrid, 1872.

man—of the piece. Lisarda professes her desire to get her children married and settled in life, in order that she may retire to the country with one gentlewoman and a slave, there to bewail her lost lord (who, we learn, has been dead for about a year), like the tender turtle on a thorn. Tiberio pooh-poohs his sister's sentiments, and makes the unsympathetic remark that widows generally seem to find solitude a thorn, to judge by their perpetual fidgeting, but offers to use his influence to persuade Belisa to marry. Then follows a scene with the young lady. She knows she is going to be sermonised, and puts on all her airs and graces. A chair is brought for Tiberio and cushions for the ladies, who squat on them in the old Spanish fashion. Mme. d'Aulnoy, the author of the fairy tales, who came to Spain as wife of the French Ambassador, has explained how intolerable she found this attitude. Belisa provokes her uncle, who has the usual peppery temper of the *barba*, into expressing a desire to box her ears, but will accept no husband. To this party enter an *alguacil*, or officer of police, with an *escribano*, a species of attorney and process-server. We learn that Lisarda has a claim on her son's friend Eliso, who owed her husband money, and will not pay it. She has therefore sued out a writ, and is sending the officers to seize a *prenda*, or pledge, which she can keep or sell for the discharge of the debt, if Eliso will not pay what he owes.

The scene now changes to the house of Eliso, who is found discussing with his servant Fabio the question whether it is better to pay the debt or

compound by marrying Belisa, with her vapours. His conversation is broken off by the hurried entry of Felisardo, sword in hand. He has found a Navarrese cavalier persecuting Celia, who is on her way home from church, with unwelcome attentions. The usual duel has followed. The Navarrese is on the pavement, and Felisardo is on his way to take sanctuary, bringing Celia with him to leave her under the protection of Eliso. Of course Eliso behaves like a gentleman, orders his front door to be shut in case the police-officers are in pursuit, and gives his friends refuge. He persuades the two to disguise themselves in the holiday dresses of his Morisco slaves, Pedro and Zara, who are absent on his estate. Meanwhile Fabio reports that there are police-officers below, and is sent down with orders to delay them as long as he can. Eliso has a soliloquy on the hazards of love, in the form of a half-burlesque sonnet in which all the last words are *esdrújulo*, accented on the antepenult. At last the *alguacil* is admitted, deeply angered by the delay, and announces that he has come to serve Lisarda's writ. Eliso is relieved, and tells him to take what he likes—and he takes the two supposed slaves. The scene now returns to Lisarda's house. She is much pleased by the intelligence of the *alguacil*, and the attractive appearance of the supposed Pedro and Zara. Belisa, too, is impressed by the gallant bearing of Felisardo, who enters into the game with spirit. Meanwhile Don Juan is at last up. He finds Celia among the servants, and on learning who she is supposed to be, observes that his

friend Eliso was wise not to let him see her. Of course he makes hyperbolic love to her at once. Celia is not pleased at the admiration of Lisarda's female servants for Felisardo, and he is jealous of Don Juan. And so the first act ends. Lope, it will be seen, has carried out his dramatic scheme so far with great success. He has introduced his persons, and knitted his intrigue. Everything has happened in a probable way, and there are infinite possibilities of complications and cross purposes.

The second act opens with Belisa's confession of her love for the supposed Pedro. It is made to the indispensable *confidante*, who, as a matter of course, is her servant Flora, the counterpart of the *gracioso*, and the *soubrette* of the French comedy. Belisa speaks largely in infantile little lines of six syllables. She explains and excuses her own *melindres* at considerable length, and asks Flora how to escape from a love which she feels is disgraceful, and half considers as a punishment for her whims. Flora makes the ferocious suggestion that she should insist on having Pedro branded on the face, after the manner of runaway slaves. This was a rebus formed of the letter s, pronounced "es," and a nail—*clavo*—which together make the word *esclavo*, a slave. The object of this precious device is to kill Belisa's love by degrading its object. The *melindrosa* hesitates, but finally takes her servant's counsel, and when her mother, who is as much in love with Pedro as herself, declines, threatens hysterics. Lisarda in despair applies to Tiberio, who advises that the rebus should be painted on the faces of the slaves,

which will quiet Belisa, and do no harm. In the meantime Eliso pays a visit to Lisarda. He has at last made up his mind to become Belisa's suitor. The mother warns him of her daughter's humours, but promises her help, insisting, however, that he must make her a present of the slaves, although he has now satisfied the debt. Eliso, who knows he gives nothing, consents with just sufficient appearance of reluctance to provoke the lady's wishes still further. He also drops hints that the slaves are not what they seem. In a short conversation with Felisardo, Eliso tells him that the Navarrese still lives, though in danger, that the police are seeking for him and Celia, and that they will be wise to stay where they are. They agree, and allow the infamatory mark to be painted on their faces. The play need no longer be told scene by scene, and could not be so told except at inconvenient length. Lisarda hankers after the man slave, and Don Juan makes furious love to Celia. Belisa finds her love is not cured by the supposed branding of Pedro, and is perpetually either making advances to him, or flying off in more or less affected hysterics. Celia for her part is jealous of the mother and daughter. She and her lover are twice surprised in talk, and have to use their wits to escape discovery. There is no small truth in the part Belisa plays. Lope accepted slavery as a matter of course, and was writing to amuse, not to enforce a moral, but he comes very near the best passages in that powerful book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,—the scenes which follow the death of St Clair. Mrs Beecher Stowe wrote to prove that slavery makes it



possible for a weak self-indulgent nature to be horribly brutal in act. Belisa is not allowed to go beyond whims. The second act ends by her insisting that an iron collar shall be put on Pedro's neck, which makes an effective "curtain," and no doubt left the audience highly excited as to what was coming next.

The third act opens with a scene between Lisarda and Eliso, who reproaches her with ill-treating the slaves, and repeats his warning that they are not what they appear to be. This only excites Lisarda in her determination to marry Pedro. Then Eliso is angered by Don Juan's servant Carrillo, the *gracioso* of the piece, who tells him that the slave is making love to Belisa. With a want of scruple too common with the Spanish *galan*, he eggs on Don Juan to persevere in his pursuit of Celia. Belisa also has begun to have her suspicions as to the real character of the slaves, but cannot believe that a free man and woman would allow themselves to be branded. Now follows a set of scenes hovering between farce and melodrama. In a more than usually exalted state of the vapours, Belisa pretends to faint, in order that Pedro may carry her to her room. She has first given him a ring. Pedro is not a little embarrassed, but finally takes her up with disgusted resignation, and is about to carry her to her room, when Celia comes in, and "makes him a scene of jealousy." Supposing the *melindrosa* to be insensible they address one another by their true names, and say some uncomplimentary truths of Belisa. At last Felisardo puts Belisa down on a sofa, as Celia insists upon it, gives his lady-love the

ring as a proof of his loyalty, and walks off to the stable. Belisa is furious, puzzled, but still doubtful. In a fit of rage she accuses Celia of stealing the ring, and the *dama* is in some danger of learning that it is perilous to play the part of slave. She is, of course, rescued from the officious Carrillo, who is eager to inflict the punishment ordered by his mistress, by Don Juan. The young gentleman is in high indignation, and swears that he will marry the slave. His mother, who means to do the same with Pedro, is not on that account the less angry with him. Being now thoroughly tired of Don Juan's rebellion and Belisa's whims, she begs the help of Tiberio to bring about her marriage with the slave. The helpful Tiberio has a resource. He has seen a gentleman named Felisardo about the court who is wonderfully like Pedro. Let the slave be dressed as a gentleman and introduced as Lisarda's proposed husband. In the meantime Don Juan has plotted with Eliso that Celia shall be helped to resume her true place, when he will of course marry her, and present his mother with the accomplished fact. After a well-handled passage of mutual reproaches between mother and daughter, there comes a stage device which the play-goer will recognise as now worn threadbare, but which is always effective. Lisarda decides that when Tiberio returns with Felisardo, whom she still believes to be the slave Pedro, she will put out the light by an affected accident, and seize the opportunity to make a declaration of love. What follows need hardly be told. The light is put out. Everybody says the wrong thing to everybody,

and when the candles are lit again the play is over. Felisardo is married to Celia, who arrives at the right moment. Belisa, her vapours being no longer heeded, consents to marry Eliso. Carrillo is paired off with Flora. Lisarda declares herself satisfied, and so the play being played out, the puppets return to their box.

Here, it will be allowed, is a play—and it is one of many—which may well have amused a Spanish audience for an afternoon. We may confess that this was its main purpose. Yet it is also amusing to read. Lope, indeed, wrote well. His verse in its various forms, including blank verse, which has been comparatively little written by other Spaniards, is accomplished, when haste did not make him careless; and it has the qualities of the prose of our own Vanbrugh—straightforward simplicity and natural ease. The actors must have found it pleasant to learn. His characters, again, have a respectable measure of general truth to human nature. They are not, indeed, the living persons we meet in Molière and Shakespeare. Even Belisa is only a *dama* with *melindres*, and as Celia is, so his other *damas* are; nor does one *galan*, *gracioso*, or *barba* differ essentially from another. Yet they are true, with the measure of truth possible to conventional types, and their doings are lively. The doings are always the essential thing. Whatever literary merit Lope's play may have, it is always strictly subordinate to the purely theatrical purpose, to the necessity of pleasing an audience by a lively action which must be full of surprises in the

details, but always intelligible in the general lines. Of this purely theatrical art he was a master. He knew how to bring about a good situation, how to lead up to an effective ending to his act, how to make the wildly improbable look probable on the boards. In so far he is very modern. The popular play of to-day, the French comedy of *quiproquo*, is only Lope's comedy of intrigue in modern trappings. It is never better in these qualities than his are at their best. He had discovered all the devices which the playwright finds more effective, and much easier to produce, than passion, or thought, or poetry. And he did at least present them in poetic form. He was the most poetic of playwrights, and the ancestor of all who write merely for the stage, whose aim it is to amuse, and to move by direct appeal to the eye, and the laughter, or tears, which lie near the surface.

The *enredo* supplied the canvas on which, or the background against which, the Spanish dramatist had to place whatever romantic, religious, or other figure or action he wished to present to his audience. In

the *Tejedor de Segovia*—'The Weaver of Segovia'—of Alarcon we have romance of the most approved type, the story of a gentleman who is driven by oppression to become a Robin Hood, a "gallant outlaw," and who finally earns pardon, and restoration to his honours, by service against the Moor. This is Don Fernando Ramirez, whose father has been unjustly put to death by the king Don Alfonso, at the instigation of the favourite, the Marques Suero Pelaez. It is supposed that Fernando has also been killed, but

he is living disguised as a weaver at Segovia, with his *dama* Teodora. A sister, Doña Ana Ramirez, is living in retirement near the town with a servant, Florinda. She is in love with the Count Don Julian, son of Suero Pelaez, who neglects her, and is tired of her. Don Julian has caught sight of Teodora, and has fallen in love with her in the usual fire-and-flames style. He is determined to carry her off, and when the play opens, is prowling about the weaver's house with his servant Fineo. Don Julian is convinced that a mere mechanic will not dare to resist the son of so powerful a man as Suero Palaez. As a matter of fact the weaver is absent, and Teodora is alone in the house with the servant Chinchon, the *gracioso* of the piece, and an accomplished specimen of the greed, cowardice, brag, and low cunning proper to the type. A moderately experienced reader of romance sees at once what the course of the story must be. The count endeavours to gain admittance. Chinchon the coward proves no protection. He is rather a traitor, and Teodora is assailed by the count, when the weaver returns. Fernando takes a high line with Don Julian, and when the count endeavours to carry things with a high hand, shows that, weaver as he appears to be, he can use a sword like a gentleman. The count and his servant are ignominiously driven into the streets. Then the storm breaks on the weaver. He is imprisoned, and Teodora has to fly to hiding. In prison the weaver finds Don Garceran de Miranda, and various others, who form the raw material of a model band of brigands. The courage and craft of Fernando

aiding, they all break out and take to "the sierra"—the hillside—which is the Spanish equivalent of our green wood. Through many adventures, each coming one out of the other, all the personages playing their part with that sense of the theatre which Lope had conveyed to his countrymen, Don Fernando works back to his own, and to revenge. It is a Robin Hood story, told by a Spaniard for the stage, and with Spanish types.

There are individual scenes of the best Spanish romance. One is that in which Suero Pelaez, the *barba*, the personification of austere Castilian honour and loyalty, reproaches his son with his disorderly life. Suero Pelaez is the typical *père noble*, the heavy father of the stage, comparable for rigid loftiness of sentiment to the Ruy Gomez of *Hernani*. Victor Hugo would have done the scene magnificently, and as Alarcon wrote it, it will stand comparison with the best of the French romantic plays. In another scene Teodora and Fernando are prisoners to the count, and she saves her lover by pretending to betray him. She asks to be allowed to kill him, and when supplied with a sword for that atrocious purpose, cuts his bonds and gives him the weapon—a *coup de théâtre* repeated with more or less disguise many thousands of times, but unflinching in its effect. In a more thoroughly Spanish scene, Fernando forces the count to do justice to his sister, Doña Ana, by promising to marry her, and having so salved the honour of his family, kills him in fair fight. Doña Ana displays the philosophy rarely wanting in the second *dama* at the end of a play.

While Don Julian was alive, honour required her to insist on marriage; but now that he is dead, and she has been righted, she is quite prepared to marry Don Garceran, who has gallantly played his part as Patroclus, Achates, Horatio, Amyas Leigh's Lieutenant Cary, or Jack Easy's friend Gascoigne—in short, hero's right-hand man. It is not *King Lear*, or even *Phèdre*, but it is very amusing reading, made of such stuff as romance is made of at all times.

With the play on a religious motive we come to what is far more alien to ourselves. In Tirso de Molina's

El Condenado  
por Descon-  
fiado.

*Condenado por Desconfiado* we have something which, at any rate in such a form as this, is unknown on the modern stage.

Paul the hermit is a man of thirty, who has fled from the world ten years ago, and is living in the practice of every austerity. Inappropriate as it may seem, he has with him a servant, Pedrisco, the *gracioso* of the piece, who differs in nothing from others of the same function on the Spanish stage. In the first scene Pedrisco is absent begging for the herbs on which the hermit lives. The play opens with a soliloquy by Paul, which is a rapid theatrical equivalent for Lord Tennyson's monologue of St Simeon Stylites. The hermit is troubled by no doubts on any point of faith, but he is racked by anxiety to feel assured that his austerities have earned him salvation, and we see that he has yielded to spiritual pride. After giving expression to his doubts and fears, through which there pierces an aggrieved sense that heaven owes him salvation, Paul retires to his cave. We have a buffoon

interlude from Pedrisco, who complains of his diet (the *gracioso* is ever a glutton), and tells us that he smuggles in something more substantial than herbs for his own consumption. Then he goes into his cave to eat, and Paul returns in great agitation. He has dreamt, and in his dream has been taken to the judgment-seat of heaven. There he has seen his good deeds weighed against his evil, and the good have proved by far the lighter. He breaks into a wild prayer for assurance, for a sign, which is by far the finest passage of verse in the play. It is strictly according to tradition that he should be heard by the enemy of mankind. The devil tells us that he is empowered to tempt the holy man, that vulgar temptations have failed, but that now Paul is wavering in his faith in the divine mercy, and he will tempt him in another way. A disappointment now awaits the reader, who expects a scene of temptation, and gets a device for helping on the action. Satan appears in the shape of an angel, and tells Paul to go to Naples. There at a certain place near the harbour he will meet one Enrico, son of Anareto. He is to watch that man, for as the fate of Enrico is, so will his own be, the devil being a liar from the beginning. Paulo wonders, but obeys, and departs with Pedrisco for Naples.

There we precede him, and find ourselves with two gentlemen at the door of Celia, who is a courtesan. From the conversation of these two we learn of her beauty, her rapacity, her great wit, and many accomplishments, as also that she is devoted to one Enrico, a ruffler, gambler, and bully, who beats and robs her.



One of the two gentlemen has never seen her, and after due warning from his friend, it is decided that they shall go in on pretence of asking Celia, who is a poetess, for some love verses to be sent to their *damas*. They go in, bearing gifts, and then Enrico bursts in with his follower Galvan. Enrico plays the bully to perfection, drives off the two gentlemen, and seizes their gifts to Celia, who wheedles and adores him as the most valiant of men. All this scene is full of vigour, and is written with astonishing gusto. When placated by Celia, Enrico promises her a feast on her own money, and sending for friends, they go out to the sea-shore by the harbour. Here Paulo is waiting, as he was directed by the fiend. There is a scene, very intelligible, and not at all ridiculous to a Spanish audience of the day, in which Paulo proves his Christian humility by throwing himself on the ground and telling Pedrisco to trample on him. Then Enrico and his riotous party burst on the scene. Enrico has just tossed a troublesome old beggar into the sea out of pure wickedness, and is in jovial spirits. He glories and drinks deep, bragging of his own sins, and extorting the admiration of Celia and the subordinate scoundrels who form the party. This, again, is an excellent scene, and not untrue to nature. Paul recognises the man with whose fate his own is bound up, and is horrified. He feels convinced that this man can never be saved, and revolts at thinking that after all his austerities he is to be lost. In an explosion of passion, not unhuman, and certainly very southern, he decides that he too will lead a life of

crime and make the world fear one who, "although just," has been condemned.

So ends the first act. In the second and third we have the perpetual contrast between the two men. Paulo has become a brigand, but is still in trouble about his soul. He has a warning by an angel, who appears in the shape of a shepherd-boy, and tells him a parable of the lost sheep. Paulo understands, but still his doubts haunt him. Meanwhile we learn, with some surprise, that Enrico has one virtue amid his thousand crimes—a tender affection for his old father. He refuses to kill an aged man, though he has taken pay to kill him. The old man's resemblance to his father disarms Enrico. When reproached by his employer he kills *him*. He has now to fly Naples, and in order to escape pursuit has to take to the water. Before plunging in he prays for God's mercy, for though a sinner Enrico has never doubted. Considerations of time and space troubled the Spanish dramatist but little. Enrico swims from Naples to the place where Paulo is camped with his band. He falls into the hands of the ex-hermit. Paulo now conceives a hope. If he can find that Enrico is repentant there will be a chance for his salvation. He causes his prisoner to be tied to a tree blindfold, in order that he may be shot to death, and then resuming his hermit's dress, exhorts him to prepare for death. But Enrico will not go beyond a general acknowledgment that the divine mercy can save him if God so pleases. Of confession and repentance he will not hear a word, but is in all respects a hardened sinner.

Paulo is again plunged into despair, and repeats his determination to exceed the crimes of Enrico, "since it is to be all one in the end." The words are trivial, but they contain blasphemy in the real sense. The close of the play finds Paulo still revolving his weary doubt, and Enrico in a dungeon waiting for execution. Here we have another very arbitrary and pointless scene of temptation. The fiend shows Enrico a means of escape, but he hears voices warning him to stay, and he stays. The scene has no purpose, for the devil makes no attack on the prisoner's faith, and Enrico remains still an unbending sinner. At last he yields to the prayers of his old father, confesses, and makes an edifying end. In the last scene, while Paulo soliloquises, the soul of Enrico is borne to heaven by two angels. But Paulo will not believe that so great a sinner can have been saved. He does not, it is true, see the vision, and has only the word of Pedrisco for Enrico's pious end. Then Paulo is killed by soldiers who are hunting him down. Flames are seen round his dead body, and his voice is heard announcing that he is lost for ever, "por desconfiado," as one who did not trust God's mercy.

The morality and doctrine of this play need not concern us here, all the more because they are not unfamiliar. There is some virtue in a name, for if the Maestro Tirso de Molina had called his play 'Justification by Faith,' as he well might, he would have been in peril of ending at the stake. Head of a house of Nuestra Señora de la Merced Calzada at Soria, as he was, his play might pass for an illus-

tration of Luther's much-debated "pecca fortiter." The purely literary interest of the piece is great. The scenes filled with the crimes and violence of Enrico are written with the greatest *brio*. Indeed this venerable churchman Gabriel Tellez excelled in drawing types, and more especially a type of woman, of the simple, sensuous, and passionate order. He appears to have had a strong sympathy with them, and a belief, less monastic than sound, that there was something better in their unfettered loyalty to nature than in the coward virtue of those who fly the battle. His Enrico is a better fellow from the first than the hermit. There is a manfulness about him which is more hopeful than the self-seeking, conventional piety of Paulo. Whether Tirso de Molina meant so much or not, his lost hermit is a vigorous rough sketch of the stamp of man who is not essentially good, but only very much afraid of hell-fire, and abjectly eager to escape it by acting according to rule. The play, it will be seen, does not differ essentially from the accepted model of the Spanish drama. There is no development of character. The action is imposed on the personages, not produced by them. Enrico does not repent in any real sense of the word. He only makes a pious end, because his father, whom he loves, persuades him, and the act is sufficient. As Paulo is at the beginning so he remains to the end.

With the play on the "point of honour" we return to more familiar regions. There are hundreds of modern comedies in which the leading personages are the lover, the wife, and the husband. But the

Spaniards were limited in their treatment of the theme. Neither the Church nor their own more than half-oriental sentiment permitted of the presentation of adultery as sympathetic, or even pardonable. When they took this subject it was only for the purpose of showing by a lively action how the husband vindicated his "honour." This honour, as has been already said, lay in the opinion the world had of him. Don Gutierre Alfonso, in the *Médico de su Honra*, kills his wife, not because he believes her guilty, but because she has been pursued by a lover and he will not have it said that this has been, and that he has not avenged himself. To do this effectually he must kill both—the innocent woman and the lover who sought to seduce her. If you ask Why? he answers "Mi opinion"—which means not what I believe, but what the world may believe of me—leaves me no choice. If I do not, it will say, There is a man whose wife was courted, and she lives. Where one failed another may succeed. There must be no doubt of my "honour." And so after a little complaint over the tyranny of the world he kills her with no more scruple than he would show in despatching a worthless horse or hound. The father, or brother, who is head of a house, is under the same obligation as the husband. His honour is concerned in seeing that his daughter or sister gives no occasion to the evil tongues of the world. In Calderon's very typical *comedia de capa y espada*, the *Dama Duende*—the 'Fairy Lady'—the heroine is a young and beautiful widow living with a brother, who keeps her in a separate set of rooms in

his house, and will not let her be seen. She accepts this tyranny as a matter of course, and has no more doubt of her brother's right to control, and if she is found disobeying his orders, to punish her, than she would have had of a husband's. How far all this gives a true picture of the society of the time has been a debated question. It certainly was the picture which that society liked to see drawn of itself. We may accept it as giving no more than an exaggerated theatrical representation of truth. Spain is a country of the Roman law, which allows a husband to kill an unfaithful wife and her lover. It had also been affected by the long Moorish dominion, and the women of all ranks were certainly less independent than in England. In the higher classes they were, and in provincial towns where ancient customs linger, still are, much secluded.

None of the many plays in which Calderon set forth this conception of honour is more interesting than *A Secreto Agravio Secreta Venganza*.

*A Secreto*

*Agravio Secreta*

*Venganza.*

The action takes place in Portugal in the reign of Don Sebastian, just before that king sails on his disastrous expedition to Africa. Don Lope de Almeida, a Portuguese gentleman of great fortune, has made a contract of marriage with Doña Leonora de Guzman, a Castilian lady. He has never seen his future wife, who is travelling to Lisbon under the escort of Don Lope's uncle, Don Bernardino, when the play opens. In the first scene Don Lope informs the king of his approaching marriage, and asks leave not to accompany him on his

invasion of Morocco. Then after a brief conversation with his servant Manrique, the inevitable *gracioso*, he catches sight of an old friend, Don Juan de Silva, who comes on the stage poorly dressed. Don Lope greets him warmly, and with some difficulty learns his story. In a long speech, disfigured, according to a fault too common with Calderon, by repetitions, apostrophes, and frigid ornament, Don Juan explains that at Goa he has killed the son of the governor, and has been compelled to fly, leaving his possessions, and is a ruined man. The provocation was great, for Manuel de Sousa had given him the lie. Don Juan describes how he drew at once and killed the insulter on the spot—not, be it observed, in a duel, but by a thrust delivered before Sousa could draw his sword. A passage of this speech is very necessary for the understanding of the play. Don Juan breaks into an outcry against “the tyrannical error of men,” the folly of the world, which allows honour to be destroyed by a breath. He labours the point, he repeats himself to insist that his honour was destroyed when he was called a liar, and that though he avenged himself in the not very heroic fashion described, still it will remain the fact that he has been called a liar. At a later stage of the play this works. For the present Don Lope gives his old friend refuge, and tells him of his marriage. We are now introduced to Doña Leonor, and learn that she has had a lover, in all honour of course, Don Luis de Benavídes. He, she thinks, is dead on an expedition to Africa. She is marrying because she is forced, but will carry his love to the

altar. Beyond that it shall not go, for it would touch her honour. But Don Luis is not dead. He appears, and makes himself known to her by pretending to be a diamond-merchant, and sending her by the hand of Don Bernardino a ring she has formerly given him. There is a scene of reproach and explanation between them, but Doña Leonor is loyal to honour so far. Her husband now comes on the scene, and greets her with a sonnet, to which she answers with another of double meaning. It is addressed both to Don Luis and her husband—each may read it his own way, the first as a farewell, the second as a promise of faithful obedience. Don Luis decides to follow her to Portugal and die for his love, if die he must. So the personages being introduced, and the intrigue on foot, the first act ends.

Now Don Luis establishes himself near the house of Don Lope, and is for ever prowling about the neighbourhood. Don Lope sees him, and wonders what he is doing. He suspects wrong at once, for the wronged husband of these plays is not of a free and noble nature. From the Spanish, and Italian, point of view he who is not suspicious is credulous, and a fool. Yet he will not believe at once, his wife being what she is, and he what he is. He shows his confidence by asking his wife's leave to join the king's expedition to Africa. Leonor gives it, and he sees no danger. But his friend Don Juan does. He drops a hint that it is strange the lady should be ready to part with her husband so soon. Again Don Lope is set speculating and wondering. Meanwhile Don Luis has been persecuting Leonor for a last



interview, and she agrees to see him in the house, in the early morning, when she thinks she will not be discovered by her husband. Don Luis comes and is caught by Don Lope, but invents a story to the effect that he has taken refuge in the house to escape an enemy. Don Lope pretends to believe, but does not, and warns Don Luis plainly enough, though not in direct terms, that he will permit no trifling with his honour. Now the action advances very rapidly. Don Juan warns Don Lope by putting the supposed case of a man who knows that an insulting word has been used of a friend, who has not heard it, and asking whether he ought to be told. Don Lope advises silence, because the more an offence to honour is repeated, the worse. But he knows what is meant, and makes his mind up to take a secret revenge for the secret wrong when once he is sure. The king refuses to take him to Africa, on the ground that he is more needed in his own house. "Is my wrong already so public?" is Don Lope's comment.

Now a very skilful use is made of Don Juan's story to influence the mind of Don Lope. Don Juan hears himself described by two cavaliers as the man to whom the lie was given by Manuel de Sousa. He draws, kills one, and drives the other off. Then, in a paroxysm of grief, he once more complains to Don Lope of the injustice which compels the insulted man to bear the stigma of a public insult for ever. This incident confirms Don Lope's intention to be secret in his revenge, lest it should make his wrong known. Fortune throws a chance in his way. Doña Leonor,

encouraged by what she believes has been her escape from discovery, invites Don Luis to meet her on the other side of the river in a garden. He comes on the stage reading her letter, and meets Don Lope. The husband does not know what is in the letter, but he suspects. He invites Don Luis to cross the river with him, pushes off without the boatman, stabs his enemy in mid-stream, and upsets the boat. Then he swims ashore to the garden where his wife is waiting for Don Luis. To her he tells a story of an accident, and gives her the name of the Castilian gentleman who has perished. Leonor faints, and thus confirms Lope's belief that she meant to betray him. He pretends that her anxiety was for himself; but that night he fires his house, strangles his wife in the confusion, and appears from among the flames bearing her body in his arms, pretending that she has been stifled by the smoke. The scene between husband and wife is not given. At the end he tells the king what has happened as to the death of Don Luis, and says that being no longer needed in his own house he is ready to sail for Africa. Don Sebastian approves of his hidden vengeance for the secret wrong, and we are left to suppose that Don Lope goes to perish at Alcázar el Quebir.

This is a powerful drama, and a good example of Calderon's command of stage effect. It is written in the finished poetic form with which he replaced the free-flowing dialogue of Lope de Vega. The defect of this lay in the temptation it afforded to redundancy and undramatic ornament, but it has a sparkling

icy beauty of its own. There is no development, even very little play, of character. The interest lies in the consistent working of a fierce, sullen, suspicious jealousy.

The *Auto Sacramental* is very Spanish, very remote from us. These mysteries were performed during the month containing the feast of Corpus Christi in the streets, not in the theatres, which were shut at this time, but they were acted by professional actors. "Andar en los carros"—to go in the cars—was the regular phrase used by the actors for this form of their work. The cars were elaborate structures, covered, but capable of being opened to show scenes, and of letting down drawbridges which served as the stage. They were taken to different parts of the town, so that performances might be given in the squares, or before the houses of distinguished people.

*The True God Pan* may represent for us what the *Auto Sacramental* had become in Calderon's hands when his genius was at its fullest development.<sup>1</sup> Calderon was fond of taking classical myths for his *autos*, and treating them as symbols of things to come since fulfilled. He used the story of Psyche and Cupid, and also the Andromeda. The application of the myth of Pan to Christianity was not uncommon in the Renaissance. Pan in Spanish means "bread," and the *auto* was especially meant to set

<sup>1</sup> Vol. v. of *Autos Sacramentales* de Don P. Calderon, published by Don Juan Fernandez de Apontes, Madrid, 1757-1760—five years before the public performance of *autos* was forbidden by Charles III.

forth the mystery of the Sacrament. This play on words is the key to the whole *auto*. If the reader thinks the conceit puerile, and of more than dubious taste, he must remember that he is asked to look not at what would please us, but at what did please the Spaniards, — what was accepted by their still mediæval simplicity of piety, and was in keeping with their love for playing on words. First came the *loa* or praise. This was an introductory piece, sometimes delivered by a single speaker, sometimes containing a little action. It was common on the secular stage, but had no necessary connection with the piece to follow, being only part of the surroundings and dependencies of the *comedia*. Calderon's *loa* was a regular introduction to the *auto*. In *The True God Pan* there are five personages in the *loa* — History, Poetry, Fable, Music, and Truth. History, the *dama*, begins by announcing that in this time of general joy it becomes her to speak, since she by the mouth of Paul and John has told how the Bread (Pan) became flesh, and the Word had become flesh. She calls in Music and the other personages. A forfeit dance takes place—that is to say, all sing as they dance, and each who makes a fault is called upon to pay a small forfeit. This was, and is, a form of amusement in Spain. The songs all refer to the mystery of the Sacrament, and the faults are the successive departures of Music, Poetry, and the others from the Catholic truth. Fable promises to pay her forfeit by telling one of her stories, and beginning with the

Spanish once upon a time — “Érase que se era” — gives an allegorised version of the myth of Pan. Poetry promises an *auto* on the same subject, to show that the heathen had foreknowledge of our pure truths, but being blind, without the light of Faith, applied them to their own False Gods. The *auto* shall be on the True God Pan. With a loyal address to Charles the Consoler—the unhappy Carlos II., then a small boy, before whom the *auto* was performed—the *loa* ends.

The personages of the *auto* are—Pan, Night, the Moon, the World, Judaism, Synagogue, Heathenism, *El Verdadero* Idolatry, Apostasy, Malice, Simplicity, the *Dios Pan.* Fiend, Faith, a child, shepherds, shepherdesses, with musicians and attendants. Pan comes out of a tent, and begins by a lyric appeal to Night. Night comes, and Pan explains that his birth was at Bethlehem, which in Hebrew means house of grain, and from that point goes on to allegorise, in a fashion which it is difficult to interpret, out of its own proper language of piety and poetry, without offence. He asks Night to lead him to the Moon, and then again allegorises, explaining that she is Luna in heaven, Diana on earth, and Proserpine in hell, therefore the type of human nature, which dwells on earth, aspires to heaven, and can sink to the infernal regions. Night refuses, telling him that all the country is ravaged by a monster of whom Paul, Chrysostom, and Saint Augustine speak. Here we have an example of those “impertinences” which excited the ridicule of Madame

D'Aulnoy, who would, no doubt, have found Ben Jonson's masques "impertinent." Pan recognises the monster as "Sin," and announces that he will retire to the desert while the Gentiles sing to their false gods. The last words are taken up by a chorus, and we have now a scene at the altar of the Moon. Judaism, Heathenism, Synagogue, and the others appear, only to quarrel and debate. The *auto* goes on, with constant interludes of singing and dancing. The monster "Sin" is heard of, ravaging the flocks. All prove hireling shepherds except Pan, who appears to help Luna in her distress. There is a scene of defiance between him and the Fiend, quite in the style of the *comedia* when *galan* is opposed to *galan*. The Fiend flies, leaving the trunk of a tree with which he meant to strike down Pan. The comic element is not wanting. Judaism takes up the weapon which the Fiend has dropped, and threatens Pan with it, but he only succeeds in knocking down, and killing, Synagogue. Then he carries off the body, saying in an aside that though all the world knows Synagogue is dead, yet he will always consider him as alive. Judaism rejects Pan, and Apostasy will not be persuaded that Flesh can be Bread. Apostasy, of course, stands for the heretics who will not accept the doctrine of transubstantiation. But Heathenism is persuaded, and Luna, typifying human nature, believes. Pan takes her as "spouse," and both ascend to the celestial mansions.

The *entremes*—interlude or farce—was by nature a slight thing. In the *Dos Habladores*—'The Two

Chatterers'—of Cervantes we have the simple story of a gentleman who is plagued in the streets by a ragged gabbler of insufferable fluency. He makes several attempts to shake him off without success, but at last sees how to make use of him. Sarmiento, the pestered gentleman, has a talkative wife. He takes the bore home, introduces him as a poor relation, and sets him at her. Roldan the chatterer drives the woman frantic by torrents of talk which leave her no chance to speak. The merit of the piece on the stage lay no doubt in the opportunity it presented for “patter” and comic acting. Yet the *entremeses*—not this one only, but the whole class—have great literary interest as store-houses of vivid, richly coloured, familiar Castilian.

A drama which flowered for a century, and was so productive as the Spanish, cannot be fully illustrated by six examples. Yet these may serve to show the reader what he may expect to find there. Much he will not find, or will find only in passing indications. Perfection of poetic form in the verse is too rare; the more than human beauty of the Elizabethan lyric, the “mighty line,” whether of Marlowe, Shakespeare, or Corneille, the accomplishment of Molière or Racine, are wanting. The personages are constantly recurring types, with here and there a humour. The Juan Crespo of Calderon's *Alcalde de Zalamea* stands almost alone among the characters of the Spanish stage as a being of the real world fixed for us by the poet. What has been called the *au delà* of Molière, and what is

found in the very greatest masters—the something which transcends the mere action before us, and is immortally true of all human nature—is not on the Spanish stage. But there is much good verse, easy, with a careless grace, and spirited in Lope, or stately with a peculiar Spanish dignity in Calderon; there is a fine wind of romance blowing all through, and there is ingenious, unresting, yet lucid action. If it never reaches the highest level of our Elizabethan drama, neither does it fall to the vacant horseplay which is to be found side by side with the tragedy of Marlowe or Middleton. And though this essentially theatrical drama cannot be said to have held the mirror up to nature, yet it does give a picture of the time and the people, adapted and coloured for the boards, but still preserving the likeness of the original. This may be said to be its weakness. Spanish dramatic literature is so much a thing of Spain, and of the seventeenth century, that it must needs appeal the less on that account to other peoples and later times. None the less the spectacle is picturesque in itself, while the great theatrical dexterity of the Spanish playwrights will always make their work interesting to all who care for more than the purely literary qualities of drama. The religion of the Spaniard is conspicuous in his plays. It has been said that Calderon was the poet of the Inquisition, and if this is not said as mere blame, it conveys a truth. That solution of the riddle of the painful earth which A. W. Schlegel professed to have found



in him, is no doubt only the teaching of the mediæval Church. We may on this account decline very properly to receive him as a deeper thinker than Shakespeare, but that teaching of the Church, to which the Inquisition strove to confine all Spaniards, had been the guide and consolation of all civilised Europe. To have given it a lofty poetical expression for the second time, as Dante had for the first, was no contemptible feat.

## CHAPTER V.

## SPANISH PROSE ROMANCE.

PASTORALS AND SHORT STORIES—THE ORIGINAL WORK OF THE SPANIARD—THE “LIBROS DE CABALLERÍAS”—THE ‘AMADIS OF GAUL’—FOLLOWERS OF ‘AMADIS OF GAUL’—INFLUENCE AND CHARACTER OF THESE TALES—THE REAL CAUSE OF THEIR DECLINE—THE CHARACTER OF THE “NOVELAS DE PÍCAROS”—THE ‘CELESTINA’—‘LAZARILLO DE TORMÉS’—‘GUZMAN DE ALFARACHE’—THE FOLLOWERS OF MATEO ALEMAN—QUEVEDO—CERVANTES—HIS LIFE—HIS WORK—THE MINOR THINGS—‘DON QUIXOTE.’

THE mere bulk of the Spanish stories was great, but it is subject to many deductions before we can disentangle the permanently important part. Pastorals, for instance, were much written in Spain, and one, the *Diana*<sup>1</sup> of Jorge de Montemayor (1520?-1561?), is excellent in its insipid kind. But they were and could be only echoes of Sannazzaro. In estimating the literature of any nation we can afford to pass over what it has only taken from a neighbour with a notice that the imitation was made. The merit of creating the type, be

<sup>1</sup> There is a pretty and not uncommon edition of the *Diana* published at Madrid by Villalpando in 1795.

it great or little, belongs to the original. Even when an imitator is himself widely read, as was the case with Montemayor, he is but carrying on the work of the first master. Short stories, again, were popular enough in Spain; but to a large extent they, too, were imitations. The *Patrañuelo*—‘The Story-Teller’—of Juan de Timoneda, or the *Cigarrales de Toledo* of Tirso de Molina, are full of the matter of the *Fabliaux* and the Italian *Novelli*.<sup>1</sup> What the Spaniard did which was also a contribution to the literature of Europe was done neither in the pastoral nor in the short story, but in the long tale of heroic or of vulgar adventure. His are the *Libros de Caballerías*—‘Books of Knightly Deeds’—which are the parents of the true modern romance; and the *Novelas de Pícaros*, or, ‘Tales of Rogues,’ the counterpart, and even perhaps a little the burlesque of the first, are the ancestors of all the line which comes through *Gil Blas*. Then his was *Don Quixote*, which belongs to no class, but is at once universal and a thing standing by itself, a burlesque of the *Libros de Caballerías* which grew into a sadly humorous picture of human delusion, and was also an expression of the genius of Miguel de Cervantes.

The books of Chivalry, or of Knightly Deeds, which is perhaps the more accurate translation of the Spanish plural *Caballerías*, like the Romances, cannot be said

<sup>1</sup> The *Patrañuelo* is reprinted by Ochoa in his *Tesoro de Novelistas Españoles*, Paris, 1847, vol. i. He also gives one story from Tirso de Molina—*The Three Deceived Husbands*. It is a *fabliau*. A *Cigarral* was the name given to a country villa near Toledo.

to belong to the literature of the Renaissance. They were a survival of the Middle Ages, the direct successors of the *Romans d'Aventures*, which had sprung from the *Chansons de Gestes*.

The Arthurian stories of Lancelot and of Merlin were known to the Spaniards, and had an enduring popularity by the side of their own Tales of Chivalry. There is even one book belonging in essential to the school which certainly preceded the *Amadis*. This is the Valencian *Tirant lo Blanch*, written in Catalan, of which the first three books are the work of Juan Martorell, and the fourth was added by Mosen Juan de Galbá, at the request of a lady, Isabel de Loriz. It was printed in Valencia in 1490, was translated into Spanish, though with suppressions, and had the rather curious fortune to be published in a French version in 1737 by a gentleman whose own name was not unworthy of a *Libro de Caballerías*, A. C. P. Tubières de Grimoard de Pestels de Levi, Count of Caylus.

Here it is, perhaps, but fair to warn the reader of the extreme difficulty of making more than a slight acquaintance with these once widely read tales. Popularity and neglect have alike been fatal to them. They were thumbed to pieces while they were liked, and thrown aside as worthless when the fashion had changed. Single copies alone remain of some, as, for instance, the curious 'Don Florindo, he of the Strange Adventure,' of which Don Pascual de Gayangos gives a long analysis. Even Don Pascual had never seen the Spanish original of the once renowned *Palmerin of England*. Southey was compelled to make up his

*Palmerin* by correcting Anthony Munday's translation from a French version. Surviving copies are scattered in the public libraries, and it is probable that nobody has seen them all. So we must speak with a certain reserve concerning them, but yet with a tolerably well-founded conviction that what one has not seen does not differ in material respects from what has come in one's way.

It is not the matter of these tales, but the spirit, which attaches them to the Middle Ages. Knights and damsels errant, dwarfs, dragons, giants, and enchanters were not neglected by the poets of the Italian Renaissance, but they were dealt with in gaiety, and more than half in mockery. But the *Libros de Caballerias*. *de Caballerias* are very serious. Chivalry was not to their authors an old dream, but a still living standard of conduct, and they carried on the tradition of the Middle Ages with absolute sincerity.

When the *Libros de Caballerias* are described as the direct descendants of the *Romans d'Aventures*, it must be understood that this does not imply that the actual story had its origin out of Spain. We cannot say stories, because there is in reality only one, which was constantly rewritten, with changes which in the majority of cases hardly go beyond the names. There is one parent story closely imitated by the others, and that is the *Amadis of Gaul*.<sup>1</sup> The honour of the first invention has been claimed by the French, on the general

<sup>1</sup> *Libros de Caballerias* in the *Biblioteca de Ribadeneyra*, with an exhaustive introduction by Don Pascual de Gayangos, vol. xl.

ground that their influence in Spain and Portugal was great, and that therefore they must not only have carried the taste for tales of chivalrous adventure beyond the Pyrenees, but have created all the stories and personages. But the French Amadis has been lost, and though that may be his only defect, it suffices to leave us entitled to doubt whether he ever existed, except in the patriotic French literary imagination. What is certain is that Amadis was a popular hero of romance with the Castilians and Portuguese before the end of the fourteenth century. It also appears to be put beyond doubt that a version of the story was written by Vasco de Lobeira, a Portuguese gentleman who died in 1403. Whether it was the first, or was a version of a Castilian original, or whether the French, who were then very numerous both in Castile and Portugal, and had an undeniable influence on the poetry of both countries, and more especially of the second, did not at least inspire Vasco de Lobeira, are questions which can be debated for ever by national vanity, without settlement. The *Amadis of Gaul*, which belongs to literature, and not to the inane region of suppositions, disputes, and lost manuscripts, is the work of Garcia Ordoñez de Montalvo, of Medina del Campo in Leon. It was announced as an adaptation from the Portuguese. As the manuscript of Vasco de Lobeira was lost in the destruction of the Duke of Arveiro's library in the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755, we cannot tell how far Montalvo followed, or improved upon, or did not improve upon, his original. Indeed, in the absence of

a Portuguese manuscript, it is impossible to be sure that the Spanish author did not adopt the common device of presenting his work as a translation, when in fact it was wholly his own. It is certainly strange, considering the immense popularity of the *Amadis of Gaul* all over Europe, that the Portuguese did not vindicate their right to him by publishing Vasco de Lobeira, since the manuscript was known to exist, and to be accessible in the library of a great noble.

Be all that as it may, we are on firm ground when we come to the proved facts concerning the actual writing of the Spanish *Amadis*. It belongs to the years between 1492 and 1504. The first known edition, that of Rome, is dated 1519; but it is unlikely, though not impossible, that there had not been a Spanish predecessor. There is a known edition of the first of the rival *Palmerin* series, which is dated 1511. What is beyond doubt is that its popularity was immediate and widespread. Spain produced twelve editions in fifty years. It was translated in French and Italian with immense acceptance. One of the best known stories of lost labour and disappointment in literature is that Bernardo Tasso, the father of Torquato, founded a considerable reputation on the fact that he had undertaken to make the *Amadis* the foundation of an epic, which reputation endured until the appearance of the poem.

As if in direct imitation of the mediæval custom, Amadis was made the founder of a family. Montalvo gave the world the deeds of his son Esplandian in 1526, and from another hand came in the same year

his nephew, Florisando, and then a long line, reaching to the twelfth book. The succession in France was even longer, for it reached the twenty-fourth. Beside the house of Amadis, there arose and flourished the distinguished family known as the Palmerines. The first two of this series, the *Primaleon* and the *Palmerin de Oliva*, are said to have been the work of a lady of "Augustobriga, a town in Portugal." But her name and very existence are uncertain, while neither of the places called Augustobriga in the time of the Roman dominion in the Peninsula is in Portugal. The most famous of this line, the *Palmerin of England*, was for long attributed to a Portuguese, Francisco de Moraes, who after a rather distinguished public career was murdered at Evora in 1572; but it was probably the work of a Spaniard, Luis Hurtado of Toledo. It was the confusing habit of the authors of these tales to call them the fifth, or sixth, or other, "book" of *Amadis*, or of *Primaleon*. Sometimes rival fifths or sixths appeared, and translators did not follow the Spanish numeration. Hence much trouble to the faithful historian. Yet the family history can be followed with tolerable accuracy. Don Pascual de Gayangos has been at the pains to make a regular pedigree for both, showing the main lines and collateral branches. It is a satisfaction to be able to state with confidence that the lady Flérida, daughter of Palmerin de Oliva, married Don Duardos (Edward), son of Frederick, King of England, and of a sister of Melèadus, King of Scotland, and that Palmerin of England was their son. He again married Polinarda, and was the father of Don Duardos de



Bretaña II., who was the father of Don Clarisel. The *Palmerin* series, by the way, is much less rich than the *Amadis* in those superb names which are not the least of the pleasures of the Tales of Chivalry. It rarely rises to the height of Cadragante, or Manete the Measured, or Angriote de Estravaus, and never to the level of the Queen Pintiquinestra, or the Giant Famon-gomadan, whom Cervantes had in his mind when he imagined Brandabarbaran de Boliche. The stories independent of these two series are numerous, though less numerous than the reader who has not looked into the matter may suppose. Their names—and that is all which survives of some—will be found in their proper places in the lists of Don Pascual de Gayangos.

It will be seen that much of this work is either anonymous, or is attributed on vague evidence to authors of whom the name only is known. The chief exception is the Feliciano de Silva at whose style Cervantes laughed. It happens that something is known of Feliciano, and that it is to his honour. He was page to the sixth Duke of Medina Sidonia, and he saved the Duchess from being drowned in the Guadalquivir at the risk of his own life; which, it will be allowed, was an action not unworthy of the author of *Libros de Caballerías*. He wrote the *Lisuarte de Grecia*, the *Amadis de Grecia*, and several others, including the *Florisel de Niquea*. Feliciano was an industrious man of letters, who would have been a useful collaborator with, and fairly successful imitator of, Dumas, had time and chance suited. He adulterated his tales of knightly deeds by im-

itations of the pastoral model, and his style certainly laid him open to the ridicule of Cervantes. Yet it is not more pompous and mechanical than our own Lyly, and is better than the manner of some of the *Novelas de Pícaros*.

✓ None of the commonplaces in the history of literature are better established than these: that the *Libros de Caballerías* were tiresome and absurd; that they appeared in immense numbers, and flooded out all better and more wholesome reading; and that they were killed by *Don Quixote*. Yet there are probably not three worse founded commonplaces. That these books can be tedious, and that the worst of them can be very tedious, is true. But none are more long-winded than the *Golden Epistles*, which had an equally great popularity, or than some well-accepted reading of any generation is apt to look to later times, when fashion has changed. They were certainly neither more tiresome nor more essentially absurd than the *Novela de Pícaros*. Their number was not very great. The whole body is not nearly as numerous as the yearly output of novels to-day in England; and even when their inordinate length is allowed for, their total bulk is not greater, though they were written during a century. As for their supposed predominance, it must be remembered that the great time of the *Libros de Caballerías* was also the time of the "learned poetry" of Spain, of the growth of the drama, of most of the *romances*, and of some of the best work of the historians and the mystic writers. That *Don Quixote*

*Influence and character of these Tales.*

destroyed them may seem to be a truth too firmly established to be shaken, and yet the contrary proposition, that it was the waning popularity of the Tales of Knightly Deeds which made *Don Quixote* possible, is on the whole more consistent with fact. They had been less and less written for a generation before Cervantes produced his famous First Part. The *Novela de Picaros* was taking their place. Readers were pre-disposed to find them laughable, and therefore enjoyed the burlesque. Cervantes' own half-humorous boast has been taken too seriously. The ridicule of the *Libros de Caballerías* is the least valuable part of *Don Quixote*, and is not in itself better than much satire which has yet failed to destroy things more deserving of destruction than the family of *Amadis*.

Neither the popularity nor the decline of the *Libros de Caballerías* was in the least unintelligible. These books supplied the Spaniards with stories of fighting and adventure in a fighting adventurous time, when the taste for reading, or at least hearing others read, was spreading, and when the theatre—the only possible rival—was still in its feeble beginnings. And what they gave was not only suited to the time but not inferior to what came after. The English reader who wishes to put it to the test has an easy way open to him. Let him take the adaptations which Southey made of *Amadis of Gaul*, or *Palmerin of England*, and compare them, not with Sir Walter Scott, who showed what a great genius could do with a motive not unlike that of the *Libros de Caballerías*; not with *Gil Blas*, which shows what genius could do with the machinery

of the *Novela de Pícaros*; not with *Don Quixote*, which is for all time,—but with an English version of the *Guzman de Alfarache*, the book which first firmly established the *gusto picaresco* at the very close of the sixteenth century. He will find much repetition (though Southey, who made one or two notable additions, has suppressed largely) in both, but in the *Guzman* it is endless sordid roguery, in which there is no general human truth, and in place of it a mechanical exaggeration of a temporary form of Spanish vagabondage, while in the *Amadis* or *Palmerin* it is something not unlike the noble fancies of the Arthurian legend.

The decline of the *Libros de Caballerías* is easily accounted for. They ended by wearying the world with monotony, and the increasing extravagance of incident and language, which was their one resource for avoiding monotony. The Spaniard's tendency to repeat stock types in the same kind of action was visible here as elsewhere. The *Amadis* gave the pattern, and it was followed. A hero who is the son of a king, and is also a model of knightly prowess and virtues, with a brother in arms who, while no less valiant, is decidedly less virtuous, are the chief figures. Amadis, the Bel-tenebros—the lovely dark man—is the pink of loyalty to his peerless Oriana, who is the fairest and most loving of women. Galaor is gay and volatile, light of love, but loyal in friendship. Amadis is born out of wedlock, and left to fortune by his mother, or for some other reason brought up far away from the

*The real cause  
of their decline.*

throne which is lawfully his, and fights his way to his crown without ever failing for an instant in his devotion to Oriana. Galaor helps him, and loves what ladies he meets on the road. Amadis breathes out his mistress's name as he lays his lance in rest, Galaor throws a defiant jest in front of him; Amadis has the gift of tears, but Galaor laughs in the jaws of death, laughs in fact at everything except the honour of a gentleman—and on that he smiles. It is a brotherhood between Sir Charles Grandison and Mercutio. Combats, giants, fairy ladies, enchanters good and bad, make up the matter of the story. If it is essentially unwholesome, so is the Round Table legend; and if it is necessarily absurd, so is the *Faërie Queen*. But when it had been done once in *Amadis*, and for a second time in *Palmerin*, it was done for good. To take the machinery of the *Libros de Caballerías*, and put a new spirit into it, which, as Cervantes saw, was possible, was not given to any Spaniard. All they could do was to repeat, and then endeavour to hide the repetition by multiplying everything on a fixed scale. The giants grew bigger, the sword-cuts more terrific, the combats more numerous, the monsters more hideous, the exalted sentiments swelled till they were less credible than the giants. The fine Castilian of García Ordoñez was tortured into the absurdities which bad writers think to be style. The *Libros de Caballerías*, which had been a natural survival, and revival, of the Middle Ages in the early sixteenth century, were unnatural at its close. *Don Quixote* did but hasten their end. They

would have perished in any case before the *Novelas de Pícaros*, which in turn ran much the same course, and were extinguished without the intervention of satire. That the taste of the time was tending away from the higher forms of romance is shown by the little following found for the *Civil Wars of Granada* by Ginés Perez de Hita, of whom little or nothing is known.<sup>1</sup> This book, of which the first part was published in 1598 and the second in 1604, is the original source of all the stories of the Zegries and Abencerrages. It gave the Spaniards a model for the historical novel proper, but though it was popular at the time—so popular that it was taken for real history—Perez de Hita founded no school. The Spanish character was becoming too impoverished for a large and poetic romance. What imagination there was, was becoming concentrated in the theatre before withering entirely.

The fate of the *Novelas de Pícaros* is one of the most curious in literature. But for them, and their popularity outside of Spain, there could not well have been any Gil Blas, and without him the history of modern prose fiction must have been very different. Yet apart from the example they set, and the machinery they supplied, their worth is small. We find in them the same monotony of type and incident as in the *comedia* and the *Libros de Caballerías*, while they have neither the fine theatrical qualities of the first (which was, we may allow, inevitable) nor the

<sup>1</sup> The *Guerras Civiles de Granada* is in vol. iii. of the *Biblioteca de Ribadeneyra*.

manly spirit of the second. Poetry, heroic sentiment, or deep religious feeling we could not expect from what only professed to deal with the common and animal side of life.

*Character of the  
Novelas de  
Pícaros.*

But they do not give what might have compensated for these things, average sensual human nature, acting credibly and drawn with humour. Their fun—and they strained at jocularity—is of the kind which delights to pull the chair from below you when you are about to sit down, and laughs consumedly at your bruises. To make the jest complete you must be old, ugly, sickly, and very poor. There is no laugh in the *Novelas de Pícaros*, only at their best a loud hard guffaw, and when they do not rise to that, a perpetual forced giggle. Truth to life is as far from them as from the *Libros de Caballerías*, but the two are on opposite sides. In mere tediousness they equal the heroic absurdity, for—and this is not their least offensive feature—they are obtrusively didactic. The larger half of the *Guzman de Alfarache* is composed of preachment of an incredibly platitudinous order. Boredom for boredom, the endless combats of the knight-errant are better. And withal we find the same childish effort to attain originality by mere exaggeration. The *Lazarillo de Tormés* forces the tone of the *Celestina*, *Guzman de Alfarache* advances, more particularly in bulk, beyond *Lazarillo*, *Marcos de Obregon* improves on *Guzman*, and so it goes on to the grinning and sardonic brutality of Quevedo's *Pablo de Segovia* and the jerking capers of *Don Gregorio Guadaña*. This last is the work of an exiled Span-

ish Jew, Enriquez Gomez (*f.* 1638-1660). Imagine Villon's *Ballade des Pendus* without the verse, without the pathos, spun out in prose, growing ever more affected through endless repetitions of sordid incident, and you have the *Novela de Picaros*.<sup>1</sup>

Yet they started from what might well have been the beginning of better. The *Celestina* had a certain truth to life in its really valuable parts, and it did not strive to amuse with mere callous practical joking.<sup>2</sup> This curious dialogue story was written perhaps before, or it may be about, the time of the conquest of Granada—1492—and both the identity of its author and its date of publication are obscure. It is divided into twenty-one so-called acts, of which the first is very long and the others are very short. Fernando Rojas of Montalvan, by whom it was published, says that the first act was the work of Rodrigo Cota of Toledo, a Jew, the known author of some tolerable verses in the style of the Court school; and that he himself finished it at the request of friends. This account has been disputed by the criticism which delights in disputing the attribution of everything to everybody. It is neither supported by internal, nor contradicted by external, evidence. The literary importance of the tale is not affected by it in the least. There are two elements in the *Celestina*. It contains

<sup>1</sup> See *Novelistas anteriores a Cervantes* and *Novelistas posteriores a Cervantes* in the *Biblioteca de Ribadeneira*, vols. iii. and xviii.

<sup>2</sup> For the history of the *Celestina* see Mr Fitz Maurice Kelly's introduction to the reprint of Mabbe's excellent version in Mr Henley's Tudor Translations.



a love-story of the headlong southern order, sudden and violent in action, inflated, and frequently insufferably pedantic in expression, withal somewhat commonplace. With this, and subservient to this, there is a background, a subordinate, busy, scheming world of procuresses, prostitutes, dishonest servants, male and female, and bullies, which is amazingly vivid. *Celestina*, whose name has replaced the pompous original title of the story, *Tragicomedy of Calisto and Melibœa*, is the ancestress of the two characters of similar trade in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*. She had many forerunners in mediæval literature, in and out of Spain. But she has never been surpassed in vividness of portraiture, while her household of loose women and bullies, with their intrigues and jealousies, their hangers-on, and their arts of temptation, is drawn with no less truth than gusto. The quality of their talk is admirable, and the personages are not described from the outside, or presented to us as puppet types, but allowed to manifest themselves, and to grow, with a convincing reality rare indeed in Spanish literature.

Though the popularity of the *Celestina*, not only in Spain but abroad, was great, it did not produce any marked effect on Spanish literature until a generation had passed. It was adapted on the stage, but there it left few traces except on the racy dialogue of the prose *entremeses*. The poetic form of the Spanish comedy did not, and even perhaps could not, adapt itself to the alert naturalistic tone of the *Celestina*, and the subjects of the plays grew ever more romantic and more remote from the vulgar world. But this answered too

well to a natural taste of the Spaniards to remain without a following. Its first real successor *The Lazarillo de Tormés.* (apart from *rifacimientos* or mere echoes, of which there were several) was the *Vida de Lazarillo de Tormés; sus Fortunas y Adversidades*,<sup>1</sup> attributed on very dubious evidence to the famous Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, and with not much greater probability to Fray Juan de Ortega, of the Order of St Jerome. The date of its composition is uncertain. The first known edition is of 1553, but it may have been read in manuscript before that. In the *Lazarillo* we have the *Novela de Picaros* already complete, differing only from those which were to come after in the greater simplicity of its style and in freshness. The hero is a poor boy of Tormés, in the neighbourhood of Salamanca, none too honest by nature, and made perfectly unscrupulous by a life of dependence on harsh, or poverty-stricken, masters. The story tells how he passes from one service to another, generally after playing some more or less ferocious trick on his employer. It is a scheme which affords a good opening for satirical sketches of life, and the author, whoever he was, clearly adopted it for that among other reasons. Lazarillo's master, the poor cavalier who keeps up a show of living like a gentleman while in fact he is starving at home—too proud either to work or beg, but not too proud to cherish schemes of en-

<sup>1</sup> The early history of the book, with an account of the doubts which prevail as to its authorship, will be found in the *Vie de Lazarillo de Tormés*. A new translation by M. A. Morel Fatio. Paris, 1886.

trapping a wife with a dowry, and not spirited enough to serve as a soldier—was no doubt a familiar figure in Spain, and he became a stock puppet of the *Novelas de gusto Picaresco*. Another scene of real, though not peculiarly Spanish, satire deals with a dishonest seller of pardons and his sham miracles. The Reformation had imposed limits on the freedom of orthodox writers to deal with the sins, or even absurdities, of churchmen, and this passage was suppressed, as of bad example, by the Inquisition. The majority of the figures are, however, less satirical than grotesque. We find in the *Lazarillo*, though not to the extent which afterwards become common, the love of dwelling on starvation, poverty, and physical infirmities as if they were things amusing in themselves. But this is less the case than in its successors, and being nearly the first, or even the actual first, in the fully developed form, it has a certain freshness. It has the merit of being short, and leaves its hero dishonourably married, with a promise of a continuation, which was never written by the author.

Putting aside spurious “second parts” of the *Lazarillo*, the next event in the advance—we cannot say the development—of the *Novela de Pícaros* is the publication of the *Guzman de Alfarache* of Mateo Aleman, a Sevillian of whose birth, life, and death nothing certain is known. This book, appearing just as the *Libros de Caballerías* were dying of exhaustion, set the example to a swarm of followers. Yet it was itself but an imitation of *Lazarillo*, greatly enlarged, and over-burdened with what Le Sage,

*Guzman de  
Alfarache.*

who translated it, most justly called "superfluous moral reflections." The second title of the book, *La Atalaya de la Vida*—'The Beacon of Life'—indicates Aleman's didactic intention, which even without it is obtrusive. But a beacon of life, to be other than a useless blaze, must be set to warn us off real dangers in real life: it must flame with satire on possible human errors. The satire of Aleman is akin to Marston's, and Marston's many followers among ourselves,—it is a loud bullying shout at mere base-nesses made incredible by being abstracted from average human nature, and kneaded into dummies. Celestina, besides being an impudent, greedy servant of vice, is also a woman with humour and an amusing tongue. Her household are the scum of the earth, but they are human scum, with a capacity for enjoying themselves as men and women without dragging their humour of vice in, when no cause sets it in motion. They can laugh and cry, like and dislike, as other human beings do. But the personages of Mateo Aleman are grinning puppets, galvanised to imitate the gestures of greed, cowardice, mendacity, and cruelty, abstracted from humanity. Then they are set to play a wild fantasia *in vacuo*. What is true of Mateo Aleman applies equally to his followers.

A brief outline must suffice for his successors. A spurious second part of *Guzman de Alfarache* was published in 1603, written, as it would seem, by one Marti, a Valencian, who assumed the noble name of Luxan. This, by the way, is one proof among many that the *Libros de Caballerias*

were not the prevailing taste of readers when Cervantes published his first part of *Don Quixote* in 1605, or else it would have suggested itself to nobody to trade on the popularity of *Guzman*. In 1605 Aleman wrote a second part, in which he victimises the plagiarist in a fashion afterwards followed by Cervantes when provoked in the same fashion. In the same year came out the *Picara Justina* of Andreas Perez, a Dominican who wrote under the name of Francisco Lopez de Ubeda, with a she rogue as heroine, with exactly the same spirit and machinery, and an identical didactic purpose, but written in a tortured style. Vicente Espinel (? 1551-? 1630), who was otherwise notable for adding the fifth string to the guitar and as a verse-writer, published *El Escudero* (i.e., Squire) *Marcos de Obregon* in 1618. This squire is of the class of the Biscayan whom Don Quixote overthrew, an elderly man who waited on ladies—the forerunner of the footman with the gold-headed stick, familiar to ourselves till very recent times. He has led the usual life. The *Marcos de Obregon* had the honour of contributing a few incidents to Le Sage. The soul of Pedro Garcia is not taken from the introduction, but put in place of what Espinel had written. In the Spanish story two students find a tombstone on which are written the words “Unio, unio,” a pun on pearl and union. One sees nothing in the riddle, and goes on. The other digs and finds—the skeletons of the lovers of Antequera, who threw themselves together from a precipice to escape capture by the Moors. Here we see

what Le Sage did with the framework supplied him by the Spaniards. He took what was only Spanish, and made it universal. We can all laugh over the bag of coin which was the soul of Pedro Garcia, but who understands the story of the Spanish lovers without a commentary? After *Marcos de Obregon* there follow mainly repetitions.

✓ An exception must, however, be made for the *Gran Tacaño* — ‘The Great Sharper,’ Paul of Segovia, by Quevedo.<sup>1</sup> Don Francisco Gomez de Quevedo y Villegas, Señor de la Torre de Juan Abad (1580-1645), was a very typical Spaniard of those who came from “the mountain,” and lived an agitated life in the Spain of the seventeenth century. He served under the once famous Duke of Osuna, viceroy of Sicily and Naples, was implicated in the mysterious conspiracy against Venice, and finally suffered from the hostility of the Count Duke of Olivares. In literature he is still the shadow of a great name as poet, scholar, and satirist. Among his countrymen his memory is still popular as the hero of innumerable stories of much the same kind as those told in Scotland of Buchanan, and in France of Rabelais. For his sake *Pablo de Segovia* may be mentioned, and also because it is the *Novela de Pícaros* as the Spaniards wrote it, stripped of the last rag of what-

<sup>1</sup> Quevedo’s works are in the *Biblioteca de Ribadencyra*; but the desirable edition is that of Sancha, Madrid, 1791, in eleven pretty volumes. A translation of ‘The Sharper’ was published in London in 1892, admirably illustrated by the Spanish draughtsman known as Daniel Vierge.

ever could disguise its essential hard brutality. If you can gloat over starvation—if the hangman ex-patiating joyfully over halters and lashes seems a pleasant spectacle to you—if blows, falls, disease, hunger, dirt, and every form of suffering, told with a loud callous laugh, and utterly unrelieved, seem to you worth reading about,—then *Pablo de Segovia* is much at your service. But Quevedo did other than this. Some of his satiric verse has life, and if not gaiety, still a species of bitter jocular-ity; and more-over, he gave a new employment to the *gusto picaresco* in his *Visions*. These once world-renowned satires are composed of such matter as the vices of lawyers, doctors, police-officers, unfaithful wives, complacent husbands, &c. To those who wish to master the Castilian language in all its resources they are invaluable, and it is in itself so fine that we can endure much to gain access to its treasures. But it is possible to gain a quite accurate understanding of Quevedo by reading the translation and amplification of his *Visions* by our own Sir Roger L'Estrange. Then, just in order to see where this spirit and this method lead, it is not a waste of time to go on to Ned Ward. There was something very congenial to the Restoration in the Spanish *gusto picaresco*, and that is its sufficient condemnation. Yet it did supply Le Sage with what he might not have been able to elaborate for himself, and thereby it contributed to the gaiety and the wisdom of nations.

That the name of Miguel de Cervantes towers above all others in Spanish literature is a commonplace.

✓ Montesquieu's jest, that Spain has produced but one good book, which was written to prove the absurdity of all the others, is only the flippant statement of the truth that the one Spanish book which the world has taken to itself is *Don Quixote*. What else the Spaniards have done in literature may have its own beauty and interest. It may even have affected the literature of other nations. The Spanish drama did something to form the purely theatrical skill of the playwright, and the *Novela de Pícaros* gave a framework for the prose story of common life. Yet the plays of Lope or of Calderon, the tales of Aleman, Espinel, and others, are essentially Spanish, and Spanish of one time. It is only in touches here and there that we find in them, behind their native vesture, any touch of what is human and universal. Even when they dealt with what was common to them with other peoples, the emotions of piety and devotion, they gave them their own colour, their own purely Spanish flavour. There is no *Imitation of Christ*, no *Pilgrim's Progress*, in their religious writing. But *Don Quixote* is so little purely Spanish that its influence has been mainly felt abroad, that it has been, and is, loved by many who have neither heard nor wish to hear of the literature lying round it.

The life of Cervantes has been made so familiar that the details need only be briefly mentioned here.<sup>1</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> The main authority for the life of Cervantes is still the *Biography* by Don Martin Fernandez de Navarrete, published by the Spanish Academy in 1819. The memory of Cervantes has undergone the



is within the knowledge of all who take any interest in him at all that he was by descent a gentleman of an ancient house. His own branch of it had become poor. He was born, probably on some day in October 1547, at Alcalá de Henares, a town lying to the east of Madrid, and the seat of the university founded by Cardinal Jimenez. It does not appear that Cervantes ever attended the university, or received more than the trifling schooling which fell to the lot of Shakespeare also. *Mar, Iglesia, y casa de rey*—the sea (*i.e.*, adventure in America), the Church, and the king's service—were the three careers open to a gentleman at a time when trade, medicine, and even the law, were plebeian. Cervantes began life in the household of a great Italian ecclesiastic, Cardinal Acquaviva, in one of those positions of domestic service about men of high position which were then, in all countries, filled by gentlemen of small or no fortune. From 1571 to 1575 he served as a soldier under Don John of Austria, and received that wound in the left hand at the battle of Lepanto in which he took a noble pride. From 1575 to 1580 he was a prisoner in Algiers. After his release in 1580 till his death in 1616—for thirty-six long years full of misfortune—he led the struggling life of a Spanish gentleman who had no fortune, no interest, no command of the arts which ingratiate a dependent

misfortune of becoming the object of a cult to the persons calling themselves Cervantistas, who have made it an excuse for infinite scribbling. A few new facts of no importance have been discovered, but Navarrete's *Vida* remains the real authority.

with a superior. At the very end he may have enjoyed some measure of comparative ease, but few men of letters have been poorer. Most men of his class were no richer than himself,—for Spain was a very poor country, and mere poverty was deprived of its worst sting when men ranked by birth and not by their possessions. No want of means could cause a noble to be other than the social superior of the merely rich man, while the Church had been only too successful in investing poverty with a certain sanctity. Yet though there were alleviations, the lot of Cervantes was a hard one, embittered by disappointments and imprisonments, which seem to have been chiefly due to the clumsy brutality of the Spanish judicial system. All this he bore with that dignity in misfortune which is one of the finest features in the character of the Spaniard, and with a cheerful courage all his own. Everything known of his life shows that he possessed two of the finest qualities which can support a man in a life of hardship—pride and a sweet temper.

The written work of Cervantes is divided in a way not unexampled in literature, but nowhere seen to the same extent except in the case of Prevost,  
*His work.* a far smaller, but a real, genius. If he had left nothing but *Don Quixote*, his place in literature would be what it is. If he had not written his one masterpiece, he would have passed unnoticed; and there would have been no reason why he should have been remembered, unless it were with Bermudez and Virues, as one of the forerunners of Lope who made vague, ill-directed experiments in the childhood of

Spanish dramatic literature. Even the *Novelas Ejemplares*, though they possess a greater measure of his qualities than any part of his literary inheritance, other than *Don Quixote* and his *entremeses*, are mainly interesting because they are his. Other Spaniards did such things as well as he, or better, but none have approached *Don Quixote*. The difference is not in degree, it is in kind.

We may, then, pass rapidly over the minor things. It is to be noted that his natural inclination was *The minor things.* not towards letters, but to arms. When a mere boy he did, indeed, write some verses on the death of Isabelle of Valois, the wife of Philip II., but they were school exercises written at the instigation of his master, Juan Lopez de Hoyos, and published by him. Like Sir Walter Scott, he believed in the greater nobility of the life of action, and more particularly in the superiority of the "noble profession of arms." If he could have had his choice it would have been to serve the king, and more especially to serve him in the reconquest of Northern Africa from the Mahometans. He was driven to write by mere necessity, and the want of what he would fain have had. During his captivity in Algiers he made plays for the amusement of his fellow-prisoners. After his release, when he was again employed as a soldier in the conquest of Portugal, in 1580 he wrote his unfinished pastoral, the *Galatea*. He was married in 1584, and established in Madrid. At this period he wrote many plays, now lost, and two which have survived. The *Trato de Argel*, or 'Life in

Algiers,' has some biographical interest, and some general value as a picture of the pirate stronghold, but is valuable on these grounds only. The *Numancia* belongs to the class of works describable in the good sense as curious. It is a long dialogued poem divided into scenes and acts, on the siege of Numantia by Scipio, and is not without a certain grandiose force. As a play it shows that the Spanish drama had not found its way, and that Cervantes was not to be its guide. It struggles between imitation of the mystery, vague efforts to follow an ill-understood classic model, and attempt to strike a new and native path which the author could nowhere find. Then comes a long interval, during which Lope was sweeping all rivals from the stage, and Cervantes, in his own phrase, was buried "in the silence of oblivion." He was struggling for mere subsistence, working as a clerk under the Commissary of the Indian fleet, collecting rents for the Knights of St John, and finally, as it would seem, supporting himself, his wife, a natural daughter born to him in Portugal before his marriage, and a sister, by the trade of *escribiente* at Valladolid. The *escribiente*, still a recognised workman in Spain, writes letters for those who cannot write for themselves.

He never quite lost his connection with literature. A few commendatory verses in the books of friends, and other slight traces, remain to show that in the intervals of the work by which he lived he endeavoured to keep a place among the poets and dramatists of the time. During these years he wrote the first part of

*Don Quixote*. It appeared in 1605, but, according to the usual practice, had been shown to friends in manuscript. His last years were spent in Madrid. How he lived must remain a mystery. The *Don Quixote* was popular, but copyrights were then not lucrative, even if they could be said to exist. He again tried the stage, and was again unsuccessful. In 1613 he published the *Novelas Ejemplares*, a collection of short stories, partly on the picaresque, partly on an Italian model. During the following year he brought out the *Voyage to Parnassus*, a verse review of the poets of his time, a common form of literary exercise, and not a good specimen of its kind. In 1614 he was provoked by the false second part of *Don Quixote*. This was a form of literary meanness from which Mateo Aleman had already suffered, but Cervantes had particular cause to be angry. The continuer of *Guzman de Alfarache* appears to have been only an impudent plagiarist, but the writer who continued *Don Quixote* was obviously animated by personal hostility. He descended to a grovelling sneer at Cervantes' wounded hand. It has been guessed that this is another chapter in the miserable history of the quarrels of authors. Avellaneda, as the author of the false second part called himself, is supposed to have acted on the instigation of Lope de Vega, who is known to have had no friendly feelings for Cervantes. The trick, which was as clumsy as it was spiteful, probably hastened the appearance of the genuine second part. It undoubtedly had some influence on the form, for it induced Cervantes to alter the course of the story, in

order to make the two as unlike as possible. Perhaps it decided the author to kill the hero lest another should murder him. The second part was printed in 1615. Cervantes died in the next year. Cheerful and hopeful to the end, even when "his foot was in stirrup" for the last journey, he had prepared his *Persiles y Sigismunda* for the press before he died. This was meant to be a model of what a tale of adventure might be, and was written with more care in the formal and mechanical parts than he gave to *Don Quixote*; but, like almost all he is known to have done with deliberate literary intentions, it is dull and lifeless.

There is a difficulty in speaking of *Don Quixote*. One has to come after Fielding and Scott, Heine,

Don Quixote. Thackeray, and Sainte-Beuve, not to mention many others hardly less illustrious.

These are great names, and it may seem that after they have spoken there is nothing left to say. The first duty which this position imposes is not to endeavour deliberately to be different, in the vain hope of attaining originality. But the cloud of witnesses who might be summoned to prove the enduring interest of *Don Quixote* is itself a part of the critical history of the book, and a tribute to its solitary place in Spanish literature. The ascetic and so-called mystic writers had their day of influence among us in the seventeenth century. Crashaw alone is enough to prove that here, and in a certain section of English life and literature, Santa Teresa and Juan

de la Cruz were living forces. Quevedo had his day, and the *Novela de Pícaros* their following. During the romantic movement, the dramatists were much in men's mouths. But in each case the Spaniard remained only for a time. Calderon once had his place in Lord Tennyson's *Palace of Art*, but he fell out, and that has been the fate of all things Spanish in literature. They have given an indication, have been used—and forgotten, or they have been welcomed as strange, mysterious, probably beautiful, and then silently dropped as too exclusively Spanish, too entirely belonging to a long past century. But *Don Quixote* has been always with us since Shelton's translation of the first part appeared in 1612. This of itself is proof enough that there is something in *Don Quixote* which is absent from other Spanish work, whether his own or that of other men.

No words need be wasted in controverting the guesses of those who wish to account for the greatness of a great piece of literature by some hidden quality not literary. They have ranged from the fantastic supposition that Cervantes was ridiculing Charles V. down to the amazing notion that he was attacking the Church. Nor need much respect be shown to the truth that *Don Quixote* was meant to make fun of the books of chivalry. This would be self-evident even if Cervantes had not said so. It may be that this was all he meant, and then he builded better than he knew. The work of burlesque, though often necessary, and, when decently done,

amusing, is essentially of the lower order. In this case it was not necessary, for the *Libros de Caballerías* were already dying out before the sordid rivalry of the *Novelas de Pícaros*. It was the less necessary, because it was no reform. The Spain of the *Libros de Caballerías* was the Spain of Santa Teresa and Luis de Leon, of the great scholars of the stamp of Francisco Sanchez El Brocense, of Diego de Mendoza, of Cortés and Pizarro and Mondragon—the Spain which Brantôme saw, “brave, bravache et vallereuse et de belles paroles proférées à l’improviste.” It was a better country than that in which the Count Duke of Olivares had to complain that he could find “no men.” The follies of the *Libros de Caballerías* were a small matter. It was not a small matter that a nation should replace *Amadis of Gaul* by *Paul of Segovia*, should pass from the lofty romantic spirit of Garcia Ordoñez to the *carcajada*—the coarse, braying, animal, and loveless guffaw of Quevedo.

In so far as Cervantes forwarded that change he did evil and not good. He did help to laugh Spain’s chivalry away. But in truth it was dying, and the change would have come without him. He is great in literature, because while consciously doing a very small, unnecessary, and partially harmful thing, he created a masterpiece of that rare and fine faculty which while thinking in jest still feels in earnest (the definition of what is, it may be, undefinable is taken from Miss Anne Evans), and which we call humour. Elsewhere in Spanish literature we find a type fixed and un-



varying, or even a mere puppet, met through a succession of events, and moved about by them. In *Don Quixote* we have two characters acting on one another, and producing the story from within. And these two characters are types of immortal truth—the one a gentleman, brave, humane, courteous, of good faculty, for whom a slight madness has made the whole world fantastic; the other an average human being, selfish, not over-brave, though no mere coward, and ignorant, yet not unkindly, nor incapable of loyalty, and withal shrewd in what his limited vision can see when he is not blinded by his greed. The continual collisions of these two with the real world make the story of *Don Quixote*. Cervantes had a fine inventive power, the adventures are numerous and varied, yet the charm lies not in the incidents, but in the reality and the sympathetic quality of the persons. We have no grinning world of masks made according to a formula. The country gentlemen, priests, barbers, shepherds, innkeepers, tavern wenches, lady's - maids, domestic curates, nobles, and officials are living human beings, true to the Spain of the day no doubt, but also true to the humanity which endures for ever, and therefore intelligible to all times. In the midst is honest greedy Sancho with his peering eyes, so shrewd, and withal so capable of folly, the critic, and also the dupe of the half-crazed dreamer, by whom he rides, and will ride, as long as humanity endures, in this book, and under every varying outward form in the real earth.

As for Don Quixote, is he not the elder brother of Sir Roger de Coverley, of Matthew Bramble, of Parson Adams, of Bradwardine, of Colonel Newcome, and Mr Chucks, the brave, gentle, not over-clever, men we love all the more because we laugh at them very tenderly? <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The fame and the excellence of *Le Diable Boiteux* of Le Sage entitle the author of *El Diablo Cojuelo* to notice in this chapter. Luis Velez de Guevara (1572 or 1574-1644) of Ecija was a fertile dramatist. His *Diablo Cojuelo*, published in 1641, supplied the starting-point, and the matter but not the form, of the two first chapters of *Le Diable Boiteux*. There is nothing answering to the famous "Après cela on nous réconcilia; nous nous embrassâmes; depuis ce tems là nous sommes ennemis mortels." The matter of the *Diablo Cojuelo* is akin to the *Visions* of Quevedo, and the style is very idiomatic.

## CHAPTER VI.

SPAIN—HISTORIANS, MISCELLANEOUS WRITERS, AND  
THE MYSTICS.

SPANISH HISTORIANS—HISTORIES OF PARTICULAR EVENTS—EARLY HISTORIANS OF THE INDIES—GENERAL HISTORIANS OF THE INDIES—GÓMARA, OVIEDO, LAS CASAS, HERRERA, THE INCA GARCILASO—MENDOZA, MONCADA, AND MELO — GENERAL HISTORIES — OCAMPO, ZURITA, MORALES — MARIANA — THE DECADENCE — SOLIS — MISCELLANEOUS WRITERS — GRACIAN AND THE PREVALENCE OF GÓNGORISM—THE MYSTICS—SPANISH MYSTICISM—THE INFLUENCE OF THE INQUISITION ON SPANISH RELIGIOUS LITERATURE—MALON DE CHAIDE—JUAN DE ÁVILA—LUIS DE GRANADA—LUIS DE LEON—SANTA TERESA — JUAN DE LA CRUZ — DECADENCE OF THE MYSTIC WRITERS.

It was natural that a very active time of great literary vigour should be rich in historians. Spanish literature is, indeed, fertile in historical narratives of contemporary events written by eyewitnesses, and not less in authoritative narratives, the work of almost contemporary authors. A people so proud of the present could not be indifferent to the past. The Spaniard least of all; for he is, in his own phrase, *linajudo*—proud of his lineage—not less concerned to show that he had ancestors than to convince the world of his greatness. Thus the sixteenth century,

and the early years of the seventeenth, saw the production of a very important Spanish historical literature. It followed the fortunes of the country with curious exactness. Every great campaign, every great achievement in America during the reign of Charles V., has been well and amply described. The reign of Philip II. is equally well recorded by contemporaries, and was the period of the great general histories of Morales, Zurita, and Mariana. But as the seventeenth century drew on, there was less and less which the Spaniard cared to record, till after the revolt of Catalonia and the separation of Portugal in 1640 we come to a period of entire silence. The exhaustion of the national genius was felt here as elsewhere. When the voice of Spanish history was last heard, it was in the conquest of Mexico by Antonio de Solis—the work of an accomplished man of letters who looked back over the disasters of his own time to the more glorious achievement of the past.

Much of the historical writing of the great epoch—the histories of religious orders, of which there are many, and of towns, of which there not a few, and genealogical histories, also numerous and valuable—does not, properly speaking, belong to literature. But it would be a very pedantic interpretation of the word which would exclude the *Comentario de la Guerra de Alemaña*<sup>1</sup> of Luis de Ávila y Zuñiga. It is an account

<sup>1</sup> This and most of the other works mentioned here will be found in the two volumes of *Historiadores de Sucesos Particulares* in the *Biblioteca de Ribadencyra*, vols. xxi. and xxviii.

of the war of the Smalkaldian League, written by an eyewitness who served the emperor, and attended him in his retirement at Yuste. The merit of this, and many other books of the same order, lies less in any beauty of style they possess than in the interest which attaches to the evidence of capable men who saw great events. Luis de Ávila is also valuable because he gives expression to that pride and ambition of the emperor's Spanish followers, who really dreamt that they were helping towards the establishment of a universal empire. Another writer of the same stamp, who lived when the fortune of Spain had reached its height and was beginning to turn, was Don Bernardino de Mendoza, a most typical Spaniard of his time. He was a soldier of the school of the Duke of Alva, a cavalry officer of distinction, was ambassador in England some years before the Armada, and in France during that great passage in history. He died at a great age, blind and "in religion," having lived the full life of a fighting pious Spaniard who could use both sword and pen. He wrote commentaries on the war in the Low Countries between 1566 and 1577, and a treatise on the *Theory and Practice of War*. The commentaries were published in 1592. The treatise had appeared in 1577. The great subject of the Low Country wars of a somewhat later period—1588-1599—was also treated by another Spaniard of the same stamp as Don Bernardino. This was Don Carlos Coloma, Marquis of Espinar, who also was both soldier, diplomatist (he came on an embassy to England in the reign of

*Historians of  
particular  
events.*

James I.), and man of letters. Besides his *Guerras de los Países Bajos* he made a translation of Tacitus.

Contemporary with these and less famous authors of commentaries is the long line of writers usually classed together by the Spaniards as Early Historians of the Indies.<sup>1</sup> The desire to record what they had seen and suffered was strong in the *conquistadores*, and a long list might be made of their names. Only the most famous can be mentioned here. No more amazing story of shipwreck and misery among savages has ever been told than in the *Naufragios* of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca. He was wrecked in Florida, and remained wandering among the native tribes for ten years, 1527-1537. A power of endurance, wellnigh more than human, was required to bear up against all he suffered; but he lived to hold a governorship in the Rio de la Plata, of which also he has left an account. A much gayer and a more famous book is the account of the conquest of Mexico written by Bernal Diaz del Castillo, one of the companions of Cortés, who survived nearly all his brothers in arms, and died at a great age in Guatemala, on the estate he had won with his sword. His *True History* was provoked by the earlier narrative of Gómara, and was written to vindicate the honour due to himself and his fellow-adventurers, which he thought had been unduly sacrificed by the official historian of Cortés. Bernal Diaz is a Spanish Monluc, but both ruder and more mediæval than the

<sup>1</sup> The *Historiadores Primitivos de Indias* fill two volumes—xxii. and xxvi.—in the *Biblioteca de Ribadencyra*.

inimitable Gascon. Francisco de Jerez, Augustin de Zarate, and Pedro Cieza de Leon (the work of the last-named has only been wholly published in our own time) give the Peruvian half of that wonderful generation of conquest.

Beside these, the actual eyewitnesses of events, are to be put the general historians of the Indies. The first who published his work complete was General His-  
torians of the  
Indies. Francisco Lopez de Gómara. He was born in 1510, too late to share in the conquest, and was, in fact, a man of letters, who travelled, indeed, but only in Italy. The accident that he was secretary to Cortés when he had returned for the last time to Spain probably directed Gómara's studies. He was accused of knowing nothing of many parts of his subject except what Cortés had told him, and of having distorted truth in the interest of his patron. But Gómara wrote well, and the immense contemporary interest in the subject gave his *History of the Indies* and his *Chronicle of New Spain*, which is a panegyric of Cortés, a great vogue. They first appeared in 1552, 1553, and 1554. An older man, and a much greater authority, was Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdes (1478-1557), whose *General and Natural History of the Indies* was partly published in 1535, before Gómara's. But the author kept his work in hand till his death, and appears to have made corrections and additions to the last.<sup>1</sup> Oviedo was in

<sup>1</sup> The standard edition of the *Historia General y Natural de las Indias, istas y tierra firme del Mar Oceano*, is that in four volumes folio, edited by Don Amador de los Rios for the Academy of History in 1851-1855.

the West Indies in official posts for forty years, beginning in 1513, and was therefore a contemporary of, though not a partaker in, the great conquests. He is a garrulous writer of no great force of mind, much more a chronicler than a historian. There are two general historians of the Indies of very different value from Oviedo. The first is the Bishop of Chiapa, the justly *Gómara, Oviedo*, famous Bartolomé de las Casas (1474?-1566), *Las Casas, Herrera, the Inca Garcilaso*, who supplied the critics of his countrymen (most of whom afterwards showed that they wanted only the opportunity in order to equal the crimes) with weapons by his famous *Very Brief Account of the Ruin of the Indies*. This, first printed in 1542, was reprinted with other tracts written for the honourable purpose of defending the unfortunate Indians from oppression in 1552, and was made known to all Europe in translations. The general *History of the Indies*, which he wrote during his old age, remained unprinted till it was included in the *Collection of inedited Documents for the History of Spain* published by the Spanish Government.<sup>1</sup> Las Casas was a man of a stamp not unfamiliar to ourselves. His hatred of cruelty was equally vehement and sincere. In his perfectly genuine horror for the excesses of his countrymen, which are not to be denied, he sometimes exaggerated and was sometimes unjust. He was perhaps inevitably emotional in his style, yet the fact that he had principle and passion and a cause to plead, gives his book a marked superiority

<sup>1</sup> *Coleccion de Documentos inéditos para la Historia de España*, vols. lxii.-lxvi.



over the mainly chronicle work of Gómara and Oviedo. Antonio de Herrera (1549-1625) was a very different man, an official historian—he was historiographer of the Indies—who served the king as literary advocate, and was supplied with good information. His *General History of the Deeds of the Castilians in the Islands and Mainland of the Ocean Sea* was published in 1601-1615 at Madrid. While compiling this great book, the most valuable part of his work, Herrera was also engaged in drawing up a *General History of the World in the time of our Lord the King Philip II.*, and other treatises, which are, in fact, statements on behalf of the Government, and have in historical literature something like the place of the yearly summaries in the old *Annual Register*. Herrera's style was businesslike, but he can never have been read for the pleasure of reading him. With these writers may be placed the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1540-1616), an attractive and rather pathetic figure. His father was one of the *conquistadores*, and his mother belonged to the sacred Inca race. The son was almost equally proud of his pedigree on both sides. The Inca Garcilaso, as he is always called, did some other literary work, including a translation of the once famous *Dialogues on Love by Leon Hebreo*, an echo of the Florentine Platonists, written in Italian by the exiled Spanish Jew, Juda Abarbanel, but he is best known by the *Commentaries on Peru*. In this work, published in two parts in 1609 and 1617, he contrived to reconcile a genuine Christian zeal and an equally genuine Castilian pride of descent with a tender

memory of his mother's people. Garcilaso, though weak and garrulous, is touching, and his commentaries have been the great storehouse of the more poetic legends told of the Incas.<sup>1</sup>

Though writers who recorded what they had seen, and others who only recorded what had happened in their time, or near it, cannot be wholly classed together, yet the authors named above have certain qualities in common. Of those mentioned here, almost all wrote in a straightforward manly fashion, with little straining after effect, and a manifest desire to tell the truth. There is little in them of that overweening arrogance which has become associated with the character of the Spaniard. There is no want of pride, which was, indeed, amply justified by the stories they had to tell, but little of the vanity so common in the time of Spain's decadence.

The account of the rebellion of the Moriscoes written by Don Diego de Mendoza supplies a link between the series of histories just named and the histories which belong wholly to learning and literature. The subject was contemporary to the author, and members of his family took an active part in the events; but Don Diego had a literary ambition which is only too visible. It was plainly his intention to make a careful copy of Latin models—chiefly Sallust—and *Mendoza, Moncada, and Melo.* in one passage he slavishly follows the account given by Tacitus of the discovery of the remains of the legions of Varus, by the soldiers of Germanicus.

<sup>1</sup> The commentaries of the Inca Garcilaso were early translated into English, and have been reprinted by the Hakluyt Society.

But there was an intrinsic force in Diego de Mendoza which saved him from falling into a mere school exercise, and though the mould of sentence is too much taken from the Latin, the vocabulary is very pure Castilian. He protests in one place against the use of the foreign word *centinela* for a sentinel, in place of the old Spanish *atalaya* for the watch by day, and *escucha* (listen) for the watch by night. *The Expedition of the Catalans and Aragonese against the Turks and Greeks* of Francisco de Moncada, Count of Osona (1635), which Gibbon said he had read with pleasure, has a great reputation among the Spaniards. It is certainly a well-written account of the expedition of the Free Companions who were led by Roger de Flor to serve under the Paleologi against the Turks, and who, after making themselves intolerable to their employers, ended by expelling the Dukes of Athens of the house of Brienne from their duchy, and then held it for the crown of Aragon. Moncada was a viceroy and general who served with high distinction, and a very accomplished man of literary tastes; but his narrative, which is very brief, is mainly a good Castilian version of the Catalan *Chronicle* of Ramon Muntaner, and has, in a phrase dear to Mr Hallam, been praised to the full extent of its merits. It appeared in 1623, twelve years before the death of the author, who was then viceroy in Lombardy. A work on the same scale as Moncada's, which has been praised much beyond its merits, is the account of the revolt of the Catalans against Philip IV. in 1640 by Francisco

Manuel de Melo. It contains only the beginning of the war, and though the author seems to promise a continuation, he never went further. The book was published in 1645. Melo had a curious literary history. He was a Portuguese in the Spanish service, and a kinsman of the unfortunate general who lost the battle of Rocroi. He lived long, wrote much, and it was his fortune to survive Góngorism. But his *History of the Troubles, Secession, and War of Catalonia* was written while he was under a bad literary influence. Without being exactly "Góngorical," it is written in a strained, pretentious, snappy style, which covers a decided poverty of thought.

The great school of Spanish historians has an unbroken descent from the chronicles of the Middle Ages. It had been the custom of the *General Histories* kings of Castile from the reign of Alfonso XI. (1350-1369), surnamed the Implacable, or "he of the Rio Salado," from the scene of the battle in which he overthrew the last considerable Moorish invasion of Spain, to appoint a chronicler. With Florian de Ocampo, who held this post under Charles V., the chronicler became the "historiographer." He was not necessarily a scholar and student of the past, yet he might be if he so pleased, and the spirit of the time invited him to adopt the new character. Ocampo himself showed little faculty, though his intentions were good; but his successor, Ambrosio de Morales (1513-1581), was a scholar in the fullest sense of the word. It was his wish to write a real history of Spain, based on chronicles and records. But he obtained his post

late in 1570, and his work is a fragment ending so early as 1037. Morales was unquestionably influenced by the example of his friend Gerónimo de Zurita, the historiographer of the crown of Aragon. The unanimous judgment of scholars has recognised the right of Zurita to the name of historian, and even to the honour of being the first of modern historians. His father had been physician to Ferdinand the Catholic, and he was himself one of the many secretaries of Philip II. Zurita, who was born in 1512 and died in 1580, was appointed historiographer of Aragon by the choice of the Cortes in 1548. For a man with the ambition to be a historian, the position was enviable. It gave him independence, a right of access to all records; he had a fine story to tell, and as he had no predecessors, he had no need to spend time in reading the works of others. Zurita was worthy of his fortune. His *Annals of the Crown of Aragon* down to the death of Ferdinand the Catholic, in six folio volumes, published between 1562 and 1580, has kept its place as a work of scholarship and criticism.

The great name of Spanish historical literature is that of Juan de Mariana,<sup>1</sup> the Jesuit, whose name once rang all over Europe for his defence of regicide in the treatise *De Rege*, written for the benefit of his pupil, Philip III. But this and his other treatises were written in Latin, and never

<sup>1</sup> The works of Mariana are in the *Biblioteca de Ribadeneyra*, vols. xxx. and xxxi.; but it is much more pleasant to read his history in the edition of Ibarra, 1780, 2 vols. folio, beautifully printed.

translated by himself. His place in Spanish literature is due to his history. Mariana was of the most humble birth, for he was a foundling. He was born at Talavera in 1536, and educated by the Jesuits, in whose college in Sicily he taught for many years; but his later life was spent in the house of his order at Toledo. His troubles with his superiors form a not very honourable passage in the history of the Jesuits. The first purpose of his great work was to make Europe acquainted with the past of Spain, and he wrote in Latin, the universal language of scholarship. Twenty of the thirty books were published in that language in 1572. But, unlike Bacon, Mariana did not believe that the learned language would outlive the modern tongues. He was induced to make a Castilian version of his own Latin, and when doing it he took the freedom which even the most strict critic will allow to belong to the translator of his own work. He enlarged, corrected, and amended, till the Castilian history, which appeared in 1501, was almost a new work. Four editions, further enlarged and amended, appeared before the author's death in 1623.

In answering a minute critic, Mariana, with an audacity not perhaps to be excused, declared that if he had stopped to verify every small fact, Spain would have waited for ever for a history. This bold avowal of his indifference to the tithings of mint and anise illustrates sufficiently the spirit in which he wrote. He was not a historical scholar in the same sense as Zurita—a minute student of original records

—but a man of great learning and high patriotic spirit, who applied himself to the making of a work of literature worthy of the past of his country. The defects of the history are patent, and one of them is a mere matter of change of fashion. He took Livy for a model, and therefore put long speeches into the mouths of his personages. This, however, was a mere literary convention not intended to deceive anybody, and not likely to mislead the most uncritical reader. It was only a now disused way of giving what the modern historian would give in comment and illustration. The same following of Livy led him into including in his history, and presenting as history, a great deal of what he knew to be legend, simply because it was picturesque and familiar. Against these defects, which from the literary point of view are no defects at all, are to be put a fine style quite uncontaminated by the usual defects of Spanish prose, a great power of narrative, and then this, that Mariana gave the history of his country throughout antiquity and the Middle Ages in a lofty patriotic spirit, which may not interpret and explain ancient institutions, but does convey to us a sense that we see an energetic people of fine qualities struggling on to high destinies.

The fall from Mariana to any of his contemporaries or successors is great. The *Cisma de Inglaterra*—

*The decadence.* 'The English Schism'—by Pedro de Ribadeneyra (1527-1611), enjoys the reputation of being a well-written account of the great movement by which the English Church vindicated its indepen-

dence of the see of Rome, told from the point of view of a Spanish Jesuit. Prudencio de Sandoval, a distinguished churchman and one of the historiographers of the Crown, continued the general history of Morales, and then added to Mariana a life of Charles V., which is of about the same length as the Jesuit's whole history. Sandoval shows what the reign of the great emperor looked like to a learned Spaniard of the later sixteenth century, but it has no great force and no merit of style.<sup>1</sup>

Other names might be added—Bartolomé de Argensola's *History of the Moluccas* (1609), the work of a pure man of letters who wrote to please his patron, and the *History of the Goths* of the diplomatist Saavedra-Fajardo, published at Munster in 1649—but they could swell a list to little purpose. All these writers had the good fortune to write before the invasion of Gón-gorism, except Saavedra-Fajardo, who escaped it by residence abroad. Antonio de Solis (1610-1686) had the honour of resisting the plague. If the second-rate men of a literature could be dealt with at any

*Solis.* length in our limits, Solis would be an interesting figure to dwell on. He was an accomplished man, who did very creditable work both as poet and dramatist, but in the schools of other and more original writers. There are few more melancholy lives among the biographies of men of letters.

<sup>1</sup> There is not, I think, any modern edition of Sandoval, whose life of Charles V. first appeared in 1604-1606, since the second edition of Antwerp, 1681. It was translated and abridged in 1703 by Captain John Stevens, an indefatigable hack to whom we are indebted for many bad versions of Spanish originals.



In spite of reputation and success, he was always poor. Although he held the post of *Cronista Mayor* of the Indies in the latter part of his life, he died in utter poverty, leaving "his soul to be the heir of his body"—that is, giving orders that his few belongings should be sold to pay for masses. In the general bankruptcy of Spain his salary was probably not paid. A sense of duty rather than an inclination to the task may be supposed to have led him to undertake the writing of a book which has always remained very dear to the Spaniards. This is *The Conquest of Mexico*, published by the help of a friend in 1684.<sup>1</sup> The excellence of the style was recognised from the first, and has preserved the reputation of the book. Yet it wants the rude life of the contemporary narratives, and the understanding of, or at least strenuous effort to understand, the native side, which is to be found in Mr Prescott. Flowing and eloquent as Solis is, he is also somewhat nerveless. Perhaps our knowledge of the fact that he stood on the very verge of the time when the voice of literature in Spain was to be silenced altogether makes the reader predisposed to find something in him of the signs of exhaustion. He closes the time when the Spaniards wrote for themselves, and also wrote well.

Before closing this survey of the great period of Castilian literature by a notice, which must necessarily be brief, of one intensely national body of writers, some

<sup>1</sup> A very finely printed edition of *The Conquest of Mexico*, unfortunately disfigured by silly plates, was published at Madrid by Sancha in 1783.

words must be said about the large class of authors of <sup>Miscellaneous</sup> miscellaneous books belonging to the first <sup>writers.</sup> half of the seventeenth century. The press was active in those years. Unfortunately it was an age of oddity and extravagance. Its dominating figure is that Baltasar Gracian (1601-1658) to whom the admiration of Sir M. Grant Duff among ourselves, and the whim, if not the cynicism, of Schopenhauer among the Germans, have given a limited revival of popularity in our own time. He was an Aragonese Jesuit, who published his books under the name of his brother Lorenzo. Gracian is not uninteresting as a finished example of all that bad taste and pretentiousness can do to make a man of some, though by no means considerable, faculty quite worthless. It was his chosen function to be the critic, prophet, and populariser of Góngorism. He wrote a treatise to expound the whole secret of the detestable art of saying everything in the least natural and perspicuous manner possible.<sup>1</sup> This Agudeza y Arte de Ingenios—‘Wit and the Wits’ Art’—was not written till he had published a book on *The Hero* to show that he had every right to speak with authority. Gracian was otherwise a copious writer. His *Criticicon*, translated into English under the name of *The Spanish Critic*, by Paul Rycaut in 1681, about thirty years after it appeared, is an allegory of life, shown by the adventures of a shipwrecked Spaniard and a “natural man,” whom he finds on the island of

<sup>1</sup> Part of Gracian is in the *Biblioteca de Ribadeneira*, vol. lxxv. A translation of the *Oráculo Manual* has been included in *The Golden Treasury*.

St Helena. It may have helped Swift by showing him how not to write *Gulliver's Travels*. The work which has been revived of late by the freak of Schopenhauer is the Oráculo Manual y Arte de Prudencia—'Hand (or Pocket) Oracle and Art of Prudence.' It is a collection of maxims. Mr Morley went to the extreme limit of good nature when he said that Gracian sometimes gives a neat turn to a commonplace. As a rule, his maxims are examples of all that maxims ought not to be—long, obscure by dint of straining after epigrammatic force, and in substance of platitude all compact. We soon find that we are dealing with a "haberdasher of small wares," who is endeavouring to impose himself upon us as wise by dint of a short obscure manner and a made-up face of gravity.

Gracian is worth singling out, not for his merits, but because he so thoroughly typified a something in the Spaniard which, oddly mixed with his real humour and sound sense, gives him a leaning to the theatrical in the worst sense of the word. When Shakespeare drew Don Adriano de Armado, the fantastical Spaniard, he was not laughing at random at the foreigner. And this side of the people was never more conspicuous than in the middle seventeenth century. It came out everywhere, from serious treatises on politics down to the fencing-book of the egregious Don Luis de Narvaez de Pacheco. It was not that Spain wanted for able men. Diego de Saavedra-Fajardo, the author of the history of the Goths, and of a curious book of emblems called *Empresas Politicas*, or 'The Idea of a

Political Christian Prince'; Vera y Figueroa, the author of *The Ambassador*; Suarez de Figueroa, who wrote the miscellaneous critical dialogues called *El Pasajero*—'The Traveller,'—were none of them insignificant men, but there was a perpetual straining after sententious gravity in them, an effort to look wiser than life, an attempt to get better bread than could be made out of wheat. They helped to give Europe the old idea of the rigid sententious Spaniard which is so strangely unlike the real man. But it was the time of the frozen court etiquette of the Hapsburg dynasty, and of grave peremptory manners in public, covering an extraordinary relaxation of morals, and an unabashed taste for mere horseplay in private. These writers gave the literary expression of the artificial Spain of the seventeenth century. It adds to the piquancy of the contrast that at a time when Spain was marching resolutely, and with her eyes open, to ruin, by accumulating fault upon fault, the political writers named here, and others, abounded in good sense. To take a single example. Among the emblems of Saavedra-Fajardo is one representing a globe supported between the sterns of two warships, with the motto "His Polis." In the Essay the Spanish diplomatist sets out the whole doctrine, so familiar in our own days as that of "sea-power," with great force. Yet this was written, a melancholy example of useless wisdom, when his country was destroying its last chance of maintaining a navy, by bleeding itself nearly to death in the wars of Germany for the purpose of vindicating the claims of the house of Hapsburg.

Here may be mentioned, a little out of his date, but hardly out of his place, for it is difficult to say where he ought to be classed, the *Viage Entretenido*, or 'Amusing Voyage,' of Agustin de Roxas or Rojas. He was a very busy miscellaneous writer, who led a strange roaming life as a soldier, strolling actor, and in some sense *pícaro*. The *Viage Entretenido* is the only part of his work which survives. It is a rather incoherent autobiography, swollen out by specimens of the *loas* he wrote for his fellow-actors. The historical value of the book is considerable, for Roxas gives a very full account of the theatrical life of his time, and is the standard authority for the early history of the Spanish stage. The literary merits of the book are not small, for, consciously or unconsciously, he takes, and keeps, the tone of the true artistic Bohemian, the wandering *enfant sans souci* to whom the hardships of his life, long tramping journeys, hunger, poverty, rags, and spasms of furious hard work are endurable because they give him intervals of reckless idleness, and save him from what he especially hates, which is orderly industry. The *Viage Entretenido* was the model of Scarron's *Voyage Comique*. It appeared perhaps in 1603, but certainly very early in the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup>

A survey of Spanish literature of the great epoch cannot end more appropriately than with the writers who by common consent are called the Mystics. The term has become established in use, and there would be pedantry in rejecting it. Yet it is far from being

<sup>1</sup> *El Viage Entretenido de Agustin de Roxas*. Madrid, 1793.

accurately applied. What is, properly speaking, called  
*The Mystics.* Mysticism is not congenial to the Spaniard,  
and was inevitably odious to the Inquisi-  
tion. A train of religious thought which led infal-  
libly to trust in the "Inner Light," to the contempt  
for dogma, to indifference to the hierarchy, and to the  
preference for emotional piety over morality of con-  
duct, could not but be suspect to a body which existed  
for the purpose of maintaining the authority of the  
Church. One Spaniard, Miguel de Molinos, did  
indeed show himself a true mystic, and was the  
father of the "Quietism" of the later seventeenth  
century. But Molinos lived in Italy, did not ad-  
dress his countrymen, and found his following mainly  
in France. There were a few *alumbrados*, as the  
Spaniards called them—"Illuminati"—in Spain, as  
there were a few Protestants; but they were ex-  
ceptions, and examples of mere personal eccentricity.  
The Inquisition had the sincere support of the nation  
in stamping out both. When it went too far and  
condemned what the Spaniards did not dislike, as  
when, for instance, the *Guia de Pecadores* — 'The  
Guide for Sinners'—of Luis de Granada was put in  
the Index, the Inquisition was forced to reverse its  
decision. But it had the approval of the country  
in its efforts to suppress teaching which had a danger-  
ous tendency to arrive at the doctrine that, when the  
soul of the believer is united in ecstatic devotion with  
God, the sins of the flesh are no sins at all. The  
common-sense of the Spaniard, which was never more  
conspicuous than in the greatest of his orthodox

mystics, Santa Teresa, left him in no doubt as to the real meaning of such teaching as that. The *Spanish mysticism.* stern handling it received from the Inquisition had his sincere approval. The mysticism of the Spaniards consisted wholly in a certain Platonism or Neo-Platonism, in the doctrine which can be sufficiently well learnt in Spenser's *Hymne of Heavenly Love*. This might have lent itself to the extreme of Quietism or Antinomianism, but it was restrained by the sense of the necessity for active virtue, which was strong in the Spaniard, and was the result of the Church's teaching that there is no salvation without works.

It is not, however, the doctrine of the mystics, but their importance, and the literary quality of their work, which concern us here. As regards their position in the country, and their influence with all ranks of Spaniards, there can be no question. It was shown not only by the deference of the austere Philip II. to Santa Teresa, but by the docility of his grandson, Philip IV.—a very different and a very pleasure-loving man—to Maria de Jesus de Ágreda, a woman far inferior in intellect and force of character to the reformer of the Carmelites.<sup>1</sup> To their work we may apply the expression, very Platonist and old, which Diego de Estella uses of the soul in his *Very Devout Meditations on the Love of God*. "Da vida," he says,

<sup>1</sup> For this rather unexpected side to the character of Philip IV., and strange feature of the Spanish life of the time, see *Cartas de las Venerable Madre Sor Maria de Agreda y del Señor Rey Don Felipe IV.* Don Francisco Silvela. Madrid, 1885.

and “es la forma del cuerpo”—“It gives life, and is the form of the body.”

“For soul is form, and doth the body make,”

as the same truth stands in Spenser’s hymn. The intense religious spirit of the Spaniards gives their work life, and is the form of their body. All the best of this side, if one ought not to say this basis, of their character has gone into the “mystic” works. The Spaniard has not been a great preacher. Part of the explanation of this, on the face of it, rather surprising fact, is no doubt to be found in saying that if the Inquisition had listened to every denunciation of a preacher, nobody would have been found to risk going into a pulpit. For, while denying that the Holy Office was felt to be oppressive by the majority of Spaniards, there can be no doubt that its yoke was heavy on the neck of individuals—even of the most orthodox. The persecution of Luis de Granada, who as a Dominican, and therefore as a member of the order which controlled the Inquisition, might have been supposed to be sure of the most favourable treatment, is an example of the vigilance exercised over all who even approached religious questions. Luis de Leon incurred an imprisonment of five years on accusations brought by envious rivals at Salamanca, and too favourably received by the jealousy of the Dominicans, who were hostile to him as an Augustinian.<sup>1</sup> Santa Teresa was sequestered by the Inqui-

*The influence of the Inquisition on Spanish religious literature.*

<sup>1</sup> For this example of the Inquisition at work see the papers of his case in vols. x. and xi. of the *Documentos inéditos*.



sition at Seville. Her disciple, Juan de la Cruz, who helped her in the reform of the Carmelites, was imprisoned for a year, and only released by the intrepid exertions of the saint and the use of the royal authority. It was dangerous to speak without much thought and care. So the Spaniards, who might have given their country what the great Caroline divines gave to English and Bossuet to French literature, preferred to confine themselves to writing, where they could weigh every word and subject their work to the revision of superiors.

The bulk of the Spanish mystic, religious, and ascetic writings is enormous. By far the greater part of them have fallen dead to the Spaniards themselves. They have never been made the subject of an exhaustive study by any native scholar.<sup>1</sup>

The great names among the Spanish mystics of the golden time of their literature are those of Malon de Chaide, Juan de Ávila, Luis de Granada, Luis de Leon, Santa Teresa, and San Juan de la Cruz—and of these Santa Teresa alone is a living force. It is difficult to understand what sense the word mystic bore to the first person who applied it to Pedro Malon de Chaide (? 1530—?). He was of the Order of St Augustine, and was a master of a fine-flowing, rather unctuous style. The work by which he is known in Spanish literature is *The Treatise of the Conversion of the Glorious Mary Magdalen*. It

<sup>1</sup> My own obligation is mainly to M. Paul Rousselot's *Mystiques Espagnols*, Paris, 1867, which the Spaniards have found it easier to call insufficient than to displace.

was written for a young lady who had resolved to take the vows, but was not published till many years later. Malon de Chaide was one of those who denounced the evil influence of the books of chivalry; but his own style is very often—at least to our modern taste—more fit for a romance than a book of devotion. He wrote verse—and well. It must be read with a constant recollection that it was not written for us, but in a time when the application of the language of *The Song of Solomon* to devotion was justified by the all but universal belief in the allegorical character of the poem. In this practice, of which we have well-known examples of our own, Malon de Chaide never went to the extreme reached by Juan de la Cruz. The venerable master Juan de Ávila (1502-1569), known as the Apostle of Andalucia, an older man than Malon de Chaide, was also much less the fashionable divine. The most famous of his many works is *The Spiritual Treatise* on the verse *Audi, filia*—"Hearken, O daughter, and consider," &c. It was at first only a letter of advice written for a lady, Sancha Carrillo, who had resolved to take the vows, but Ávila added to it largely, and in its final form it is a complete guide for those who wish to lead the religious life, whether in a monastery or in the century. It is not, perhaps, a book to be recommended to those who cannot read with the eyes of a Spanish Roman Catholic, or at least with as much critical faculty as will enable them to understand, and to allow for, that point of view. The style of Juan de Ávila, though verbose in the weaker passages, has an ardent

eloquence at times, and has always a large share of the religious quality of unction.

Luis de Granada (1504-1588) and Luis de Leon (1527-1601) were contemporaries, younger men than

*Luis de  
Granada.*

Juan de Ávila, and to some extent his followers. *The Guide for Sinners* of the first, and the *Perfecta Casada* of the second, have remained more or less popular books of devotion. At

least they are reprinted among the Spaniards. *The Guide for Sinners* was translated and read all over Europe. Granada's *Book of Prayer and Meditation*

on "the principal mysteries of our faith" was hardly less famous. He had both the qualities and the defects of the style of his master. Luis de Leon was

probably the greatest of the mystics in intrinsic force of intellect and in learning, besides being master of a far more manly style than any of them. He was also

a man of independent intrepid character, and it may be that the fear with which the Inquisition regarded him was largely inspired by his strictures on the ignorance of the clergy and their flocks. Inquiry

and knowledge were dreaded at a time when the Protestants were using them as instruments against the Church. *The Perfecta Casada* was written for a lady, Doña Maria Varela Osorio. These writers, it

*Luis de Leon.*

will be seen, worked much for women. It was the age of the directors as distinguished from the old confessors. Pious people, and more especially women, who wished to lead a religious life, and had been taught that it was necessary not only to do but to believe what was right, were anxious for the

constant guidance of a teacher who must be both orthodox and learned. Santa Teresa insisted greatly on this. The treatise is a long comment on the passage of Scripture which will suggest itself to everybody as fit for the purpose—the last chapter of Proverbs, beginning at the tenth verse. But the allegorical meaning is more insisted on than the plain sense of the words, and the *Perfecta Casada* is a treatise on doctrine. Luis de Leon wrote much else, including an exposition of the *Names of Christ* and of *The Book of Job*.

The greatest name among the Spanish mystics, and one of the greatest in all religious history, is that of Teresa de Zepeda y Ahumada, who called herself "in religion" Teresa de Jesus. She was born of a noble family of Ávila in Old Castile in 1515, and died in Santa Teresa. 1582. We are not directly concerned here with her religious life, her reform of the Carmelites, or her doctrine, which indeed was not original. The inspiring motive of Santa Teresa was her desire to save the souls of the Lutheran heretics, not by preaching to them, but by so reforming her own order, the Carmelites, that they should return to their original purity, and prove an effective instrument for the Church. Her literary work may be divided into two parts. One contains the different treatises she wrote by the order of her superiors, who probably began by wishing to test her orthodoxy, and who ended by revering her as one inspired. Then there are her many letters, written to all ranks of her contemporaries, from the king down to the nuns of her houses.

In both Santa Teresa wrote the same Castilian—the language as it was spoken by the nobles, not learned, indeed, but not wholly uneducated, who belonged to “the kidney of Castile,” and had not been affected by the Italianate style of the Court. Her own great character is stamped on every line. Nobody ever showed less of the merely emotional saintly character, “Meandering about, capricious, melodious, weak, at the will of devout whim mainly!” Her letters, which are not only the most attractive part of her writing but even the most valuable, show her not only as a great saint but as a great lady, with a very acute mind, a fine wit, and an abounding good sense.

Santa Teresa’s disciple and colleague in the reform of the Carmelites, Juan de la Cruz, whose family name was Yepes (1542-1591), not unjustly named the Ecstatic Doctor, was emphatically a saint of the “melodious” order. His emotional—not to say gushing—style has been, and is, much admired by the Spaniards. To us it seems that nobody stands in greater need of being judged by the widest interpretation of the text, “To the pure all things are pure.” There is an amatory warmth of language, an application to religion of erotic images in Juan de la Cruz, which, considered in itself, and apart from what justified it at the time, is nauseous. A quite sufficient example will be found in the much-quoted verses in his *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, which begin, “En una noche oscura.” Yet Juan de la Cruz wrote eloquently in his emotional way, and his verse is beautiful.

These are but a very few names from among the

Spanish mystic, moral, and ascetic writers, but it would only be a very full history of Spanish religious literature which would deal with *Decadence of the Mystic writers.* Jerónimo Gracian (not to be confounded with Baltasar), with Juan de Jesus Maria, or Eusebio Nieremberg. As the seventeenth century drew on there was continually less thought in Spanish religious literature and more emotion, while that emotion had an increasing tendency to abound in the amatory images of Juan de la Cruz.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All the writers mentioned here will be found in the *Tesoro de Escritores Místicos Españoles* of Ochoa. Paris, *n. d.*

## CHAPTER VII.

## ELIZABETHAN POETRY.

THE STARTING-POINT—ITALIAN INFLUENCE—THE OPPOSITION TO RHYME—EXCUSES FOR THIS—ITS LITTLE EFFECT—POETRY OF FIRST HALF OF ELIZABETH'S REIGN—SPENSER—ORDER OF HIS WORK—HIS METRE—CHARACTER OF HIS POETRY—SIR P. SIDNEY—THE 'APOLOGIE FOR POETRIE'—HIS SONNETS AND LYRICS—WATSON—THE SONNETEERS—OTHER LYRIC POETRY—THE COLLECTIONS AND SONG-BOOKS—THE HISTORICAL POEMS—FITZ-GEOFFREY AND MARKHAM—WARNER—DANIEL—DRAYTON—THE SATIRIC POETS—LODGE—HALL—MARSTON—DONNE.

A LONG silence and two generations of effort preceded the renaissance of English poetry, which may conveniently, though perhaps somewhat arbitrarily, be said to date from the publication of the *Shepherd's Calendar* in 1579. The choice of this year as the actual starting-point is arbitrary, because

*The starting-point.* Spenser was already recognised by his friends as the "new poet," and his work was known among them in manuscript. It had therefore begun to live, and to exercise an influence, before it was given to the world. But the convention which treats the ascertainable date of printing, and not the first moment

when the poet's mind began to create, as the starting-point, is useful, and we may (always remembering that it is a convention) put 1579 at the head of the history of the great Elizabethan poetry.

With us, as with the Spaniard, the spark, which was to grow into so great a flame, was brought from Italy. Before Spenser there had been Surrey and Wyatt, who had worked in the Italian metres in the reign of Henry VIII., and their example had been set up for all to follow by the publication of *Tottel's Miscellany* in 1557. There had also been the leaders of the New Learning, and the classic models. But the resemblance

*Italian influence.* between the history of poetry in the two countries goes no further. Italy could affect only individual Englishmen. No such similarity of language, beliefs, and character existed between the two countries as would have enabled Italy to press on us as it did on Spain, all along the line. There was not the same proximity, nor had there been an equally close previous relationship of pupil to master stretching far back into the Middle Ages. The Italian influence in England was rather an incitement to independent effort than a mere pattern to be copied, as it was to the Spaniard. Nor were the Greek and Latin models more, though in this case a deliberate effort was made to bring English verse into subjection to ancient prosody. Much ridicule was shed then, and has been poured since, on those who endeavoured to write English verse by quantity only. The quaint pragmatic figure of Spenser's friend Gabriel Harvey, who was the most conspicuous, though not



the first of the school, was of itself enough to confer  
*The opposition* a certain absurdity on the effort. And the  
*to rhyme.* verse produced in this struggle to do the  
 impossible was altogether worthy of Harvey's oddities.  
 Putting aside Stanyhurst's *Æneid*, published in 1582,  
 which is the most bulky example of misapplied labour,  
 it ought, one would think, to have been warning  
 enough to those who thought to force English into  
 an alien mould when they found a writer of the real  
 intelligence and natural good taste of Webbe, author  
 of *The Discourse of English Poetrie*, contentedly pro-  
 nouncing such a line as this:—

“Hedgerows hott doo resound with grasshops mournfully  
 squeeking.

Webbe did worse, for he seems really to have be-  
 lieved that he improved Spenser, whom he admired  
 and recognised as the new poet, when he turned the  
 song in *The Shepherd's Calendar* beginning—

“Ye dainty Nymphes that in this blessed brooke  
 doo bathe your brest,”

into this:—

“O ye Nymphes most fine who resort to this brooke  
 For to bathe your pretty breasts at all times,  
 Leave the watrish bowers hyther and to me come  
 At my request now.”

Yet the mistake of Webbe was one which Spenser  
 himself, and Sidney, had so far shared that they  
*Excuses for* played with the classic metres. Nor was  
*this.* it altogether absurd, but, on the contrary,  
 natural, and even inevitable. When there were no

native models newer than Chaucer to follow, and when the splendour of classic literature was just being fully recognised, it was not wonderful that men who were in search of a poetic form should have been deluded into thinking that they could reproduce what they admired, or should have agreed with Ascham that “to follow rather the Goths in rhyming, than the Greeks in true versifying, were even to eat acorns with swine, when we may freely eat bread among men.”

Then this mania, pedantry, or whatever other evil name may be given it, never attained to the dignity of doing harm. No Englishman who could  
*Its little effect.* write good rhyme was ever deterred from doing so by the fear that he would become a Goth, and eat acorns with swine. The real belief of the Elizabethan poets was expressed in *The Arte of English Poesie*, which tradition has assigned to George Puttenham. If we have not the feet of the Greeks and Latins, which we “as yet never went about to frame (the nature of our language and wordes not permitting it), we have instead thereof twentie other curious points in that skill more than they ever had, by reason of our rime, and tunable concords, or simphonie, which they never observed. Poesie therefore may be an arte in our vulgar, and that very methodicall and commendable.” *The Arte of English Poesie* was published in 1589. Webbe’s discourse had appeared three years before. The conflict, such as it was, was really over, though the superiority of “versifying” to rhyming might continue to be discussed as

an academic question. Thomas Campion, who, as if to show the hollowness of his own cause, was a writer of rhymed songs of great beauty, might talk "of the childish titilation of riming" in his *Art of English Poetry* in 1602, and be answered by Daniel in his *Defence of Ryme*, but they were discussing "a question of the schools." The attempt to turn English poetry from its natural course belongs to the curiosities of literary history.

Poetry so completely dominated the literature of Elizabeth's reign that we can leave not only the prose, which was entirely subordinate, but the drama, poetic as it was, aside for the time. There was no great drama till the poets had suppld and moulded the language. The example set by Surrey and Wyatt had no such immediate influence as had been exercised by Boscan and Garcilaso in Spain. Part even of their own work hardly rose above the level of the doggerel to which English verse had fallen. Those who look for an explanation of the flowering or the barrenness of literature elsewhere than in the presence or absence of genius in a people, may account for this by the troubled times which followed the death of Henry VIII. But the return of peace and security with the accession of Elizabeth brought no change. The first twenty years of her reign were as barren as the disturbed years of Edward or Mary. Indeed they were even poorer, for Sackville's Induction to *The Mirror of Magistrates* and his *Complaint of Buckingham*, which have been recognised as the best verse

*Poetry of first  
half of Eliza-  
beth's reign.*

written in England between Chaucer and Spenser, though not published till Elizabeth was on the throne, had been written before 1559—in the reign of Mary. Between this year and the publication of *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) the voice of poetry was not mute in England—at least not the voice of those who were endeavouring to write poetry. When Webbe spoke, with more emphasis than respect, of the “infinite fardles of printed pamphlets,” mostly “either meere poetically or which tend in some respects (as either in matter or forme) to poetry,” by which “this country is pestered, all shoppes stuffed, and every study furnished,” he was not wholly exaggerating. Translators were very busy, and not a few published original work. There were certainly many others who wrote but did not publish. But these fore-runners could in no case have deserved more than the praise which Sir John Harington gave to one of them, George Turberville:—

“When times were yet but rude thy pen endeavoured  
To polish barbarism with purer style.”

Their inferiority to Surrey, Wyatt, and Sackville diminishes their claim even to so much as this.

They were enslaved to the old fourteen-syllabled metre, which might or might not be printed in lines of eight and six, but which, in whatever way it was arranged, had a fatal tendency to fall into a rocking-horse movement. We constantly meet with rhymes like these:—

“The hawtye verse that Maro wrote  
 made Rome to wonder muche,  
 And mervayle none for why the style  
 and weightynes was such,  
 That all men judged Parnassus Mownt  
 had clefted herselfe in twayne,  
 And brought forth one that seemed to drop  
 from out Minervaes brayne.”

These verses, which are from Barnabe Googe's *Epitaph* on Thomas Phayre, are not bad examples of a kind of metre which seems to come naturally to Englishmen, but their capacity for turning to doggerel is patent. They, with here and there a note which shows that if the writer had had the good fortune to be young after, and not before, *The Shepherd's Calendar*, he might have contributed to the great body of exquisite Elizabethan songs, make the staple of the verse of the first half of the reign. These men are entitled to their own honour. They rough-harrowed the ground. George Turberville, who was born about 1530 and died about 1594; George Gascoigne, whose dates are 1535 or thereabouts to 1577; and Barnabe Googe, born in 1540, who died in 1594, tried many things; and if they did nothing else, they helped to extend the knowledge of the average Englishman, and to give practice to the language by their translations. The strongest of the three was Gascoigne, who, in addition to his attempt to write a verse satire—*The Steel Glass*—was the author of some pretty occasional poetry, of a translation of Ariosto's *Gli Suppositi*, stories from ~~Bandello~~, and a tragedy of Euripides, and who may be said to have begun the writing of critical essays in English by his

brief note of Instruction for the construction of English verse, published as a preface to *The Steel Glass*.<sup>1</sup>

The sincerity with which the best intellects in England were studying poetry, and looking for a poet, helps to explain the instant recognition of Spenser. At this moment the times called for the man, and he came. Edmund Spenser was born in London, probably in 1552, of a Lancashire branch of a very ancient and famous house. His family was poor, and he received his education at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, as a sizar. He remained at Cambridge from 1569 to 1573, and it is believed that he then spent some time in the north of England with his family before coming to London

*Spenser.* to seek his fortune. It could be obtained in one way only—by the favour of friends who could secure him a place. That Spenser was resolved to make poetry the chief aim of his life is certain; but he could not live by it at a time when no form of literature, with the exception of the drama, brought certain payment, and even the drama gave but starvation wages. He had to rely on the willingness of powerful patrons to see him provided for because he was a poet. Spenser was not without friends who might have been useful. At Cambridge he had become known to Gabriel Harvey, who, as the older man, a good scholar, and perhaps also as a person of prag-

<sup>1</sup> *Tottel's Miscellany* has been reprinted by Mr Arber, who has also republished Gascoigne's *Steel Glass*, and the *Ecloques*, *Epitaphs*, and *Sonnets* of Barnabe Googe in his English reprints. Turberville is in vol. ii. of Chalmers's *British Poets*. Works of Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, 1859.

matical self-confidence and indomitable pertinacity, exercised a certain limited influence over him. Harvey introduced Spenser to Leicester and Leicester's kinsman, Sir Philip Sidney. His undoubted Puritanism was, it may be, in part learnt from the equally undoubted though very different Puritanism of the queen's favourite. But Leicester did, and it may be could do, little for his client. *The Shepherd's Calendar* was published in 1579, a year or two after Spenser came to London, but he had no share in "the rich fee which poets won't divide." There is no need to look far for the causes of his disappointment. Elizabeth had little money, and much to do with it, while her Lord Treasurer, Burghley, who had no love for Leicester, was the man to meet any pensioned poet with the ungracious attitude of Sully to Casaubon: "You are no use, sir, and you cost the king as much as two captains." In 1580 Spenser accompanied Lord Grey to Ireland, where estates of confiscated land were to be won. From that time he was plunged into the horrible strife between the anarchy of Celtic Ireland and the repression of the queen's officers, who fought for order with ferocious means. He obtained a grant of land in County Cork, married in 1594, and reached some measure of prosperity. A small but apparently ill-paid pension was granted him. The rebellion of 1598 shattered his fortunes altogether. His house at Kilcolman was burnt in the usual fashion of the brutal Irish wars, and it was said that one of his children perished with it. Spenser fled to England, and died on the 16th January 1599 — "for lack of bread,"

according to Ben Jonson, and undoubtedly in great poverty.

It seems certain that he began writing very young, for some translations from Petrarch and Joachim du Bellay, which were afterwards reprinted unchanged, or changed only by rhyme, in his acknowledged works, appeared in *The Theatre of Voluptuous Worldlings* of John Van Noodt in 1569. Ten years, however, passed before he published *The Shepherd's Calendar*, and then an equal period before he prepared to bring out the first three books of *The Faërie Queen*, which was registered at Stationers' Hall on the last day of 1589, and appeared in the following spring. Next year—1591—appeared the minor poems, under the name of *The Complaints* (*The Ruins of Time*, *The Tears of the Muses*, *Virgil's Gnat*, *Mother Hubberds Tale*, *The Ruins of Rome*, *Muiopotmos*, and *The Visions*). The address to the reader gives a promise of other poems, which have been lost; and it may be noted that the same thing had happened with *The Shepherd's Calendar*. The *Daphnaida* followed. In 1596 the *Amoretti*, the *Epithalamium*, *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*, the fourth, fifth, and sixth books of *The Faërie Queen*, the Hymns, and the *Prothalamium* were published within a short time of one another. Nothing more was to appear in his life. Part of a seventh book of *The Faërie Queen*, and a prose treatise giving a very vivid, very true, and very terrible "View of the Present State of Ireland," were printed after his death. The treatise did not come out for thirty



years, when it was published by Sir J. Ware. The Fragments were included in the new edition of *The Faërie Queen* in 1611.

Few great poets were ever so little beholden to predecessors as Spenser. He had before him Chaucer, and near his own time Sackville, who had written with original force in Chaucer's stanza. There were also the Italians, whom he knew well, their few English followers, and the French poets of the *Pléiade*. In his *Shepherd's Calendar* Spenser imitated the Italian copies of the classic Eclogues, and he translated from the French. Neither he nor any man could live uninfluenced by his time. The notes of the Renaissance are abundantly audible in his work—its love of beauty, its desire for joy, and the melancholy which was natural in men whose ideals were unattainable in a very harsh world, which was never harder than amid the disruption of faith, the violent clash of contending forces, and the unchaining of violent passions, of the sixteenth century. But there

might have been all this, and no Spenser.

*His metre.*

He is great by what was wholly his own, both in form and spirit. *The Shepherd's Calendar* may be called the work of his prentice hand, done when he had not attained complete control of his own vast powers. Yet it is not so far below the impeccable verse of his later years as it is above the level of his immediate predecessors in Elizabeth's reign. The part of imitation which there is in it is the weakest. What he inherited from nobody was the new melody he imparted to English poetry. It

is out of his own genius that he perfected the form in which that melody found its full expression. The Spenserian stanza does not appear in *The Shepherd's Calendar*; but it had been constructed, and was being used in the earlier cantos of *The Faërie Queen* at least immediately after the earlier work was finished. It is surely no longer necessary to argue that this form was not imitated from the Italians. The *ottava rima* and the sonnet may have—indeed must have—helped Spenser with indications, but they did no more. Had he been an imitator he would have done as the Spaniards did,—he would have taken an already finished form, and would have adhered to it slavishly. But he did a very different thing. He constructed a stanza which is to English what the *ottava rima* is to the Italian. It is just the difference between a successor and a mere follower, that whereas the second toils to reproduce the letter, the first gives a new form to the spirit. The relation in which Spenser stands to the Italians is that he carried on the torch of great poetry, but he lit it of English wood, and bore it to a measure of his own. His sonnet is hardly less independent than his stanza, and all talk of obligation to any model becomes idle indeed when we think of the melody of the Hymns, the *Epithalamium*, and the *Prothalamium*.

The matter which this form bodied forth to the world is not to be expressed in our meagre prose.

*The character of his poetry.* It could be uttered only in his own perfect verse. The mere doctrine may be defined with no overwhelming amount of difficulty, for there

is a strong and, not only unconcealed but, firmly avowed didactic aim in Spenser. It was no purpose of his to be "the idle singer of an empty day." He held with his friend Sir Philip Sidney that the poet "doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue." The poet in their creed was the seer, and Spenser strove to fulfil his lofty function by teaching the Platonism which endeavours to trace back the love of virtue and the love of beauty to that divine origin where they are one, and by singing a Puritanism which is the poetic expression of the Englishman's innate conviction that the religion which is not interpreted into conduct is an empty hypocrisy. But all this didactic side of Spenser is the side which was not necessarily poetic. In so far as the Hymns merely teach a Platonist doctrine, they do not surpass the final pages of Castiglione's *Courtier*. In so far as *The Faërie Queen* is an allegory, it is no more consistent, ingenious, or perfectly adapted to its purpose than *The Pilgrim's Progress*. But over all that could be adequately expressed in prose Spenser cast a spell which carried it into the realm of fancy—that golden world of the poet which Sir Philip Sidney contrasted with nature's "brazen" earth. A very trifling change in the wording of one passage of *The Apologie for Poetrie* is all that is needed to make it applicable to *The Faërie Queen*: "Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapistry as 'this poet hath' done, neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers; nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely." It is to this word that the

attempt to estimate Spenser finally leads. By the magic of his melody, and the force of that imagination which could transmute all from prose to poetry, he made a lovely world of poetry out of the real earth. When he used ugliness, as he could, it was for the purpose of heightening beauty by contrast.

As the poet of *The Faërie Queen*, Spenser stands apart in his time. He is connected with his contemporaries by the sonnet. This form, introduced into English literature by Surrey and Wyatt, had been little, and ill, cultivated in the duller generation which followed them. But with the revival of the poetic genius of England towards the middle of the queen's reign, it naturally attracted men who were in search of richer and more artful forms of verse. Moreover, it lent itself to the expression of feeling, and that was of itself enough to make it popular with a lyrical generation. For this reason the sonnet work of the Elizabethans has been made subject to a great deal of comment which is not of the nature of literary criticism. It has been treated as a form of confession and veiled autobiography. Various considerations—the limits of space being not the least important among them—make it impossible to discuss the question at length here. Moreover, where the external evidence is naught, and the internal evidence is subject to various interpretations, which is always the case, comment on the inner meaning of the sonnets must always be more or less guesswork. To start from arbitrary premisses, with the certainty of arriving at no definite conclusion, ought to be considered

a waste of time. Sidney may have decided to leave it on record that he found out his love for Penelope Devereux too late, and that he then hovered round the thought of adultery. Shakespeare may have made poetry out of his friendship and his love. If so, the passions which left them so much masters of themselves as to be able to produce these artistic forms of verse cannot have been very absorbing. Finished sonnets do not come to men either in their sleep or in anguish. What we know for certain of Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare, and others is, that they lived active lives in the world, and that they were artists. The nature of the artist is that he endeavours to give form to the passion or action which he can conceive, in the terms of his art, whether he be poet, painter, or actor. It is because he has the constructive imagination and the power of expression that he gives truth to his work. The genius which could give reality to the sorrow of Constance, to the manhood of the Bastard, to the jealousy of Othello, to more men, women, and passions than could be named on this page, was quite adequate to giving the same reality to the scheme of the Sonnets. As much may be said of the other Elizabethans, each in his place in the scale. From the literary point of view, too, it is of no importance how the debate be settled. Poetry is not valuable because it tells us that this or the other dead poet felt as a man the common hopes and disappointments of humanity, but because it fixes what all men can feel in forms of immortal beauty.

The sonnet was much cultivated in the literary

society gathered around Sir Philip Sidney in and about 1580. His high birth,—he was son of Sir Henry Sidney, Lord President of Wales and Lord Deputy in Ireland, and nephew of Elizabeth's sinister favourite, the Earl of Leicester,—the fact that he stood in the relation of patron to many of the men of letters of his time, his amiable personal character, and the heroic circumstances of his death in a skirmish fought to prevent a Spanish convoy from entering the besieged town of Zutphen in 1586, have combined to make Sir Philip Sidney a very shining figure. It is possible that he is more conspicuous than his intrinsic power would have made him without the gifts of fortune. Yet there must have been a great personal fascination in the man who could inspire the reverential love which was felt for Sir Philip Sidney by Fulke Greville, while his *Apologie for Poetrie*, his *Arcadia*, the sonnets collected under the title of *Astrophel and Stella*, with his other poems, remain to prove that wherever he had been born he would have left his mark on the time.

*The Arcadia* may be left aside for the present, but *The Apologie for Poetrie*, though written in prose, cannot, without violently separating things akin to one another, be taken apart from his poetry. It is to some extent our English equivalent for the *Deffense et Illustration de la Langue françoise* of Joachim du Bellay, the manifesto of a new school of poets. The circumstances in which the two were written differ widely. The Pleiade, with the Frenchman's usual love of a large and minute *ordonnance*,

drew up a scheme for the conquest and orderly division of the poetic world. Sir Philip Sidney was provoked into writing his little treatise by a very foolish tract printed in 1579, and named *The School of Abuse*, the work of one Stephen Gosson (1535-1624), an unsuccessful playwright who took orders, and lived to a great age as a clergyman of Puritanical leanings. *The School of Abuse*, which was absurdly dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney without his consent, and perhaps because he was the nephew of the chief protector of the Puritans, is in itself insignificant, except in so far as it contains a statement of the narrow puritan view that all modern poetry was wicked, and that the theatre was the home of every corruption. It is chiefly worth naming now because Sidney did it the signal honour to give it an answer. The *Apologie for Poetrie* is in no sense an *Ars Poetica*. Sidney does not deal with the formal part of poetry. He replies to those who belittle it by an emphatic assertion that it is the noblest of all things. The view and the spirit of the Elizabethan time are nowhere more clearly shown than in the *Apologie*. That Sidney fell into one gross heresy is true. He said that poetry was independent of metre. But that was not an error likely to mislead either himself or others. Against it has to be set his conception of poetry as the noble expression of that which in itself is fine, made for a lofty purpose. There may not be much guidance in this; but it is not as a guide that the *Apologie* is to be considered, but as the challenge of the coming English poetry, lyrical, epic, and

dramatic—a declaration that it was to be something more than ingenious exercises in metres, that it was to be the expression in beautiful form of passion and thought, of fancy and imagination. If English poets of that generation looked up to Sidney, it was not only for the reasons given above, but because he spoke early and worthily to the enemy at the gate. The style of the *Apologie* is full of the animation and sincerity of the writer. It has a colour and melody unknown to the downright sober English of his predecessor Ascham or his contemporary Puttenham, and is free from the conceits of his own *Arcadia*.

Sidney was himself one of the first to sound the high note of the great Elizabethan poetry.

No part of his work was printed in his life. The *Arcadia* was prepared for publication immediately after his death in 1586, but it did not appear till 1590, and then first in a pirated edition. A more accurate version followed in 1593. The *His Sonnets and Lyrics.* sonnets and other lyric pieces, collected under the title of *Astrophel and Stella*, were printed in 1591, and the *Apologie for Poetrie* in 1595. His metrical version of the Psalms remained in manuscript till 1823, while some fragments of his verse have only been recovered recently by Dr Grosart.<sup>1</sup> But the date of printing was comparatively unimportant at a time when a poet's work not only could be, but generally was, known in manuscript to the reading world long before it was published. Sidney was renowned

<sup>1</sup> *The Complete Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, edited by the Rev. A. B. Grosart, 2 vols., 1873, in "The Fuller's Worthies Library."



as a poet and prose-writer in his lifetime, and his case is only one of many. Therefore we may fairly count his influence as having been exercised from the day when his sonnets were handed about among his friends, which must have been as early as, if not earlier than, 1580. Those to whom they came must have learnt at once that the day when Gascoigne, Turberville, Googe, or an industrious decent verse-writer of the stamp of Churchyard, represented English poetry, was over. The sonnets are not all on the same high level. The epithet of "jejune" which Hazlitt applied to Sidney cannot be justly used of any of them; but the sonnet beginning, "Phœbus was judge betweene Jove, Mars, and Love," or the other which has for first line, "I on my horse and love on me, doth try," or the third, "O grammar-rules, O now your virtues show," are not equally safe against the other epithet "frigid." They are at least more marked by laboured and cold-blooded conceit than by passion or fancy. Yet even these have an accomplishment of form which was new, and in the others the greater qualities are by no means rarely shown. The first in the accepted order—"Loving in truth and faine in verse my love to show,"—with its ringing last line, "'Foole,' said my Muse to me, 'looke in thy heart and write,'" and the last, "Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust," are abundantly lofty and passionate; and were, in the sense in which the word was used, "insolent"—that is, unprecedented—in the English poetry of that generation. To these it would be easy to add many others.

“With how slow steps, O Moon”; “Having this day my horse, my hand, my lance,” are but two of them; while the sonnet “Good brother Philip” is a gem of gaiety overlaying passion. Sidney did not confine himself to the so-called legitimate form of two quatrains and two tercets, but tried experiments. He stretched the term sonnet as far as it will go when he applied it to twelve Alexandrines and a heroic couplet. Nor was it in the sonnet only that Sidney set an example. The songs of *Astrophel and Stella* usher in the great Elizabethan lyric, in which there is nothing to surpass the “Doubt you to whom my Muse these notes entendeth” in soaring melody. The verse which abounds in the *Arcadia* and the metrical version of the Psalms does not reach the level of the *Astrophel and Stella*. Yet it appears inferior only when judged by his own best work, and the best that was to follow. We may doubt whether Sidney has a claim to the place in the active life of Elizabeth’s time assigned him by the affection of Fulke Greville and by tradition, but there can be no question that he stands beside Spenser as one of the beginners of the unsurpassed poetic literature of her reign.

It is mainly on historical grounds that mention must be made of his contemporary Thomas Watson (1557-1592). Watson was a busy writer of  
*Watson.* verse and translator, whose claim to be remembered now rests on this, that he was working at the sonnet beside Sir Philip Sidney, and independently of him. What he called a sonnet was a set

of three stanzas of six lines, each complete in itself.<sup>1</sup> There the independence of Watson ends. His sonnets are avowedly imitations of Italian or French originals when they are not translations. But his chief work, the *Hecatompithia, or Passionate Century of Love*, has an undoubted value as a piece of evidence. It supplies a link in the chain of literary history, and then it gives what may be called a glimpse into the workshop of a sonnet-cycle maker. Watson candidly confesses, in a "Letter to the Friendly Reader," that his pains in suffering the pangs of love which his sonnets record are "but supposed." His less ingenuous followers leave us to guess as much concerning them. But in addition to this there is an *apparatus criticus* which in everything except bulk bears a very close resemblance to the pedantic commentaries added by his admirers to the early editions of the Spaniard Góngora. Each sonnet is introduced, explained, annotated, and the passion it is to express described, and we are shown the machinery at every stage. One of these introductions contains what is, in fact, a by no means bad criticism on the whole body of the sonnets. "This Passion," No. xli., "is framed upon a somewhat tedious, or too much affected, continuation of that figure of Rhetorique whiche of the Greeks is called *παλιλλογία* or *ἀναδίπλωσις*, of the Latins Reduplicatio." Somewhat tedious, too much affected, and full of repetitions are these sonnets; but they show the increased mechanical skill of our writers of verse, and they are historically interesting. When

<sup>1</sup> *Poems of Thomas Watson*, in Arber's English reprints.

tempted to make autobiography out of the cycles of other sonneteers, it is well to remember Watson's confession, and also this, that to have a lady for the saint of your literary devotions had been "common form" as far back as the troubadours. His later work, *The Tears of Fancy*, is in regular quatorzains.

The popularity of the *Astrophel and Stella* (there were three editions in the first year in which it was printed—1591), as well as the example it set, help to account for the profuse production of sonnet cycles in the next few years. The following list, which does not profess to be exhaustive, of the collections published before 1595, will show the wealth of Elizabethan literature in this form: The *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* of Barnabe Barnes (which owes its survival to the accident which has preserved a single copy at Chatsworth, reprinted by Dr Grosart), the *Licia* of Giles Fletcher, and the *Phillis* of Thomas Lodge, were published before the end of 1593. In 1594 appeared the *Celia* of William Percy, Constable's *Diana*, Daniel's *Delia*, and Drayton's *Idea*. To these may be added the names of Willoughby's *Avisa*, which, however, does not consist of sonnets, and the anonymous *Zepheria*. Spenser's *Amoretti*, or love sonnets, belong in date of publication to 1595. Three other collections—the *Fidessa* of Griffin, Lynch's *Diella* (thirty-eight sonnets, prefixed to the amorous poem of *Diego and Genevra*), and the *Chloris* of W. Smith, belong to 1596. The sonnet, too, was written by others who did not construct cycles. Every reader of *The Faërie Queen* knows the splendid "Me thought

I saw the grave where Laura lay," by Sir W. Raleigh, and its less legitimately built successor, "The praise of meaner wits," which was addressed less to Spenser's masterpiece than to the vanity of Queen Elizabeth. During many long fallow years of silence the poetic genius of the English race had been accumulating, and it wanted but a touch to set it free. Even among the poets named here who are not otherwise famous, there was some measure of original power. Putting aside Spenser, who towers over all, the finest lyric force was in Lodge, and the most uniform accomplishment in Daniel. It was left to Shakespeare to give the greatest of English sonnets, but the form he preferred — the three rhymed quatrains and the couplet — had been polished and established as the prevalent English type by Daniel.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Elizabethan age was great in all forms of pure literature, except the prose romance and the satire, and was not wholly barren even of these, yet it was more copious, more uniformly excellent in the lyric, than in any other. Sir Walter Scott has spoken of the wind of poetry which blew throughout that wonderful generation. He was thinking of the drama; but this general inspiration which gives its grandeur to the activity of the time is to be traced more widely, and with less admixture of weakness in its songs, than in any other of its manifold activities. But this very extension of the lyric faculty, and the number of the

<sup>1</sup> For Barnes, Percy, Constable, Lynch, *Zepheria*, and Smith, see Mr Arber's *English Garner*; for Daniel and Drayton, vols. iii. and iv. of Chalmers's *British Poets*.

singers, makes it not merely difficult but impossible to deal fully with the subject within the limits of our space. Of the sonnet writers we can speak with some approach to completeness, for there the field, though large, is not boundless. But the freer forms of lyric spread over all the life and literature of England. Raleigh, who was a soldier, politician, discoverer, colonist, historian, political writer, and amateur chemist, was also a lyric poet of more than note. So were the Jesuit missionary Southwell and the courtier Earl of Oxford. Some of the most beautiful lyrics in the language were written by pamphleteers, prose story-writers, and dramatists. The composer wrote his own songs, and some of them are among the best, while many are only just below that level. So much was the time penetrated by poetic fire, that gems of verse are to be found in its song-books for which no known author can be traced.

The general wealth of the time in lyric poetry can be better appreciated by taking its miscellaneous collections, whether of pure poetry or of verse written to accompany music, than by a list of the names of writers who may be held to deserve particular mention. Putting aside *Tottel's Miscellany* as belonging to an earlier time, though it was repeatedly reprinted under Elizabeth, and *The Mirror of Magistrates*, which stands apart, there were numerous collections of minor pieces made in the queen's reign. *The Paradise of Dainty Devises*, 1576; *A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions*, 1578; *A Handful of Pleasant Delights*, 1584; *The Phœnix Nest*, 1593;

*The Collections  
and Song-books.*

*England's Helicon*, 1600; *A Poetical Rhapsody*, 1602; *England's Parnassus*, 1600; and *Belvedere, or the Garden of the Muses*, in the same year, are the names of some of them. To these are to be added the list of song-books collected or written by Byrd, Yonge, Campion, Dowland, Morley, Alison, Wilbye, and others.<sup>1</sup> Some of the poems in these collections have always been known, but they contain many which had fallen entirely into obscurity. There can have been very few readers to whom Mr Bullen's collection, made from a class of books which in most ages are full of mere insipidities, was not a revelation. The point is that it represents not the exceptional work of the time, but the average production, which we may almost call commercial, or the poets' corner, and that being this, it maintains such an extraordinarily high level of inspiration and melody. It is not a mere question of that workmanlike dexterity which a great poet, as Scott said half humorously, but not without truth, to Moore, can teach a receptive generation. Spenser himself could never have taught anybody to produce such a piece of genuine lyric poetry as the "Fain would I change that note," which Mr Bullen quotes from Captain Hume's *First Part of Airs*. It, and much else only less good, would not have been written without Spenser and Sidney; but it is one thing to be influenced by great models, and another merely to echo them.

<sup>1</sup> Mr Arber in his *English Garner*, and Mr Bullen in his *Lyrics from the Song-books of the Elizabethan Age*, 1887, have made selections from these sources.

The love of verse led in England, as in Spain, to the production of not a little in what is almost inevitably a bastard kind—the historical poem. By *The historical poems.* attempting to do in poetry what could be adequately done in prose, the authors of *The History of the Civil War* or of *The Barons' War*, condemned themselves to be often dull, or to endeavour to escape dulness by mixing purely romantic episodes with what professes to be record of matter of fact. The romance is superfluous to those who read for the history, and the history is tiresome to those who read for the romance. Our own historical poems are commonly the more subject to the danger of dulness, because the authors, unlike the Spaniards, did not, as a rule, choose the great events of their own time, or of the previous generation, of which the memory was still fresh. They went back to the past, which they could only know through books. This would have done no harm if they had used their authorities only to find "local colour" for their romance. But they did not. They aimed at even a minute historical accuracy, and thereby condemned themselves to produce works of learning in an inappropriate shape. It is no doubt bad criticism to condemn any form of literature for being itself and not another. Yet we could spare even the *Polyolbion* for an Elizabethan Mariana, which Drayton, whose prose was excellent and whose learning was great, might well have been, and still have left himself free to write his sonnets, his *Nymphidia*, and his *Ballad of Agincourt*.

The curious literary bad fortune which has pursued



the achievements of Englishmen at sea is well illustrated by the vehement, but also frothy and flamboyant, poem of Charles Fitz-Geoffrey, called *Sir Francis Drake, his Honourable Life's Commendation and his Tragical Death's Lamentation*. It is in the seven-line stanza which Drayton, after first trying it, renounced as too soft for the subject of his *Barons' War*. Fitz-Geoffrey wraps up the substantial figure of Sir Francis in clouds of hyperbole, and makes a terrible abuse of the figure called "by the Latines Reduplicatio." We see the great corsair only in glimpses through the very smoky flames of Fitz-Geoffrey's melodious rhetoric. *The most honourable Tragedie of Sir Richard Grinvill*, by Gervase Markham, in an eight-lined stanza, very flowing and mythological, has much the same defect. The author, who founded his poem on Raleigh's pamphlet describing the last fight of the *Revenge*, endeavours to "out-cracke the scarcrow thunderbolt."

Three names stand out among the writers of historical poems—William Warner, because he was at once a forerunner to the others and a link between the poetry of the earlier and the later Elizabethans; Daniel, for a certain mild, yet grave, wisdom; Drayton, for his manly force and intrinsic poetic power. Warner, who was born about 1567, and who certainly died in March 1609 (the year in which Shakespeare's Sonnets were published), was attached in some uncertain relationship as client or servant to the Careys, Lords Hunsdon. His historical poem, *Albion's England*, was in part written before

*Warner.*

1586, when it was suppressed for some unknown reason by an order of the Star Chamber.<sup>1</sup> If this date is correct, the decidedly jejune account of the defeat of the Armada, and the most unfriendly passage on the execution of Queen Mary, must have been added later. Warner had written a collection of prose stories called *Syrinx*, as he says, "with acceptance." But his claim to be remembered rests on his *Albion's England*, a long poem in the old seven-foot or fourteen-syllable metre, on the history, and more particularly on the legends of the history, of England. His well-established reputation as "a good, honest, plain writer" is fully deserved. Warner, indeed, carries plainness so far that in the most poetic passage of his book—the episode of Curan and Argentill, in which there is a genuine simple poetry—he tells us that the hero "wiped the drivel from his beard." Beginning at the creation of the world, he comes down to his own time, with constant digressions into romantic episodes of his own growing, and classical or Biblical tales. He does not always escape the tendency of his metre to drop into a jog-trot, yet in the main he canters briskly along with a very fair proportion of spirited lines. His farewell to Queen Mary is worth quoting, both as an example of his verse and as a rather engaging mixture of charity and implacability:—

"Then to her wofull servants did she pass a kind a-dew,  
And kissing oft her crucifix, unto the block she drew,  
And fearless, as if glad to dye, did dye to papisme trew.

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<sup>1</sup> Chalmers's *British Poets*, vol. iv.

Which and her other errors (who in all did ever erre)  
 Unto the judge of mercie and of justice we referre.  
 If ever such conspirator of it impenitent,  
 If ever soule pope-schooled so, that sea to Heaven sent,  
 If ever one ill lived did dye a papist Godwards bent,  
 Then happie she. But so or not, it happie is for us,  
 That of so dangerous a foe we are delivered thus."

His moderate length (a fairly girt reader can begin and end him in a longish evening), his disregard for mere historical fact, and a certain childish downright-ness, make Warner easier reading than much better poets. Although Warner adhered to the fourteener in the face of Spenser and Sidney, he was so far affected by their example that he generally raised his verse above the mere rocking-horse motion, which is its special bane.

Samuel Daniel, the son of a music-master, was born near Taunton in 1562, and was educated at Magdalen Hall, Oxford. He began by translating  
*Daniel.* the *Imprese* of Paulus Jovius, and his first independent works were his sonnets to *Delia*, already mentioned. It is possible that he went abroad as servant to Elizabeth's ambassador in France, Lord Stafford, and that he visited Italy before 1590. Although Daniel wrote two tragedies—*Cleopatra* and *Philotas*—they were on the classical model, which our stage has never tolerated, and he therefore could not live by literature, since it was then only the theatre which paid. It was necessary for him to seek support in the service of rich people. He found it in the patronage of the Pembroke family, and was afterwards tutor to the daughter of the famous sea-

faring Earl of Cumberland. In his later years he was in the service of Queen Anne, the wife of James I., as "inspector of the children of the Queen's revels," and as groom or "gentleman extraordinary of her majesty's private chamber." At the end he appears to have achieved independence, for he died on a farm of his own near Beckington in 1619.

In spite of the interruptions caused by his tutoring, at which he repined not a little, Daniel was a voluminous writer. He was the author in prose of a history of England down to the reign of Edward III., popular in its day, and of the excellent *Defence of Rime* in answer to Campion's belated plea for "pure versifying." But it is as a poet that Daniel ranks in English literature, though with a limitation, somewhat roughly worded by his stronger contemporary Drayton, who said that "his manner better fitted prose." This would be a very unfair judgment if it were applied to all his work without qualification. *The Complaint of Rosamonde*, his first considerable poem, published in 1592, is neither in manner nor matter better fitted for prose. It is a very poetic retelling of the legend of Henry II.'s mistress in the favourite seven-line stanza. His moral epistles in verse escape the vice of mere moralising by virtue of a loftiness of sentiment which is fitly enough wedded to poetic form. Yet there is none of the "lofty, insolent, and passionate" note of the Elizabethans in Daniel, and Drayton's harsh sentence may be applied with little or no restriction to the *Civil Wars*. Daniel's claim to honour was as well stated by himself in some pre-

fatory verses to an edition of his poems in 1607 as by any of the many good judges of literature who have praised him :—

“ I know I shall be read among the rest  
 So long as men speak English, and so long  
 As verse and virtue shall be in request,  
 Or grace to honest industry belong.”

Grace to honest industry seems but a humble plea for the poet. We may paraphrase it with more dignity and not less truth by saying that Daniel was a most accomplished and conscientious artist in verse, who had a genuine, but mild, poetic nature. The care he took to revise his work is evidence of his conscience as a workman, and the fact that his changes were commonly for the better is proof of his judgment. It is mainly the beauty of his English which will cause him to be read for ever among the rest. If it never has the splendour of the greatest Elizabethan poetry, neither does it fall into “ King Cambyses’ vein,” into the roaring fury which gave an outlet to the exuberant energy of that time. Southey gave Daniel as the nearest English equivalent to Camoens, on the ground that the main charm of both is the even purity of their language. This of itself is hardly compensation enough for the undoubted tediousness of his *Civil Wars*, which tell the essentially dreary history of the Wars of the Roses down to the marriage of Edward IV.<sup>1</sup>

It was perhaps partly his dislike of the Bohemian habits of his brother men of letters which has left the

<sup>1</sup> Chalmers’s *British Poets*, vol. iii. Complete works, edited by Dr Grosart. 5 vols., 1885-1896.

life of Michael Drayton so obscure. He was a Warwickshire man of respectable parentage, but so poor that he owed his education to the kindness of patrons. The date of his birth was 1563, and he died in 1631, well into the reign of Charles I. If confidence can be placed in the jottings of Drummond of Hawthornden, there was at one time an armed neutrality between Jonson and Drayton; but Jonson wrote some highly laudatory verses on the *Polyolbion*, and we need not place too much reliance on casual remarks he threw out in conversation when he had no knowledge that his words were to be written down. It is known, too, that Drayton was patronised by Prince Henry, who in his short life was the friend of many men of pith and substance, from Raleigh to Phineas Pett the ship-builder. Ill-founded legend asserts that he was of the party in the carouse which is said to have been the death of Shakespeare.

Drayton<sup>1</sup> was a stronger man than Daniel, and there came forth more sweetness from him. No writer of the time was more voluminous. The *Drayton.* sonnets, to which he seems to have been somewhat indifferent, form a very small portion of his work. Whenever he began to write (it is said that his love of literature was shown when he was a boy), he did not publish early. His first poem—*A Harmonie of the Church*—appeared in 1591. It was suppressed by the censorship, then directed by Archbishop Whitgift,

<sup>1</sup> Chalmers's *British Poets*, vol. iv. A very thorough monograph on Drayton by Mr O. Elton has been published by the Spenser Society, 1895.

but republished under another title, *The Heavenly Harmonie of Spiritual Songs and Holy Hymns*, in 1610. In 1593 he published nine eclogues with the title of *Idea*, a name also given to the sonnets printed in 1594. It is to be noted that the famous sonnet beginning, "Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part," which is so superior to the others, and so like Shakespeare's, was first included in the edition of 1619. Drayton, like Daniel, was much in the habit of revising his work. He not uncommonly incorporated his earlier poems in his later with great changes. In 1596 appeared the awkwardly named *Mortimeriados*, in the seven-line stanza, recast and republished in *ottava rima* in 1603 under the title of *The Barons' Wars*. Between these two came the *Heroical Epistles* in 1597. In 1604 Drayton made a most unfortunate attempt to win the favour of James I. by flattery, and he also published a satirical poem, *The Owl*, and his *Moses in a Map of his Miracles*. To 1605 belongs a collection of short poems, including the most famous of his minor poems, except the universally known sonnet, the magnificent *Ballad of Agincourt*. The years which follow were employed in the composition of his vast *Polyolbion*, of which nineteen books appeared in 1613, and which was completed in 1622. Between these dates he brought out an edition of his poems in 1619. In 1627 he went back on the battle of Agincourt, and produced the poem of that name, together with *Nymphidia* and *The Misceries of Queen Margaret*. At the very close of his life, in 1630, he published the gay and graceful *Muses' Elysium*. He wrote also for

the stage, to which he had no natural inclination, in an occasional and subordinate way.

This list, which is not exhaustive, will show that the forty years of Drayton's known activity were remarkably well filled. And the quality of this great bulk of work was not less remarkable than the quantity. It may be allowed at once, and without conceding too much to the eighteenth-century criticism, which talked of his "creeping narrative," that much of his poetry is dull to other readers than those who find all dull except the last smart short story or newspaper scandal. The reader who can master *The Battle of Agincourt* (not the Ballad), *The Miseries of Queen Margaret*, and *The Barons' Wars* without an effort may hold himself armed against the more laborious forms of study. Drayton indeed tempted dulness when he chose for subject the Barons' War of Edward II.'s reign, and did not also decide to make the "she-wolf of France" his heroine and to throw history to the winds. Yet even in these the strong poetical faculty of the writer can never be forgotten. The longest of all his poems—the *Polyolbion*, or "Chorographical Description of all the Tracts, Rivers, Mountains, Forests, and other parts of Great Britain," which may be described as a poetical guide-book to his native country—is not dull, though it cannot be praised as exciting. Drayton may have made an error when he decided to write it in the long twelve-syllable line, and not in his favourite eight-line stanza, which, in the words of his preface to *The Barons' Wars*, "both holds the time clean through to the base



of the column, which is the couplet at the foot or bottom, and closeth not but with a full satisfaction to the ear for so long detention." Yet he has mastered his unwieldy verse, and after a time, when the reader's ear has become attuned to the melody, his at first rather strange mixture of topography, legend, and vigorous romantic flashes rolls on in a majestic course. It is a proof of the essential strength of Drayton that his most delicate work—the fairy poetry of the *Nymphidia* and the *Nymphalls* or *Muses' Elysium*—belongs to his later years. He grew sweet as he mellowed.

A time so rich as the Elizabethan in new forms of literature could hardly fail to produce the satirist.

*The Satiric  
Poets.*

In this case also there were Italian and, it need hardly be added, Classic models to follow, and they were followed. Satiric writing there had always been, and that inevitably, since so soon as men began to record observation at all they would see that there was much vice and folly in the world, and from this experience all satire springs. The satiric spirit abounded in the prose pamphlet literature of the time. Between this and the help afforded by the Latin models, who supplied the ready-made mould, the poetic satirists were led forward by the hand. As a class, and in so far as they were satirists, they were the least interesting body of writers of their time. It is very necessary to limit this estimate to their satires; for the four who may be mentioned here are all, for one reason or another, notable men, or even more. Lodge, without ever attaining to originality or power of the first order, was a success-

ful writer in many kinds. Marston has a deservedly high place in our dramatic literature. Hall, though that part of his life lies outside the scope of this book, was a divine and controversialist of mark in his later years. Donne, who however belongs in the main to a later time, is one of the most enigmatical and debated, alternately one of the most attractive and most repellent, figures in English literature.

If Hall's boast in the Prologue to his Satires—

“ I first adventure, follow me who list,  
And be the second English Satirist,”

is to be taken seriously, he must be supposed to have claimed the honour of leading. If so, he must also be presumed not to have known *The Steel Glass* of Gascoigne, an undeniable though rambling and ineffective satire, belonging to the first half of the queen's reign. He certainly ignored the earlier claim of Lodge, whose *Fig for Momus* appeared in 1595, two years before the first six books of Hall's *Virgidemiarum*. But it may be that he wrote long before he printed, and in any case the originality is not great enough to be worth fighting over, since both were followers of Latin originals; while it appears more than probable that Marston and Donne were turning their thoughts in the same direction about the same time. In fact, the Poetic Satire was so certain to arise that many men may well have begun it together in complete independence one of another.

*Lodge.*

The satire of Lodge is confessedly a mere echo of Horace.

This cannot be said of the Satires of Joseph Hall. Hall, who in his very interesting brief autobiography says that he was born on the 1st January, *Hall.* 1574 (which, if he went by the old official calendar, means 1575), and was educated at the Puritan College of Emmanuel, Cambridge, lived to attain the bishopric of Exeter, to play a conspicuous part in the early days of the Long Parliament, to be translated to Norwich in the eclipse of King Charles's fortunes, and to be rabbled out of his palace by the Puritans. He died at Heigham in 1656. His Satires, therefore, appeared when he was at the utmost only twenty-three. Although marked by a certain youthful loftiness of moral pose and some impudence, they show an undoubted maturity of form much more meritorious than it would be now, when there is so much more in English to copy. In "A Postscript to the Reader," printed with the first issue of the *Virgidedmiarum* (a pedantic title taken from *Virgidedmia*, a gathering of rods), he states what undoubtedly was the literary faith of the satirists of the time: "It is not for every one to relish a true natural satire, being of itself, besides the nature and inbred bitterness and tartness of particulars, both hard of conceit and harsh of style, and therefore cannot but be unpleasing both to the unskilful and over-musical ear." In other words, a rough form and a deliberate violation of melody were proper to satire. Marston and Donne acted on that rule. But Hall in his own verses is not markedly hard of conceit or harsh of style. His couplets flow easily enough, carrying with them

shrewd but not very important remarks on the contradictions of sinners. We can well believe that when Pope was shown them late in life he wished he had seen them sooner, and that he thought the first satire of the sixth book "optima satira." Hall's attitude of superiority to a sinful world is rather comic in a young gentleman who knew no more of it than lay inside the walls of "pure Emmanuel." His worst fault was a habit of sniffing at contemporary poets, whose poetic shoe-latchet he was not worthy to undo. He falls upon the sonneteers and their "Blowesses" (*i.e.*, Blowsibellas) after a fashion afterwards bettered by Swift with his incomparable brutality.<sup>1</sup>

Marston's first set of Satires were printed under the assumed name of W. Kinsayder in 1598, together with a poem called *Pygmalion's Image*. A second instalment of the Satires followed next year, and both bear the same title—*The Scourge of Villainy*. There was not much villainy to which Marston had better call to apply the scourge than the greasy lubricity of *Pygmalion's Image*. He preferred to scold at his contemporaries in verse which is as pleasant to read as charcoal would be to eat, and to lecture an imaginary world made up of vices which he took at second hand from Latin books, in a style which raises the image of ancient Pistol unpacking his heart with curses.

<sup>1</sup> *Satires by Joseph Hall*. Chiswick Press, 1824.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE EARLIER DRAMATISTS.

THE FIRST PLAYS—RESISTANCE TO CLASSIC INFLUENCE—ADVANTAGES OF THIS—AND THE LIMITATIONS—THE DRAMATIC QUALITY—CLASSIC, SPANISH, AND FRENCH DRAMA—UNITY IN THE ENGLISH PLAYS—‘RALPH ROISTER DOISTER’—‘GAMMER GURTON’S NEEDLE’—‘GORBODUC’—FORMATION OF THE THEATRE—LYLY—GREENE—PEELE—KYD—MARLOWE—CHARACTER OF THESE WRITERS—SHAKESPEARE—GUESSES ABOUT HIS LIFE—ORDER OF HIS WORK—ESTIMATES OF SHAKESPEARE—DIVISIONS OF HIS WORK—THE POEMS—THE DRAMAS—THE REALITY OF SHAKESPEARE’S CHARACTERS.

THREE plays stand at the threshold of the Elizabethan drama—*Ralph Roister Doister*, *Gammer Gurton’s Needle*, and *Gorboduc*, or *Ferrex and Porrex*. None of the three indicate the course which that dramatic literature was destined to take. *Gammer Gurton’s Needle* is a spirited farce of low life, holding if from anything, then from the mediæval comedy as it flourished in France. *Ralph Roister Doister*, as became the work of a schoolmaster, is full of reminiscences of the Latin comedy. *Gorboduc* is an open imitation of the Senecan tragedy.

When the great and natural authority of the classic

models is allowed for—when we remember how many writers for the stage, not only here but wherever the theatre flourished, were university wits—when the taste of the time for moralising is taken into account, it is rather to be wondered at that this pattern proved so unattractive as it did. The predominance of the French drama of the seventeenth century must not lead us into over-estimating the rarity of the independence required to reject the classic model in the time of the Renaissance. Corneille and Racine did indeed establish a “correct” form of tragedy, largely constructed on classic lines. But this was part of a general, and far from inexcusable, reaction towards order, measure, and restraint in literature. During the Renaissance the influence of the classic drama was confined to producing a false dawn of the French tragedy. Italy achieved no considerable drama. The classics, both the great Greek and the lesser Latin, were presented to Spain in translations, and by scholarly critics, only to be rejected. The *Nise Lastimosa* of Gerónimo Bermudez, with here and there a tentative effort in early plays, is all that remains of the teaching of translators and men of learning. Among ourselves *Gorboduc* had little immediate following, and when Daniel in the very early seventeenth century tried to succeed where Sackville had failed, he wrote for the literary coterie of the Countess of Pembroke and for nobody else. Between the two there is Kyd’s translation of Garnier’s *Cornelia* or so, and that is all.

For this we have undoubtedly reason to be thankful,

and so have the Spaniards. Both nations had the spirit to be themselves on their stage, which is something; and then we have had a freer Shakespeare, a more spontaneous Lope, than would have been possible if the three unities and the complete separation of tragedy from comedy had been accepted in the two countries. Yet we may be thankful with more moderation than we commonly show. It is not to be taken for granted that the choice lay between freedom and a convention. It was rather between one convention and another. The Spanish stage is not unconventional. It has a different convention from the French—that is all. Ours made its own rules, less precise than the Spanish or the classical, but none the less real. “*Tanto se pierde por carta de mas, como por carta de menos,*” says the Spanish proverb. The card too much is a loss as much as the card too little; and a convention which says “You shall” is no less tyrannical than the convention which says “You shall not.” A drama which will allow no mixture of comedy with tragedy is unquestionably limited, and is condemned to give no full picture of life. But a drama which is forced to insert comic scenes is equally under an obligation. The clown who figures as porter in *Macbeth* is not necessarily more in place than the murder of a king would have been in *The Taming of the Shrew*. To say that you may fairly keep your comedy unmixed by tragedy, but must never allow your tragedy to be unrelieved by comic scenes, is as arbitrary a rule as any other. Un-

doubtedly the reaction from the strained emotion of tragedy to lighter feeling is natural—and that is the sufficient artistic justification for the jests of Hamlet. But this just observation does not excuse the insertion into a tragic action of independent comic scenes which have no necessary connection with the main personages and action.

The history of the Elizabethan drama is the history of the formation of an English dramatic convention. The questions are what it was, and what were its merits. These questions are not settled by the answer that Shakespeare was the greatest of dramatists. That he would have been in any case. What is greatest in him—his universal sympathy with all nature and his unerring truth to life—was wholly personal. He shared it with nobody. If the Elizabethan drama is Shakespeare, and a ring of men whom we are content to know wholly by “beauties,” which beauties, again, are lyric poetry and not drama, then it is quite superfluous to treat it as dramatic literature at all. The Bible does not belong to a class, and neither does Shakespeare in those qualities which raise him above all others. We must look at him as standing apart; and as for the others, if that for which they are worth studying is their lyric poetry, or their mighty line, or this or that touch of genuine pathos or fine interpretation of character in flashes, it is unnecessary to consider them as writers of plays. If there was an Elizabethan dramatic literature in any other sense than this, that many poets wrote for the stage and put noble poetry into a machinery not essentially dramatic,



it must be studied apart from what was purely Shakespeare. And that is not difficult to do. On his predecessors he could have no effect, and it is only necessary to turn from him to any contemporary or successor to see how little they shared with him in all that was not mere language and fashion of the time.

I trust it will not be thought superfluous to attempt a definition of what we ought to look for in judging dramatic literature. Dryden, whose example cannot well be followed too closely in criticism, acknowledges the need for a definition of a play early in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. Lisideius, one of the interlocutors in the conversation, gives this, with the proviso that it is rather a description than a definition: "A just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind." Now this is neither definition nor description of a play. There is not a word in it which does not apply to *Gil Blas*. Dryden was himself well aware of its insufficiency, for he makes Crites raise "a logical objection against it"—that it is "only a *genere et fine*, and so not altogether perfect." Yet he leaves the matter standing there. That he, who was himself a playwright, should have been content to do this when dealing with the drama is one proof how much English literature had lost "the sense of the theatre." If Lisideius had not been thinking of literature, but of literature as adapted to the stage, he would have said (but in Dryden's incomparably better

way) something like this: "A play is an action, put before an audience by dialogue and representation, forming a coherent whole, in which all the parts subserve a general purpose, and are dramatically good only in so far as they do." Lyric beauty, good moral reflection, vigorous deliveries of human nature, are, however good in themselves, as little able to make a good play as the most beautiful ornament is to make a fine building.

It is the unity of the action which constitutes the good play, and it may be obtained by different methods. A dramatist may obtain unity by means of the passion or by the working out of a single situation. Of the great Greek dramatists I cannot speak with expert authority, but as far as they are visible in translations as in a glass darkly, they appear to have achieved unity in this way to the full. The chorus, which in inferior hands offers irresistible temptations for wandering talk, always carries on the action, while what we see is the outward and visible sign of some terrible force working behind. This ever-present sense of the something reserved driving before it what we are allowed to see, with an undeviating directness of aim, gives by itself an awful unity of interest to the tragedy. The Spanish dramatist gains his unity by artful construction of his story, and by subordinating passion and character to the mere action. The French stage in its great days aimed at using the same resources as the Greek, though with certain mechanical changes, such as the dropping of the chorus, and the division of

*Classic,  
Spanish,  
and French  
drama.*

its work among the personages, which in itself was no great gain.

Our own drama adopted neither device. It neither concentrated its attention on the one situation or *Unity of the* passion, nor did it subordinate all to the *English play.* march of an action. There remained to it to do this—to secure unity by giving to the play the unity of life itself—by showing us human nature working in all its manifestations, of love and hate, heroism and cowardice, laughter and tears. Every rule suffers exceptions. There are many pure comedies in our dramatic literature, while Ben Jonson showed at least a strong leaning to accept the unnecessary unities of time and place in order to attain more effectually the indispensable unity of action. Yet the distinguishing feature of our great dramatic literature on its constructive side is that it threw tragedy and comedy together, and that it relied for its unity on an inner binding force of life. This is the greatest skill of all, but it is for that very reason the most difficult of attainment. It presupposes in the dramatist a sympathy with all humanity from Lear to Parolles, and with that a power of creation and construction incomparably greater than is needed to build by the classic rules, or to put together an artful story worked out by stock-figures on the Spanish model. Its dangers are obvious. When the dramatist had no natural tragic power he would be in constant peril of falling into fustian. When he was deficient in a sense of humour, he would be tempted to fall back for his comedy on mere grossness. His action, being free to wander in time and space, would

have a constant tendency to straggle, and the play would become a mere succession of scenes following one another "like geese on a common." The strict following of the classic rules, which work for concentration, helps to preserve the dramatist from these errors, at the cost of limiting his freedom. To Shakespeare they would have been a slavery, but it is not certain that they would not have been a support to Marlowe or Middleton, who stood much less in need of freedom than of discipline and direction. So while feeling duly thankful for that resistance to the authority of the classics which helped to give us Shakespeare, we may remember that it also helped to give us many comic scenes which it is hardly possible to read without feeling ashamed for the men who wrote them, and many so-called plays which are only shapeless combinations of scenes, bound together by no other nexus than thread and paper.

*Ralph Roister Doister*, the earliest known English comedy, was written apparently about 1530, and printed some fifteen or sixteen years later. Ralph Roister Doister. The date of the printing of a play is notoriously no test of its date of composition or acting, but only of the time when the actors had no further motive for keeping it in their own hands in manuscript—that is, when it ceased to be popular on the stage. *Ralph Roister Doister* was the work of Nicholas Udall, headmaster of Eton and Westminster, and is full of reminiscences of Plautus. *Ralph Roister Doister* himself is our old friend the *miles gloriosus* adapted to the conditions of London life in the time of Edward VI.

Matthew Merrygreek, described as a "needy humorist," is our no less familiar friend the parasite. Merrygreek feeds on the vanity and credulity of Ralph Roister Doister, who is made up of conceit, bluster, and cowardice—who thinks that every woman who sees him falls in love with him, and is of course baffled and beaten in the end. It is written in sufficiently brisk lines of no great regularity; and there are much duller plays. Ralph's courtship of Dame Christian Custance, who will have none of him, is lively. On the whole, the play leaves the impression that Udall was more than a mere imitator of Plautus, but it is only the school exercise of a clever man.<sup>1</sup>

"The right pithy, pleasant, and merry comedy, entitled *Gammer Gurton's Needle*," is believed, on good Gammer Gurton's Needle. evidence, to have been written by John Still (1543?-1608), a churchman, who died Bishop of Bath and Wells. It was played at his college, Christ's, Cambridge, in 1566, but may have been written three years earlier. However that may be, it was certainly written in his youth. Nothing could well be less academic or clerical. Though divided into five acts, it is, in fact, a farce not unlike much mediæval French comedy. The plot is one of a familiar class which will always hold the stage under new forms, and the working out is of the simplest. Gammer Gurton loses her needle, and then finds it, just where she ought to have looked for it, after upsetting the house by searching in unlikely places, and disturbing the village by unjustly suspecting her

<sup>1</sup> Dodsley's *Old Plays*. Edited by W. Carew Hazlitt. Vol. iii.

neighbours of theft. It is unquestionably too long, but it is very far from dull. There is a directness of purpose in *Still* which is decidedly dramatic, and with it a power of characterisation by no means contemptible. All the personages, and notably the wandering beggar, Decon the Bedlam, have a marked truth to humble human nature. They are coarse, but not wilfully and unnecessarily coarse. There are none of those strings of mere nasty words and images which serve as foil to the poetry of the true Elizabethan comedy. *Still* is honestly naturalistic, neither toning down the truth of the rough talk of rude people, nor lavishing bad language from an apparent wish to startle. If he had not entered the Church, which made it indecent for him to work for the stage, he might have given us a series of spirited naturalistic comedies. As it is, *Gammer Gurton's Needle* stands alone. The facts that it contains the capital drinking-song, "Back and side go bare, go bare," and that it is written in the prevailing seven-foot metre, are all that connect it with the later comedy.<sup>1</sup>

We have seen that the Latin comedy had much to do with *Ralph Roister Doister*. The Latin tragedy is directly responsible for a much more ambitious effort, the play variously named *Gorboduc*, or *Gorboduc*. *Ferrex and Porrex*, generally attributed to Sir Thomas Sackville, afterwards Lord Buckhurst, though a claim is made for the part-authorship at least of Thomas Norton. If it had been the intention of the author to establish a prejudice against

<sup>1</sup> Dodsley's *Old Plays*. Edited by W. Carew Hazlitt. Vol. iii.

the regular tragedy in the minds of his audience, he could hardly have done better than write this painfully dull play. The very metre, which is the heroic couplet, moves by jerky steps of the same length, and is inexpressibly wooden. Nor is that by any means all. *Gorboduc* has all the faults and none of the possible merits of its kind. The "regular" tragedy on the classic model needs the concentration of the interest on one strong situation. But *Gorboduc* is a long story of how the king of that name divides his kingdom between his sons; how they quarrel, and one kills the other; how the mother slays the slayer; how the people kill her and her husband, and are then killed by the nobles. It is all told in speeches of cruel length, and is necessarily full of repetitions. A very curious feature of the play is the insertion between the acts of dumb shows intended to enforce the excellence of union, the evils of flattery or of anarchy, which have a decided flavour of the morality. The *Induction* to *The Mirror of Magistrates* and *The Complaint of Buckingham* remain to show that Sir T. Sackville was a poet; but *Gorboduc* is the very ample proof that he was no dramatist. The play, which one thinks must have bored her extremely, was given before the queen by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple in 1561.<sup>1</sup>

The suspension—not, indeed, of activity but of growth—in literature which marks the first years of the queen's reign was as marked in drama as in pure poetry. Udall, Still, and Sir T. Sackville had no

<sup>1</sup> Dodsley's *Old Plays*, 1825.

following to speak of, and it was not until a new generation had grown up that the first signs of the real Elizabethan drama became visible. The production of pieces for the theatre did not cease, but they belong to the past not to the coming time. The taste for shows was strong, and it was served. But the pieces of this interval are the descendants of the morality, not the ancestors of Shakespeare's drama. We can leave them aside, for they had no following. There is no *Auto Sacramental* in English literature.

*Formation of the theatre.* Before that could come it was first necessary to have a theatre, in the sense of a place of public amusement, managed by professional actors, and not only an occasional stage on which corporations and societies performed from time to time. The formation of the theatre in the material sense was the work of these earlier years; but this, which is, moreover, very obscure, does not belong properly to the history of literature. It is enough to note that a body of men working together did here what Lope de Rueda did in Spain. A class of actors was formed. Like him, they often wrote themselves. In both countries the theatre was thoroughly popular, which was not, it may be, altogether an advantage. At least the fact that the same man might be manager of a theatre and keeper of a bear-garden—as Alleyn was—points to the existence of influences which did not visibly work for the production of good literature in the theatre. In England, as in Spain, much was inevitably written to please what may be called the bear-garden element of the audience. In Spain this



tended to separate itself into the *pasos*, *mojigangas*, *entremeses*, dances, and so forth, which were given between the three *jornadas* of the *comedia*. With us all was thrown into the five acts of the play, and this difference in mechanical arrangement was not without its influence on literary form.

The flowering of the Elizabethan drama dates from the middle years of the queen's reign. By this time the theatre was formed, and the taste for it was strong. It naturally attracted many writers, if only because it was the most direct and effective way in which they could make themselves heard, to say nothing of the fact that it was by far the most certainly lucrative of all forms of literature, and therefore had an intelligible attraction for all who lived by their pens. Among them it was inevitable that there should be not a few who had no natural faculty for dramatic literature—Lodge, for instance, and Nash. Both lived much about the theatre, and their relations with it, and the writers for it, figure largely in the gossiping pamphlets of the time. But they wrote for it only by necessity or accident, and their dramatic work is altogether subordinate. As much might be not unfairly said of John Lyly; but his plays are so curious, and held so considerable a place in the estimation of his time, that he cannot be put wholly aside.

Custom has ruled that the name of Lyly shall be followed by the words "the author of *Euphues*." Custom has in this case decided rightly. Lyly was always the author of *Euphues*. This didactic tale falls to be discussed with the prose of the

*Lyly.*

time, but we may note that it is composed of a very slight framework of story, from which blow out clouds of words arranged in quaint and not inelegant patterns. No drama can be made out of such materials, and, properly speaking, the plays of Lyly are not dramatic.<sup>1</sup> Unlike most of his contemporaries, he was attached to the Court, though, according to his own melancholy summing-up of the results of his labours, he obtained nothing as a reward. He was born in Kent about 1554, and was educated at Oxford. It may be that he went on to Cambridge, according to what was then a common custom. So little is known of the rest of his life that biographers have been driven to make matter by identifying him with a certain Mr Lilly, a bold, witty atheist, who harassed Hall in his first living, and whose sudden death from the plague is recorded by the satirist and future Bishop of Norwich, with pious satisfaction, among the various examples of divine intervention on his own behalf. If he sat in several Parliaments, Lyly cannot have altogether wanted means and friends. He may have lived into the reign of James I., and died in 1606. His plays were part of his service as a courtier. They were not written for the vulgar theatre, but to be performed by the "children of Paul's" or "of the Queen's Chapel" before the queen at the New Year feasts. Here he would have an audience which already admired his *Euphues*, published in 1580, and was well content to hear him "parle Euphuism." To this we may partly attribute the fact that, while his contemporaries were making

<sup>1</sup> *Dramatic Works of John Lyly*. Edited by F. W. Fairholt, 1858.

blank verse the vehicle of the higher English drama, he showed a marked preference for the use of prose, and also for mythological and classical subjects. The names of his undoubted plays are *Alexander and Campaspe*; *Sapho and Phao*; *Endimion, or The Man in the Moon*; *Gallathea*; *Mydas*; *Mother Bombie*; *The Woman in the Moon*; and *Love's Metamorphosis*. They were written between 1584 and the end of the century. Lyly, as has been said, was no dramatist. His plays do not advance in any coherent story. They rotate or straggle. When, as in *Mother Bombie*, he did attempt to construct a comedy of intrigue, the result is mere confusion. The faults of his style have been made familiar to all the world by Falstaff's immortal address to Prince Hal: "For though the camomile, the more it is trodden on the faster it grows, yet youth, the more it is wasted the sooner it wears. . . . There is a thing, Harry, which thou hast often heard of, and it is known to many in our land by the name of pitch: this pitch, as ancient writers do report, doth defile," and so on. The antitheses work with the regularity of pistons; there is a steady march past of similes, drawn as often as not from a natural history worthy of Sir John Mandeville, and arranged in twos or threes. His humour is of the kind which makes a reader imitate the example of Sancho when he saw his master cutting capers in his shirt on the slope of the Sierra Morena—retire in order to escape the spectacle of a good gentleman making an exhibition of himself. Yet in his grave and poetic moments there is a prim charm about Lyly, and a frosty moonlight glitter which

is attractive. His snatches of song are among the best in an age of lyric poetry.

Lyric poet tempted or driven by necessity on to the stage is the description which must be given of two of his contemporaries, who in other respects *Greene.* differed from him very widely—Robert Greene and George Peele. If we are bound to take his own confessions, and the abuse poured on his grave by that bad-blooded pedant Gabriel Harvey, quite seriously, we are compelled to believe that Greene ended a thoroughly despicable life by a very sordid death. But a little wholesome scepticism may well be applied both to Greene's deathbed repentance and to the abuse of his implacable enemy. There was in the Elizabethan time a taste for a rather maundering morality, and for a loud-mouthed scolding style of abuse. The pamphleteers talked a great deal about themselves, and conducted wit combats, which were redolent of the bear-garden and backsword combats. La Rochefoucauld's observation, that there are men who would rather speak evil of themselves than not speak of themselves at all, may also be kept in mind. A weak, conceited, self-indulgent man, with a genuine vein of lyric poetry and of tenderness, is perhaps as accurate a summing up as can be given of Greene. He was born in 1560 and died in 1592, worn out by a Bohemian life led in a very exuberant time. There seems to be no doubt that the end was very miserable. Greene has enjoyed an unfortunate notoriety on the strength of a passage in his last pamphlet, *The Groat's Worth of Wit*, in which he abuses Shakespeare.

Everybody has heard of the "only Shake-scene in the country," the player adorned with the feathers of Greene himself and other real poets. Historically it is of some value as proving that Shakespeare was known and prosperous in 1592. It also helps to give the measure of Greene, that while he was affecting for the press all the agony of a deathbed repentance—partly no doubt sincere enough—and was exhorting his friends to flee destruction, he could break out, with all the venom of wounded vanity, against the man who had succeeded where he himself had failed. If we had the good fortune to know nothing of the life of Greene, he would rank as a respectable writer who had a share in a time of preparation for a far greater than himself or any of his associates. His prose stories—largely adapted from the Italian—include one, *Pandosto*, which had the honour in its turn to be adapted and made into poetic drama by Shakespeare in *The Winter's Tale*. His undoubted work for the stage which survives was all published after his death with bad or little editing. The first printed, *Orlando Furioso*, taken from a passage in Ariosto, is hopelessly corrupt. The others are—*A Looking-Glass for London and England*; *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*; *Scottish Story of James IV.*; the *Comical History of Alphonsus, King of Aragon*; and the doubtful *George-a-Green, the Pinner of Wakefield*.<sup>1</sup> With Greene we come to something at once very different from Lyly, and quite new,—to the vehement exuberant Elizabethan drama, which in strong hands reaches the loftiest heights of poetry

<sup>1</sup> *Dramatic Works of Robert Greene*. Dyce, 1833.

and passion, but in others falls to the lowest depths of rant, or runs to the very madness of fustian. It is not the greater achievement that we must look for in Greene. His heroics are "comical," in a sense not designed by the printer of *Alphonsus*. Drawcansir is hardly an exaggeration of that hero, and is incomparably more coherent. His comic scenes have too commonly the air of mere hack work put in to supply parts for the clowns of the theatre, while his plots are mere successions of events frequently unconnected with one another. But in the midst of all is the undeniable vein of tenderness and lyric poetry. All the scenes in his best play, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, in which Margaret the Fair Maid of Fressingfield is introduced, are charmingly fresh and natural. With more discipline, and no temptation to serve the taste of the time for King Cambyse's vein, Greene might have been the author of pleasant little plays of a poetic sentimental order written in a charming simple style.

His contemporary George Peele was slightly the older man, and outlived Greene a very few years. He was born about 1558, and was dead by 1598, in a very sordid way. Of his life very little is known except that he was the son of the "clerk" of Christ's Hospital, that he was educated at Broadgates Hall, now Pembroke College, Oxford, and that he was a thorough Bohemian. His reputation in this respect was so solidly founded that he was made the hero of a book of "jests," which, in fact, are tales of roguery mostly reprinted from older French originals. Peele

worked regularly for a company of actors, and no doubt did much which cannot now be traced. Commentators, who have striven hard to prove the unprovable in the history of the Elizabethan Drama, have assigned him portions of the First and Second Parts of *Henry VI*.<sup>1</sup> His undoubted plays are — *The Arraignment of Paris*, *The famous Chronicle of King Edward I.*, *The Battle of Alcazar*, *The Old Wives' Tale*, and *David and Fair Bethsabe*. To these may be added *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*, which is written in the old seven-foot metre, and differs from the others greatly. But custom has assigned it to Peele, who indeed uses the long line elsewhere. Peele was a decidedly stronger man than Greene, but a writer of the same stamp and limitations. What is best in him is the lyric note and the tenderness. The first is well shown in not a few passages of the *Arraignment of Paris*, a somewhat overgrown masque, written for the Court and to flatter Elizabeth; and the second in the *David and Bethsabe*. His chronicle play, *Edward I.*, has a certain historical value as illustrating the growth of the class, and it is notorious for the hideous libel it contains on the character of Eleanor of Castile; while *The Battle of Alcazar* is interesting in another way, as an example of the boyish "blood and thunder" popular at the time, of which Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* is the masterpiece. It is the equivalent to Greene's *Alphonsus*; but if not more sane it is more substantial, and does really contain

<sup>1</sup> *Dramatic Works of George Peele*. Dyce, 1883.

lines which are poetry and not rant, though the rant is there in profusion.

Thomas Kyd need hardly be mentioned here except for the purpose of leading on to the master of the school, Marlowe. He is a very shadowy <sup>Kyd.</sup> figure, who may have been born in 1557, and may have died in 1595. His voice is still audible in *The Spanish Tragedy*, and perhaps in *Jeronimo*. The first-named is a continuation of the second—if the second were not written to supply an introduction to the first. They too are “blood and thunder,” with the occasional flash of real poetry, which is found wellnigh everywhere in that wondrous time.

Greene, Peele, and Kyd, in spite of the independent merit of parts of their work, are mainly interesting because they were forerunners of Shakespeare, and aided in the formation of the English drama. If it had wanted *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, or *David and Bethsabe*, it would no doubt have been the poorer, but by things not great in themselves, and still less indispensable. If it had wanted the author of *Doctor Faustus*, it would have been the poorer by a very

<sup>Marlowe.</sup> great poet. Christopher Marlowe was born in 1564, in the same year as Shakespeare and was the son of a shoemaker. Probably by the help of patrons he was educated at the grammar-school of the town, and went from it to Corpus Christi College at Cambridge. The other events of his life are mainly matter of guesswork till we come to the fact that he was stabbed in a tavern brawl at Deptford on the 1st June 1593. He was accused of



exceeding even the large Bohemian licence of life of his contemporaries, and of atheism. The evidence is neither direct nor good, but it is certain that a warrant for his arrest, and that of several of his friends, on the charge of disseminating irreligious opinions, was issued by the Privy Council about a fortnight before he was killed. At a time when all the once accepted foundations of religion were being called in question, sheer denial was naturally not unknown. Given the vehemement spirit of all his work, it is as probable that Marlowe went this length as that he stopped short of it. The truth is in this case of little importance, for Marlowe's place is among the poets, not the controversialists, of the sixteenth century.

As a poet Marlowe stands immediately below Spenser and Shakespeare, but between them and every other contemporary. He fails to rank with them because he wanted their range, and also because there was something in him not only unbridled, but incapable of submitting to order and measure. For a moment, and from time to time, he shoots up to the utmost height of poetry, but only in a beam of light, which lasts for a very brief space and then sinks out of view. In these happy passages of inspiration he showed what could be done with English blank verse. It had been written before him, since it was first used by Surrey in his translation of the *Æneid*, but Marlowe was its real creator as an instrument of English poetry. This was his great achievement. His fragment of *Hero and Leander*, though a beautiful poem of the mythological and rather lascivious order popular at the time, and

full of a most passionate love of beauty, nowhere attains to the height of the constantly quoted "purple patches" from the first part of *Tamburlaine*, from *Dr Faustus*, or from *The Jew of Malta*. In themselves they are unsurpassable, yet his plays cannot by any possible stretch of charity be called good. What we remember of them is always the passage of poetry, expressing in the most magnificent language some extreme passion of ambition, greed, fear, or grasping arrogance, or some sheer revel of delight in the splendour of jewels and the possibilities of wealth. There are few scenes, in the proper sense of the word, and there is much monotonous repetition. The second part of *Tamburlaine* is the same thing over and over. The first two acts of *The Jew of Malta* promise well, and then the play falls off into incoherence and absurdity. Marlowe, though an incomparably greater man, seems to have been as blind as Greene or Peele ever were to what is meant by consistency. His Barabas, for instance, who is represented as a wicked able man, is suddenly found putting his neck in the power of a new-bought slave in a fashion hardly conceivable in the case of a mere fool. *Dr Faustus* holds together no better than Barabas. There is something more astonishing still. A poet may be able to express passion in splendid verse, and yet be able neither to construct a story nor create a character, but we do not expect to find him dropping into what, as mere language, is childishly inept. Now that is what Marlowe did. The difference is not that between Wordsworth at his best and his worst. It is the difference between

Dryden and the bellman's verses—between poetry and rank fustian, or commonplace. His short life, and the conditions in which it was passed, made it inevitable that the bulk of Marlowe's work should be but little. *Tamburlaine*, *Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*, *Edward II.*, and ~~*The Massacre of Paris*~~ sum up the list of the plays which we can be sure were wholly his. *The Tragedy of Dido* was written in collaboration with Nash. Beyond this there is a supposition, supported by greater or less probability, that he had a share in *Lust's Dominion* and in *Titus Andronicus* and *Henry VI.* To the plays are to be added the fragment of *Hero and Leander*, *The Passionate Shepherd*, and the translations from Ovid written in his earlier days.<sup>1</sup>

If the question is asked what this body of poets had done to advance the development of the English drama, the answer must be that they had done something to improve its language. More can hardly be claimed for them. They certainly give no example of how to construct a dramatic story, nor did they create a consistent interesting character, unless Greene's Fair Margaret be allowed as an exception. That you did very well as long as you took care that something happened, whether it was what the personage would have done, or what would follow from what went before, or not, was apparently an accepted rule with all of them. It was somewhat strange that it should have been so, for all were educated men, and were deeply conscious of their learning. Even if they did not take the

<sup>1</sup> *Works of Christopher Marlowe.* Dyce, 1865.

classic model, which, as they were all far better qualified to write a chorus than to construct a plot, it would have been to their advantage to do, they might have learnt, without going beyond Horace, to avoid their grosser faults. It must not be forgotten that none of their surviving plays were published in favourable circumstances. All may have been, and some certainly were, subject to manipulation while in the hands of the actors. But even when allowance is made for this, it is undeniable that the writers of the school of Marlowe, to use a not very accurate but convenient expression, were totally wanting in any sense of proportion. To judge by much that they were content to write, they cannot have known the difference between good and bad. The incoherent movement of their plays was perhaps partly due to the want of scenery. When the audience would take a curtain for Syracuse, they would also take it for Ephesus or for twenty different places, indoors and out, in one act. There was, therefore, no check on the playwright, who could move with all the licence of the story-teller. But then they did not give their plays even the coherence of a story. As they were all dependent on companies of actors, they may often have put in what their employers told them was needed to please a part of the audience. It is to this necessity that we may attribute the comic scenes of *Dr Faustus* if we wish to find an excuse for Marlowe—and if, indeed, they were his, and not written in by others at the orders of Henslowe the manager. But this does not account for all. When it is allowed for,

enough remains to show that all these predecessors of Shakespeare were unable to see the difference between horseplay and humour, and were almost equally blind to the immense distinction between the "grand manner" and mere fustian. This last, indeed, had an irresistible attraction for them, and not less for Marlowe than for the others. If it had not he would never have put the rant of *Tamburlaine* into the mouth which spoke the superb lines beginning "If all the pens that ever poets held," nor would he have allowed Barabas to sink from the gloomy magnificence of his beginning into a mere grotesque puppet Jew with a big nose.

"All that is known with any degree of certainty concerning Shakespeare is, — that he was born at Stratford-upon-Avon — married and had children there — went to London, where he commenced actor, and wrote poems and plays — returned to Stratford, made his will, died, and was buried." This summary, which Steevens put in a note to the ninety-third sonnet, is as true as when it was written in the last century. It is not quite exhaustive, for we know that Shakespeare had the respect and affection of his contemporaries from Chettle to Ben Jonson, and also that he was a very prosperous man. Yet Steevens included nearly all that the most extreme industry has been able to discover of Shakespeare's life. The date of his birth was on or just before the 23rd April 1564, and he died on that day in 1616. From the age of about twenty till he was nearly forty he lived in London as actor or manager. In his youth he wrote two poems

in the prevailing fashion, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. The sonnets published in 1609 belong to a later period, but it is impossible to fix their date. His chief work was always done for the company to which he belonged. For that he recast old plays or wrote new ones. The poems alone were published by himself. His sonnets appeared in a pirated edition during his life, and his plays after his death, when his fellow-actors had no longer an overpowering motive to keep them for themselves. On this very slight framework there has been built a vast superstructure of guesswork of which very little need be said here.

It is not only the large element of sheer folly in these guesses, the imbecile attempt to prove that the Guesses about his life. man of whom Ben Jonson spoke and wrote the well-known words was not the author of his own plays, which may be put aside. Nor is it even the hardly less imbecile effort to find political journalism, or other things didactic, social, and scientific, in his dramas. Don M. Menendez, speaking of the very similar race of Cervantistas, has said that this is the resource of people, often respectable for other reasons, who being unable to enjoy literature as literature, but being also conscious that they ought to enjoy it, have been driven to look for something else in their author. These good people have fixed on Shakespeare, as their like have settled on Molière in France and Cervantes in Spain. Some great names may be quoted to give a certain authority to the supposition that Shakespeare unlocked his heart with the key of the sonnet. For their

sake we must not dismiss this guess as unceremoniously as we may well turn out the egregious Bacon theory and its like. Yet it is perhaps not essentially wiser. Even if we accept it, nothing is proved except this, that Shakespeare experienced some of the common fortunes of men of letters and other men, and then this, that he carried the indelicacy of his time to its possible extreme. We know that his "sugared sonnets" were handed about among his friends so freely that they got into print. So much is certain. If they did unlock his heart, and if the sonnet beginning "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun" did refer to a particular person who must have been perfectly well known to many of its readers, then this very great poet and dramatist must have been singularly destitute of the beginnings of a sense of shame, even according to the standard of the sixteenth century. It is impossible to prove that those who take this view are wrong—and if the word evidence has any meaning, equally impossible to prove that they are right. But be their belief right or wrong, the value of the sonnets is not affected. They are valuable, not because they reveal the passing fortunes of one man, however great, but because they express what is permanent in mankind in language of everlasting excellence.

The work by which Shakespeare was first known in his time were the poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, which appeared respectively in 1593 and 1594. Though the dates of composition and order of succession of his

*Order of  
his work.*

plays are obscure, it is certain that he was working for the stage before the first of these years. But as yet he was rather redoing the work of others than producing for himself. The sonnets were widely known by 1598, and were in all probability inspired, as so many other collections of the same class, though of very different degrees of merit, were, by the example of *Astrophel and Stella*. The chronology of the plays is, it may be repeated, difficult to settle, but on the whole they may be asserted to have followed the order in which it would appear natural to assign them on internal evidence. First come those in which his hand, though never to be mistaken, is seen in least power—*Pericles* and *Henry VI*. Then come others in which we get most of the mere fashion of the time, its euphuism and other affectations—*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love's Labour Lost*, &c. Next follow the long series of romantic plays and chronicle plays, darkened by tragedy and irradiated by humour—*The Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry IV.*, *As You Like It*. The great tragedies with what it is perhaps more accurate to call the greater drama, *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*, belong to the later years.

The difficulty which meets the critic who wishes to speak, after so many others, of Cervantes, stands in an even more formidable shape on the path of him who wishes to speak of Shakespeare. Most generations have produced those who have spoken badly. When they were honest, and were not also incapable of literature, which has some-

*Estimates of  
Shakespeare.*



times been the case, they were enslaved to some fashion, some pedantry of their own time. With these have been the merely inept, and there has not been wanting the buffoon, straining after singularity. The gutter and the green-room have been audible. But by the side of these there has been an unbroken testimony to Shakespeare borne by the greatest masters of English literature. It began with Ben Jonson, and has lasted till it has become well-nigh superfluous amid the general agreement of the world. As in the case of Cervantes, this agreement of the competent judges, this universal acceptance, are by themselves enough to dispense us from proving that in him there was something more than was merely national. Spenser, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, all the Elizabethans, belong to us and to others only as objects of literary study, as Garcilaso, Lope, Calderon, all the others of Spain's great time, belong to the Spaniards. But Shakespeare and Cervantes, though the first is very English and the second very Spanish, belong to the whole world. Their countrymen may understand them best, but there is that in them which is common to all humanity. The one star differs from the other in glory; for if Cervantes brought the matter of his masterpiece under the "species of eternity," he brought much less than Shakespeare, who included everything except religion, and leaves us persuaded of his power to deal with that. *Don Quixote* is equivalent to one of the great dramas. Yet they meet in this supreme quality of universality. So much can be said of only

one among their contemporaries, the Frenchman Montaigne, in whom also there was something which speaks to all men at all times.

The work of Shakespeare falls into two classes—the pure poetry and the drama. The second is, indeed, *Divisions of his work.* intensely poetic, both in form and spirit, so that the division becomes unintelligent if we push it too far. But when his poetry is dramatic—when it is employed to set forth an action by talk—it is used for another purpose, and is found in combination with other qualities than are to be found in the pure poems. These are the *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, the sonnets, and the lyrics, which are mostly to be found in the plays, but can be detached from them. It is a sufficient proof of the vast sweep of Shakespeare's genius that if we had nothing of him but these, the loss to the literature of the world would be irreparable, but he would still be *The poems.* a great poet. The *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* are greater poems than Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, more intense in passion, more uniformly magnificent in expression. Marlowe may reach their level when he is speaking to the full extent of his power, but he is not always there. Shakespeare always leaves the impression that he is within the limit of what he could do. The lyrics are the most perfect achievements of an age of lyric poetry. It is the presence of this note which atones for the much that is wanting in Lyly, Peele, and Greene. But if their best is put beside Shakespeare it suffers, as a pretty water-colour would suffer if hung

by the side of a Velasquez. They lose colour by the comparison. The age was rich in sonnets. It produced the passion and melody of Sidney, the beauty of Spenser, the accomplishment of Daniel, and the vigour of Drayton. Yet Shakespeare's sonnets are no less distinctly the greatest than his lyrics. It is even here that his pre-eminence is the most marked, for he has triumphed over more. The lyric is free and is brief. The sonnet is bound by rigid laws, and a cycle of sonnets is peculiarly liable to become monotonous, to be redundant, to be mechanical and frigid. But Shakespeare's sonnets, whether or no they be in the order in which he would have put them, or were written to fall into any particular order, gave a varied yet consistent play of thought and passion, overshadowed by the ever-present consciousness of "the barren rage of death's eternal cold." In them, too, we always feel the superiority of the faculty to the work done. There is no toil, no struggle to express. What would have made another poet immortal, if said with manifest effort, is all poured out in "a first fine careless rapture."

And beyond this ample forecourt and noble portico lies the far-spreading palace of the plays. The

*The dramas.* dramatic work of Shakespeare is greater than the purely poetic, mainly because of its vastly greater scope. It contains all that is in the poems, and so much more that they are, as it were, lost in the abundance. In this stately pleasure-house there are no doubt parts which diligent examination will show to bear the traces of inexperience in the

builder, fragments of the work of others, and ornaments in the passing taste of the time. Shakespeare laboured for the Globe Theatre. He rearranged stock plays, and now and then he passed what he found in them, not because it was good but because it would suffice. He was an Elizabethan, and like others, he let his spirits and his energies relax in mere playing with words, in full-mouthed uproarious noise, and the quibbles which made Dr Johnson shake his head. In common with every other dramatist from Sophocles downwards, he had to consider his theatre and his audience. The mere man of letters writing "closet" plays can forget the stage, and be punished by the discovery that his masterpiece won't act. Shakespeare aimed at being acted. His stage had no change of scenery, and his audience loved action. Therefore he could put in more words than can be admitted when time must be found for the operations of the stage-carpenter and the scene-shifter. Therefore also he could allow himself a licence in the change of scene, which is impossible when it carries with it a change of scenery. But all this is either easily separable or can be amended by re-arrangement. And therein lies the absolute difference between Shakespeare and his contemporaries. *The Jew of Malta* could not be made an acting play by any process of manipulation. Take from the best of the others—even from Ben Jonson—what was purely Elizabethan, and how much remains? They are excellent to read, and were good to act before an audience which accepted their convention, but before

that only. For purely stage purposes, too, their convention is inferior to the Spanish. The *Dama Melindrosa* would be easily intelligible and interesting to any audience to-day, but not *Every Man in his Humour*, or *Epicene*. With Shakespeare, when the suppressions have been made and the scenes have been adapted to new mechanical conditions, there still remains—not in all cases, indeed, but in most—a play—that is, a consistent action—carried on by possible characters, behaving and speaking differently from us in those things which are merely external, but in perfect agreement in all the essentials, both with themselves and with unchanging human nature.

It is this inner bond of life which gives to Shakespeare's plays their unity and their enduring vitality. The superb verse, the faultless expression of every human emotion, from the love of Romeo or the intrepid despair of Macbeth down to the grotesque devotion of Bardolph, "Would I were with him wheresome'er he is, either in Heaven or in Hell," are the outward and visible signs of this inward and spiritual truth to nature. *Henry IV.* and *Henry V.* may seem to be but straggling plays when they are compared with the exactly fitted plots of Lope de Vega or the arranged, selected, concentrated action of Racine. So the free-growing forest-tree is less trim and balanced than the clipped yew. But it has the higher life and the finer unity. The Henry V. who meets Falstaff with—

*The reality of  
Shakespeare's  
characters.*

"I know thee not, old man: fall to thy prayers;  
How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!"

is the same man as he who said—

“I know you all, and will awhile uphold  
 The unyoked humour of your idleness. . . .  
 I'll so offend, to make offence a skill;  
 Redeeming time when men think least I will.”

Nor is he altered when he seeks a complacent archbishop to provide him with an excuse for a war of aggression, and so having provided for both worlds, takes advantage of his own wrong to throw the responsibility for the miseries of the war on the French. In the tavern, in the council-chamber, on the battlefield, by the sick-bed of his father, he is always the same Henry of Monmouth, a foundation of cold able selfishness, a surface of valour and showy magnanimity which costs him nothing—a perfect portrait of the “unconscious hypocrite.” The circumstances may change but not the man. He only adapts the outward show to them. The incomparably more honest nature of Falstaff is as consistent as the king's. He is a Bohemian who is not vicious nor cruel, but who simply follows the lusts of the flesh spontaneously, and is lovable for his geniality, his wit, and his perfect sincerity. Falstaff is not, properly speaking, immoral. He is only exterior to morals. If he were cruel or treacherous he would be horrible, but he is neither. He is only a humorous, fat, meat-, drink-, and ease-loving animal. Given these two, and around them a crowd of others, heroic, grotesque, or even only commonplace, all doing credible things on the green earth, and the result is a coherent action, not made

on the model of a Chinese puzzle, but yet consistent, because being real and true to life, the characters act intelligibly, and do nothing uncaused, unnatural, or inconsequent.

The mere fact that it is possible to differ as to the real nature of some of Shakespeare's characters is a tribute to their reality. We are never in the least doubt as to the meaning of the heroes of Corneille or Racine, or the *galanes, damas*, and jealous husbands of Lope and Calderon. In them we have certain qualities, certain manifestations of character, selected and kept so well before us that they explain themselves, as a Spaniard might say, a crossbow-shot off. Even Molière, who comes nearest to Shakespeare, is simple and transparent, because he also is, in comparison, narrow and arbitrary. We may differ as to his purpose in writing *Don Juan* or *Tartuffe*. Was he only drawing infidelity and hypocrisy to make them hateful? Was he speaking for the *libertins* of the seventeenth century, the forerunners of the philosophy of the eighteenth, who were in revolt against the claim of religion to be a guide of life and to control conduct? But the personages explain themselves. Again, when we meet one of those sudden, unexplained, or insufficiently explained alterations of the whole nature of a man or woman, so common with the other Elizabethan dramatists, and not very rare with the Spaniards, we know it to be false to life, and put it down at once as a clumsy playwright's device. But the characters of Shakespeare are like the great figures of history, real, and yet not always to be understood at once, because

they have the variety, the complexity, and the mystery of nature.

The men who grew up around Shakespeare in the last years of the sixteenth century, and who outlived him, do not belong to our subject. It is enough to point out how unlikely it was that they would continue him. Ben Jonson, who was by far the strongest of them, tacitly confessed that there could be no Shakespearian drama without Shakespeare, when he deliberately sacrificed character to the convenient simplicity of the "humour," and looked for the structural coherence of his plays to the unities. Other men who were less wise preferred to keep the freedom which they had not the strength to bear.



## CHAPTER IX.

## THE ELIZABETHAN PROSE-WRITERS.

ELIZABETHAN PROSE—TWO SCHOOLS OF WRITERS—ROGER ASCHAM—HIS BOOKS AND STYLE—WEBBE AND PUTTENHAM—THE SENTENCE—EUPHUISM—THE ‘ARCADIA’—SIDNEY’S STYLE—SHORT STORIES—NASH’S ‘UNFORTUNATE TRAVELLER’—NASH AND THE PAMPHLET-EERS—MARTIN MARPRELATE—ORIGIN OF THE MARPRELATE TRACTS—THE ‘DIOTREPHES’—COURSE OF THE CONTROVERSY—ITS PLACE IN LITERARY HISTORY—HOOKER—‘THE ECCLESIASTICAL POLITY.’

THE reign of Elizabeth and the first years of James, which cover the period of the Later Renaissance in *Elizabethan* England, were times of poetry and not of *prose.* It is true that much prose was written, that some of it is admirable, and that more is interesting. It is also true that some of the greatest masters of English prose were alive, and were working in these years. Yet these men, whose chief was Bacon, belong, by their character, their influence, and by the dates of their greatest achievements, to the generations described as Jacobean and Caroline. In the Elizabethan time proper there is but one very

great name among prose-writers, that of Hooker; while before him and around him there are many whose work was meritorious, or interesting, or curious—anything, in fact, but great—and of not a few of them it has to be said that in the long-run they were not profitable.

The difficulty of marshalling these men of letters in an orderly way is not small. The chronological arrangement, besides being ill-adapted to contemporaries, does not show their real relations to one another, or their place in English literature. The division by subject is utterly mechanical, when very different matter was handled in the same style and often by the same men. Nash is always Nash, whether he was writing *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem*, or *Have with you to Saffron Walden*, or *The Unfortunate Traveller*. We shall be better able to make a survey of this side of the literature of the Later Renaissance in England if we class its prose-writers by their spirit and their style, and treat their dates and their matter (which, however, are not to be dismissed as of no importance) as subordinate.

If this classification, then, is permitted, we may divide the Elizabethan prose-writers into those whose Two schools of writers. aim it was to give "English matter in the English tongue for Englishmen," and those who strove for something better, more ornate, lofty, peculiar, and, as they held, more literary, than was to be reached by the pursuit of this modest purpose. The chief of the first in order of time was Ascham,

who, however, belonged to an earlier generation, though he died in the queen's reign, and part of his work was published after his death. The great exemplar of the second was Lyly. In neither case did the followers merely imitate their leader. There is much in Hooker which is not in Ascham. The *enredados razones*—the roundabout affectations of the authors of the Spanish *Libros de Caballerías*—may have had some influence on Sidney, who certainly knew them. Rabelais and Aretino were much read and imitated by some who also "parled Euphues." But the distinction holds good none the less. On the one side are those who, having something to say, were content to say it perspicuously. On the other were those who, whether they had something to say or whether they were simply determined to be talking, were careful to give their utterances some stamp of distinction. If the first were liable to become pedestrian, the second were threatened by an obvious danger. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for the writer who has got tired of milking the cow, and wants to milk the bull, to escape sheer affectation—which affectation, again, is in the great majority of cases a trick, a juggle with words repeated over and over again.

The prose which was first written for literary purposes in Elizabeth's time was an inheritance from the reign of Henry VIII. It was the plain downright style of Ascham—the style of a man who thought in Latin, and turned it into good current English.

Yet the writers who were content to be as plain and downright as Ascham do not require many words.

*Webbe and Puttenham.* Such treatises as Webbe's *Discourse of English Poetrie*, printed in 1586, or the *Arte of English Poesie*, published in 1589, and attributed to George Puttenham by Carew in 1614, are interesting, but it cannot be said that they hold an important place in English literature, or had any considerable effect. The *Arte of English Poesie* is indeed a very sane and thorough critical treatise, one proof among others that if so many of the Elizabethan writers were wild and shapeless, it was not because none in their time thought wisely on questions of literary principle and of form. The explanation of their extravagance may be more safely looked for elsewhere. When Nash was reproached for his "boisterous compound words," he answered, "That no wind that blows strong but is boisterous, no speech or words of any power or force to confute, or persuade, but must be swelling and boisterous." This is Brantôme's excuse for the rodomontade, that superb and swelling words go well with daring deeds. The Elizabethans were so vehement and headlong, that they sought naturally for the "word of power," for the altisonant and ear-filling in language, and were more tolerant of bombast than of the pedestrian. Their general

*The sentence.* inability to confine themselves to the sentence may be excused on the same ground. They felt so much, and so strongly, that they could not stop to disentangle and arrange. Certainly if Englishmen sinned in this respect it was against the

light. Models were not wanting to them, and they were not unaware of the virtue of being clear and coherent. Whoever the author of Martin Marprelate's *Epistle* may have been—Penry, Udall, Barrow, or another—he knew a bad sentence as well as any of the Queen Anne men. He fixes, as any of them might have done, on the confused heap of clauses which did duty for sentences in Dean John Bridges's *Defence of the Government of the Church of England*. "And learned brother Bridges," he writes, "a man might almost run himself out of breath before he could come to a full point in many places in your book. Page 69, line 3, speaking of the extraordinary gifts in the Apostles' time, you have this sweet learning,<sup>1</sup> 'Yea some of them have for a great part of the time, continued even till our times, and yet continue, as the operation of great works, or if they mean miracles, which were not ordinary, no not in that extraordinary time, and as the hypocrites had them, so might and had divers of the Papists, and yet their cause never the better, and the like may we say of the gifts of speaking with tongues which have not been with study before learned, as Anthony, &c., and divers also among the ancient fathers, and some among the Papists, and some among us, have not been destitute of the gifts of prophesying, and much more may I say this of the gift of healing, for none of those gifts or

<sup>1</sup> These two sentences are reprinted as one by Petheram, but it is obvious that the want of a full stop after "book" is a printer's error. No changes in the punctuation can reduce Dean Bridges to order. It would be necessary to treat him as Cobbett did Castlereagh.

graces given then or since, or yet to men, infer the grace of God's election to be of necessity to salvation.'”

The Dean's meaning reveals itself at the third or fourth reading, but this is the style of Mrs Nickleby. Martin Marprelate saw its vices, and noted on the margin, “Hoo hoo, Dean, take breath and then to it again,” as Swift himself might have done. Dr Bridges is no authority in English literature, but he was a learned man, and must have had some practice in preaching. Yet we see that he fell into a confusion which at any time after the seventeenth century would have been a proof either of extreme ignorance, or of some such defect of power to express himself as accounts for the obscurity of Castlereagh. Dean Bridges shows only the disastrous consequences of that disregard of the proper limit of the sentence which was common with some of the greatest writers of his time. Take, for instance, this passage from Sir Walter Raleigh's account of the loss of the *Revenge*, published in 1591. He begins admirably: “All the powder of the *Revenge* was now spent, all her pikes were broken, forty of her best men slain, and the most part of the rest hurt.” Several rapid sentences follow, and then we come to:<sup>1</sup> “Sir Richard finding himself in this distress, and unable any longer to make resistance having endured in this fifteen hours’

<sup>1</sup> *Last Fight of the Revenge* in Arber's English Reprints. I have suppressed the full stop after “assaults and entries,” which is plainly a printer's error. Raleigh would have been as inarticulate as Dr Bridges if he thought that a new sentence could begin at “and that himself.” When the full stop is replaced by a comma, what we have is a grammatical though overlaid and redundant sentence.

fight, the assault of fifteen several Armadoes, all by turns aboard him, and by estimation eight hundred shot of great artillery, besides many assaults and entries, and that himself and the ship must needs be possessed by the enemy, who were now all cast in a ring about him; the Revenge not able to move one way or other but as she was moved with the waves and billow of the sea, commanded the Master Gunner, whom he knew to be a most resolute man, to split and sink the ship, that thereby nothing might remain of glory or victory to the Spaniards, seeing in so many hours' fight, and with so great a navy they were not able to take her, having had fifteen hours' time, fifteen thousand men, and fifty and three sail of men of war to perform it withal. And persuaded the company or as many as he could induce to yield themselves unto God, and to the mercy of none else, but as they had like valiant resolute men repulsed so many enemies, they should not now shorten the honour of their nation, by prolonging their own lives for a few hours or a few days."

This is the style of a writer who does not know when a sentence has come to an end, and who, when he writes one which is properly constructed, does it mainly by good fortune. If it is more intelligible than Dr Bridges, the cause of the superiority lies at least partly in this, that Raleigh had the easier task to perform. He had only to state facts, not to expound doctrine.

While making allowance for the inward and spiritual cause of the invasion of English by the

long, confused, overladen sentence, it must also be confessed that the evil was largely due to the prevalence of affected styles of writing, which lent themselves to over-elaboration. Two bad models were set before Englishmen about the middle of the queen's reign, and they unfortunately became, and remained for long, exceedingly popular—Lyly's euphuism, and the wiredrawn finicking style of Sidney's *Arcadia*, to which no name has ever been given. The lives of these authors have already been dealt with under another head. Their style, as shown in their stories, and its effect on English literature, are the matters in hand. Euphuism and the manner of the *Arcadia* appear to have been elaborated by their authors about the same time, though Lyly takes precedence in the order of publication. *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit*, was printed in 1579, *Euphues and his England* in the following year.<sup>1</sup>

Euphuism has become a name for literary affectation, and is in that sense often used with very little precision. It is a very peculiar form of affectation. The two main features of the style—the mechanical antitheses and the abuse of similes—have been described already. *Euphues*, in so far as it is a story, is as near as may be naught. The hero from whom it takes its name is the grandfather of all virtuous, solemn, and didactic prigs. He makes two excursions into the world from his native Athens. In the first he induces a lady at

<sup>1</sup> Arber's English Reprints. John Lyly, M.A., *Euphues*. 1868.



Naples to jilt her lover Philautus, and is by her most justly jilted in turn. He floods southern Italy with antithetical platitude, and retires to Athens. Then Euphues and Philautus come to England, where the second, after philandering with one lady, marries another. Euphues remains didactic and superior. At last he goes back to a cave in Silexedra. There is a great deal of praise of Queen Elizabeth in the second part, as indeed there was in all the literature of her time as high as Shakespeare's plays and the *Ecclesiastical Polity*. There are also pages of such matter as this: "But as the cypress-tree the more it is watered the more it withereth, and the oftener it is lopped the sooner it dieth, so unbridled youth the more it is also by grave advice counselled or due correction controlled, the sooner it falleth to confusion, hating all reasons that would bring it from folly, as that tree doeth all remedies, that should make it fertile." Unbridled youth might have answered that if lopping and watering are bad for the cypress he must be a poor forester who persists in lopping and watering. But the youth of Queen Elizabeth's reign, which was unbridled enough, was also more respectful. It listened to the due correction and grave counsel of Euphues with deference. It did more, for it imitated him. The unbridled Nash euphuised, and so did many another. Alongside the fire from heaven, and elsewhere, of the Elizabethan time, there was an unending wishy-washy, though frequently turbid, flow of copy-book heading, which came from the great Lylyan source. It looks strange that a

time which loved *Tamburlaine* and produced the great lyric, should also have delighted in this square-toed finical vacuity. But perhaps, again, it is not so wonderful. There was also in the Elizabethan time a liking for what looked superior to the common herd. About the Court there was much foppery, and there were many who wished to resemble the fine gentlemen of the Court, while the reviving morality of the age, compatible as it was with much individual profligacy, made men respectful of virtuous commonplace. With the minority of Edward VI. and the brutality of the Court of Henry VIII. close behind them, it was as yet hardly the case that "the cardinal virtues were to be taken for granted among English gentlemen." Surrey may have been jesting when he told his sister to make herself the king's mistress, but what a society that must have been in which a brother, and he "a mirror of chivalry," thought this a mere jest. Now Lyly was very moral, a fop to his fingers' ends, and with all his oddity and his pedantry, there is a real, though very artificial, distinction about him. Finally, there were as yet few and insignificant rivals. It is not then at all surprising that his style was taken up at Court as "the thing," and accepted by the honest admiration, to say nothing of the snobbery, of the outer world.

Lyly sinned by setting an example of a stilted style; but his sentence (for he had but one) is as complete as the constant use of the formula, "As the A is B, so the C is D, and the more E is F the more G is H,"

can make it. With Sidney's *Arcadia*<sup>1</sup> we come to another kind of affectation. The circumstances in which it was written must be taken into account. Sir Philip Sidney wrote to please his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, a lady who was somewhat of a *précieuse*, and who was all her life the centre of some literary coterie. Her patronage of the Senecan play shows that her leanings were towards the superfine, and away from what was natural to Englishmen. The *Arcadia*, therefore, is coterie work, and does not seem to have been looked upon as very serious by Sir Philip himself. It was written by fits and starts, and sent off to his sister in instalments. The date of composition must have been about 1580 and later, but it was not published till after the author's death in 1584, and remains a fragment, though a large one. The *Arcadia* is much longer than the "tedious brief" masterpiece of Lyly, even without taking into account the verse, of which much is written in the classic metres. It is also far more interesting. Although we are accustomed to speak of it as a pastoral, mainly, it may be, on the strength of the name, it is much more a *Libro de Caballerías*. There is a pastoral element in it unquestionably, as there is in the stories of Feliciano de Silva, but in the main its matter is that of the books of "Knightly Deeds"—challenges and defiances, combats of champions, loves of cavaliers and ladies, the rout of mobs of plebeians by the single arm of the knight. There

<sup>1</sup> We still await a good edition of the *Arcadia*. The old are numerous. Dr Sommer's reprint (London, 1891) is useful.

are wicked knights who drag off ladies on the pommel of their saddles and beat them, good knights who rescue these victims, captures and deliverances of damsels, and everywhere the finest sentiments or the most extreme wickedness, just as in the *Amadis* or the *Palmerin*. It is a very entangled book, and is not made clearer by the fact that one of the heroes, who is disguised as an amazon, figures alternately as "he" and as "she." Yet Sidney does achieve the great end of the story-teller, which is to keep alive his reader's desire to know what is going to happen next. The morality of the book has been very differently judged. It has been called "a vain and amatorious poem," a "cobweb across the face of nature," and it has also been described as noble and elevating. Yet it would be a curious morality which could be affected by the doings of personages who are either too seraphic for flesh and blood, or so wicked that the most shameless of mankind would resent being compared to them.

The "vanity" of the book lies in the wordy amatoriousness of its style. We have perhaps pushed the practice of accounting for all fashions in literature by imitation too far. It is quite as possible to explain Lyly without Guevara as it would be to account for Góngora without Lyly. Given the desire to write in a fine peculiar form, and the adoption of some trick with words follows naturally, while the number of tricks which can be played is not indefinite. Yet it is at least as likely that Sir Philip Sidney was set on his peculiar form of affecta-

*Sidney's style.*

tion by the *Libros de Caballerías*, published from thirty to forty years earlier, and certainly known to him. Such sentences as these send us back at once to Feliciano de Silva: "Most beloved lady, the incomparable excellences of yourself, waited on by the greatness of your estate, and the importance of the thing whereon my life consisteth, doth require both many ceremonies before the beginning and many circumstances in the uttering of my speech, both bold and fearful." And, "Since no words can carry with them the life of the inward feeling, I desire that my desire may be weighed in the balances of honour, and let Virtue hold them; for if the highest love in no base person may aspire to grace, then may I hope your beauty will not be without pity." Turn to the first chapter of Shelton's *Don Quixote*, and you meet with those "intricate sentences" from Feliciano: "The reason of the unreasonableness which against my reason is wrought, doth so weaken my reason as with all reason I doe justly complaine on your beauty." And, "The High Heavens which with your divinity doe fortifie you divinely with the starres, and make you deserveresse of the deserts that your greatnesse deserves," &c.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The first of these sentences hardly gives the full absurdity of the Spanish. "La razon de la sinrazon que á mi razon se hace de tal manera mi razon enflaquece, que con razon me quejo de la vuestra fermosura"—i.e., "The cause of the wrong, which is done to my right, so weakens my reason, that with reason I complain of your beauty." The Spaniard punned on the different meanings of the word *razon*. Accurate translation does not diminish the likeness to Sidney, who must have known the original.

We must not push the comparison too far. Sidney had qualities of imagination which raised him far above the Spaniard, and he never rings the changes on the same word so fatuously as Feliciano and other later authors of *Libros de Caballerías*. Yet the juggle on the two forces of the word "desire" is quite in the Spanish taste. The immediate success of *Don Quixote* in England may be explained not only by the permanent merits of Cervantes' romance, but by the fact that we had our examples of the literary affectation which he attacked. The practice of labouring the expression of sentiment, of repeating, qualifying, and counterbalancing, would inevitably lead to long straggling sentences, while it was also a direct invitation to the frigid conceits in which Sidney abounds.

Stories of a kind, translations from or adaptations of the Italians, and notably Bandello, with imitations of *Euphues* and the Pastorals, were common Short Stories. in Elizabethan literature. But, perhaps because it suffered from the overpowering rivalry of poetry and the stage, the prose tale is rarely among the good things of the time. Greene, Lodge, and Breton<sup>1</sup> are interesting to the student, but it cannot be said, with any measure of accuracy, that they have a place in the history of the English novel. They were part of the literary production of their time, but were mostly imitation, and were too completely forgotten, and too soon, to produce any effect. An exceptional interest attaches to Nash's *Unfortunate Traveller*, to

<sup>1</sup> Greene and Breton have been reprinted by Dr Grosart. Lodge's *Euphues' Golden Legacy* is in the Shakespeare's Library, vol. ii.

which attention has again been attracted of late. It is curious that a story which has considerable intrinsic force should have put the model of the *Novela de Pícaros* before English readers five years earlier than the publication of *Guzman de Alfarache* in Spain, and that it should have been so completely forgotten that when this model was again introduced among us by Defoe, his inspiration came from Le Sage.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Nash (1567-1601), who was chiefly known as a pamphleteer, published *The Unfortunate Traveller* in 1594. It is difficult to read, at any rate the earlier parts of the story, and we doubt that the author had seen, if not the original of the *Lazarillo de Tormes*, then at any rate the French version of Jean Saugrain, published in 1561. If his work is quite independent, then we have a very remarkable instance of exact similarity in the method and spirit of two writers separated from one another in race and by an interval of nearly half a century, during which the first had enjoyed a wide popularity. This is difficult to believe. Nothing can be more like Lazarillo's doings than the tricks which Nash's hero, Jack Wilton, plays on the old cider-selling lord and the captain. It would seem, however, that the time had not come when the picaresque method was to be really congenial to Englishmen. Nash wanders away from it when he introduces the story of Surrey and

Nash's  
Unfortunate  
Traveller.

<sup>1</sup> Complete works of Thomas Nash, in six vols. Dr Grosart in "The Huth Library," 1883-1884. *Guzman de Alfarache* was translated into English by Mabbe, the translator of the *Celestina*, in 1623, and was imitated in *The English Rogue*, but the inspiration for *Colonel Jack* and *Moll Flanders* did not come from either.

the Fair Geraldine. Yet he comes back to it with the hero's love-affairs with Diamante, the wife of a Venetian, whom he meets in prison at Venice. He keeps to it very close when Wilton runs away with his "courtezan," and gives himself out to be the Earl of Surrey. From the time the hero and Diamante reach Rome the picaresque tone disappears, and Nash drops into familiar Elizabethan "blood and thunder." With the inconsequence of his time he gives at the end a defiant last dying speech and confession of an Italian malefactor, who bears the English name of Cutwolf. Perhaps a certain want of finish, and an air there is about it of being hasty work done to make a little money, injured its effect. Yet *The Unfortunate Traveller* did show Englishmen a way they were to follow in the future, and it came before the *Guzman de Alfarache*.

Thomas Nash was himself perhaps intrinsically the most able, and certainly not the least typical, member of a whole class of Elizabethan men of letters. He was born at Lowestoft, "a son of the manse," in 1567, and was educated at St John's, Cambridge. It has been supposed on the strength of some passages in his writings that he travelled abroad in his youth, though he does not write in his *Unfortunate Traveller* like a man who had seen Venice and Rome. He was settled in London by 1588, and lived the very necessitous life of a man of letters who depended wholly on his pen, till his early death in 1601. It was the misfortune of Nash and of many of his contemporaries that they were born too soon

*Nash and the pamphleteers.*



for the magazine or newspaper. His work consists mainly of matter written to please prevailing tastes of the time. *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem*, a long, wordy, and decidedly pretentious collection of preaching, and denunciation of the sins of London, his violent quarrel with Gabriel Harvey, or rather with the whole Harvey family, which was rolled out in pamphlets for the amusement of the world, his collection of ghost stories, *The Terrors of the Night*, and what he called *Toys for Gentlemen*, which are lost, and into the nature of which it is perhaps better not to inquire, were journalism before its time. His *Have with you to Saffron Walden*, a piece of vigorous literary horseplay at the expense of Gabriel Harvey, is an excellent pamphlet of its kind—in the kind of Mr Pott and Mr Slurk; while his burlesque almanac, called *A wonderful strange and miraculous Astronomical Prognostication*, though undoubtedly suggested by Rabelais, and therefore not quite original, is a piece of solemn fun worthy of the irony and the good sense of Swift. Nash had ideas of style which sometimes led him into involved pomposity, but which also supplied him with an effective, though blackguard, controversial manner. Nobody was a greater master of loud-mouthed bragging, of the fashion of telling an opponent over pages of repetition of the dreadful things you are going to do with him. Consciously, or unconsciously, the Elizabethans were great believers in the maxim that if you throw mud enough some will stick, and it was one of the signs of their youth and primitive simplicity of nature that when

they were angry they gave way to the instinct which leads men to scream vituperation and curses, with no regard to their application to the subject. To call a very eminent man on his trial for treason—and on the most flimsy evidence too—"a spider of hell" would now be thought not less silly than ignoble. But that is what Coke called Raleigh, and it is a very fair specimen of Elizabethan satirical controversy. Around Nash was a whole class of men engaged in the same work of writing little stories—pastoral or euphuistic—and pamphlets moral, satirical, political, which were often in verse. When they dealt with the low life of London, as in the case of Dekker (1570?-1641?), they possess a certain value as illustrations of contemporary manners. It is curious, when their bulk and their popularity are considered, that no London printer thought of bringing out a miscellany of them at regular intervals. He would have found abundant matter ready to his hand, and the magazine, if not the newspaper, would have been founded at once.

One section of the pamphlet literature of the time possesses an enduring interest, if not for its intrinsic value, though that is not inconsiderable, *Martin Marprelate.* then for historical reasons. This was the famous Martin Marprelate controversy, which was not the first example of an appeal to the people by the press on religious and political questions, for that had been done on the Continent by the Huguenots, but was the earliest effective instance among us. It grew out of the conflict between the Church, which

was fighting for uniformity with the hearty support of the queen—at least from the day on which she found her power sufficiently established to allow her to disregard the Calvinist princes of the Continent—and a body of Englishmen who were desirous to adopt the Calvinist Presbyterian model.<sup>1</sup> According to our view the question was one to be argued peacefully, and those who could not believe the same things ought to have agreed to differ. That was not the opinion of any country, or of either side in the sixteenth century. The Puritans were as convinced of the need for uniformity as the Church or the Spanish Inquisition, and would have enforced it with no sparing hand if they had had the power. They complained quite as bitterly of the toleration which they alleged was shown to the Papists (who for their part cried out loudly of persecution), as of the severities exercised on themselves. As the power was with the bishops, those who would not conform were expelled from the universities and from their livings. The persecution to which they were subjected was enough to exasperate, but not to crush, and the embittered Puritans cast about for a weapon to use against their opponents. The pamphlet lay ready to their hand.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Puritan position is very clearly stated in John Udall's *Demonstration of Discipline*. Arber's "English Scholar's Library."

<sup>2</sup> Maskell's *History of the Martin Marprelate Controversy*, 1845, and Mr Arber's "Introduction," give accounts of the conflict from very different points of view. Mr Arber has reprinted Udall's *Diotrephes* and *Demonstration of Discipline* in his "English Scholar's Library." The chief among the succeeding tracts were reprinted in 1845-1846 by Petheram under the title of *Puritan Discipline Tracts*.

The chief dates in the controversy were these. In 1587 Dr John Bridges, Dean of Salisbury, and afterwards Bishop of Oxford, published *A*

*Origin of the*  
*Marprelate*  
*Tracts.* *Defence of the Government established in*  
*the Church of England for Ecclesiastical*

*Matters*, in answer to the Puritan controversialists Cartwright and Travers—a very long, well-meant, and learned, but lumbering book. Just at this time the Act of Uniformity was pressing heavily on the Puritans. There were two who were especially aggrieved,—John Udall, who had been expelled from his pulpit at Kingston because, as his friends alleged, he had denounced a local money-lender from whom the archdeacon of the diocese wanted to borrow £100; and John Penry, an able, honest, but headlong Welshman. In or about March 1587 Penry published at Oxford a tract with a long-winded title, which is called for short *The Equity of a Humble Supplication*. It was an address to Parliament representing the undeniably neglected state of the Welsh parishes. Unfortunately for Penry, it contained one passage which, with no more unfairness than was usual in State prosecutions, whether conducted for the king or the Long Parliament, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, might be represented to be treasonable. It insinuated plainly that the queen consented to leave Wales in religious ignorance and immorality. The press was then under censorship. Only two printers were allowed out of London—one at Oxford, another at Cambridge. In London the number was limited. No press could be held except by a member of

the Stationers' Company, and any one could be confiscated by the Warden, over whom the Bishop of London had general powers of control as censor. Penry's treatise was suppressed, and he was in great peril.

Here then were two men, both angry, both able, both accustomed to appeal directly to ignorant audiences with whom it was necessary to make things clear. Both, too, were bold men, and honest in the sense that they were ready to risk their lives for their cause. It would have been strange if they had not seized on the pamphlet, as their one remaining weapon against the bishops. Udall began by pub-

The Diotrephes. lishing, in April 1588, his dialogue commonly called *Diotrephes*.<sup>1</sup> The choice of the name was not the worst stroke of satire in the controversy. Diotrephes was that person mentioned in the ninth verse of the Third Epistle of St John "who loveth to have the pre-eminence" and who "receiveth us not." It was a great belief among the Puritans that no minister should have authority over another, and that the bishops who had "pre-eminence" were "antichrists" and "petty popes." The dialogue tells how a bishop, a papist, a money-lender, and an inn-keeper were all rebuked by Paul, a preacher. The usurer alone shows signs of compunction, while the bishop goes off thirsting for the blood of the

<sup>1</sup> The full title is, "The state of the Church of England, laid open in a Conference between Diotrephes a Bishop, Tertullus a Papist, Demetrius a Usurer, Pandochus an Inn-Keeper, and Paul a Preacher of the Word of God"; with quotations from Psalm cxxii. 6 and Revelations xiv. 9, 10. The titles of all these pamphlets are long, and commonly also abusive.

saints, with the hearty approval of the papist, and of the tavern-keeper, who explains that he lives by the vices of his neighbours, and is like to be ruined by the preaching of such men as Paul. This pamphlet was printed by John Waldegrave, a Puritan printer in London, who was deprived of his licence in consequence. His press was broken up, but he contrived to conceal a fount of type. A printing-press was smuggled in by Penry, and a campaign of unlicensed pamphlets was begun.

The details are obscure. The names of the authors can only be guessed at. The controversy lasted from the end of 1588 to the end of 1590. At *Course of the controversy.* first the Puritans swept all before them. They had many friends at Court, where indeed their doctrine that the bishops' lands should be taken and given to gentlemen who could serve the queen was not likely "to want for favourable or attentive hearers." Some country gentlemen gave them help—notably Sir R. Knightley of Fawsley, in Northamptonshire (always a Puritan county), and Job Throckmorton, who appears to have been what we should now call a bitter anti-clerical. The press was concealed by them in different parts of the country till it was captured by the Earl of Derby. Penry was probably the leader of the fight on the Puritan side. It began by the publication of Martin Marprelate's *Epistle* directed against Dr John Bridges, in November 1588. This drew a grave *Admonition to the People of England* from Dr Thomas Cooper, Bishop of Winchester, in or about January 1589. Martin followed

up his attack on Dr Bridges by the *Epitome*, printed before the *Epistle*, but not issued till February of 1589. Then he turned on the Bishop of Winchester in *Hay any Work for Cooper*.<sup>1</sup>

The success of those pamphlets was great. A well-known story tells how when order was issued that they were not to be read, the Earl of Oxford pulled one of them out of his pocket, and presented it to the queen. Solemn "admonitions" were found to be too awkward in such a conflict, and counter-pamphleteers were called in on the bishops' side. This part of the controversy is no less obscure than the other. It has been guessed that Lyly and Nash struck in for the bishops. Both have been credited with the authorship of a *Pappe with a Hatchet* and *An Almond for a Parrot*, which appeared respectively at the end of 1589 and the beginning of 1590. They are now generally attributed to Lyly. Then third parties struck in and denounced both houses, or endeavoured

<sup>1</sup> The titles of these pamphlets were very important parts of them, and this may be quoted as an example: "Hay any Work for Cooper, or a briefe Pistle directed by way of hublication to the reverend Byshopps, counselling them if they will needs be barrelled up, for fear of smelling in the nostrrels of her Magestie and the State, that they would use the advice of reverend Martin, for the providing of their Cooper. Because the reverend T. C. (by which mystical letters is meant either the bouncing Parson of *Eastmeane*, or Tom Coakes his Chaplaine) hath showne himself in his late Admonition to the people of England to bee an unskilfull and deceytfull tub-trimmer. Wherein worthy Martin quits himselfe like a man, I warrant you, in the modest defences of his self and his learned Pistles, and makes the Cooper's hoops to fly off, and the Bishops' tubs to leake out of all crye. Penned and compiled by *Martin* the Metropolitan. Printed in Europe, not farre from some of the Bouncing Priests.

to hush the clamour, by such appeals as *Plain Perceval the Peacc-Maker of England*.

Although they naturally fell into neglect so soon as the occasion had passed, the Martin Marprelate pamphlets are of great importance in the history of English literature. The euphuistic, pastoral, and other tales of the time served a mere fashion of the day, and are forgettable as well as forgotten. But when Martin Marprelate published his unlicensed *Epistle* he set an example which has been excellently well followed. His pamphlet stands at the head of the long list which includes the *Arcopagitica*, the *Anatomy of an Equivalent*, the *Public Spirit of the Whigs*, the *Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, the *Letters of Junius*, the *Regicide Peace*, and it is not absurd to say the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, which is a very long, great, and eloquent pamphlet, but a pamphlet still. The *Epistle* and its immediate successors were not unworthy to be the beginners of so vital a part of English literature.

“Si nous avions l’ambition d’être complet, et si c’était l’être que de tout dire,” it would be necessary to examine all the pamphlets in detail. But many are practically inaccessible, and there is so much repetition among them that they can be adequately judged by selected examples. The vital examples are those which set the model. On the Puritan side there are four,—the *Diotrephes*, which, though strictly speaking antecedent to Martin, gave tone and marked the lines, the *Epistle*, the *Epitome*, and the *Hay any Work for Cooper*. The *Pappe with a Hatchet* and *An*



*Almond for a Parrot* may stand as examples of the anti-Martinist pamphlets. The peacemakers were of less account. The proposition that there is a great deal to be said on both sides, and the appeal "Why cannot you be reasonable?" may be full of good sense, but they seldom inspire men to words or deeds of a decisive character. Looking at the leading things on either side, one sees that they have one feature in common. They are extremely unfair. But there is a great difference in their way of being unjust, and on that depends their literary value. The distinction is all to the honour of the Puritan pamphlets. *Diotrephes* shows both the doctrine and the spirit of the writers. They started by laying down the law to the effect that whoever exercises pre-eminence over his brethren in the ministry is an "antichrist" and a "petty pope," and that no church office not explicitly mentioned in the New Testament is Christian. Therefore they endeavoured to discredit the bishops by showing that they habitually did such acts as an antichrist and petty pope might be expected to do. We need not stop to argue that this was unjust. Of course it was, but from the literary point of view the interesting question is, How was the injustice worded? The Martin Marprelate men had a firm grip of the pamphlet style. The ridicule they poured on the long-winded sentences of Dr Bridges and Bishop Cooper shows that they were perfectly well aware of the advantages of a simple direct manner. Their own sentences are brief, and stab with a rapid alert movement. Their abuse is furious, but it is seldom

mere scream. "Sodden-headed ass" is bad language, but if it is ever to be pardonable, it is when you have caught your adversary reasoning badly, and this the Martinists at least tried to do. It was indecent to call the Bishop of Winchester "Mistress Cooper's husband." It is a foul hit to remind your opponent that his wife is a profligate termagant, but more ingenuity is needed to do that, by naming what it would have been more fair to pass in silence, than merely to bawl the slang name for the husband of an unfaithful wife, and apply it to a whole class of men at large. And Martin had intelligence enough to understand that a show of fairness can be effective. He could bring himself to allow that if John of Canterbury (Dr Whitgift) did ever marry, he would no doubt choose a Christian woman.

When we turn to the anti-Martinist pamphlets we find the same unfairness of spirit, with little and often none of the cleverness and the ingenious form. If Lyly wrote the *Pappe with a Hatchet*, he was in a better place when he was in Euphues his lonely cave in Silexedra. The elegance, real of its artificial kind, is gone, and in place of it we get a loud vaunting howl of abuse. One-half of the qualification of the "slating reviewer" was wanting to the anti-Martinists. They hated the man, but they did not know the subject. The Royalist general who answered Fairfax's self-righteous boasting of the good discipline of the Parliamentary soldiers by telling him that the Puritan had the sins of the Devil, "which are spiritual pride and rebellion," struck him harder, and

showed a finer wit than all the pamphleteers whom it has been in my power to see. They miss his vulnerable points, they bellow bad language and accusations of the kind of misconduct from which the Puritan was as free as the universal passions of humanity permitted. The difference between the two may be quite fairly put this way. The worst calumny of the Martinists can be quoted, but the anti-Martinists are naught when they are not using language which is nearly as unquotable as any written by the worst scribblers of the Restoration. The least nauseous passages are those in which these defenders of the Church gloat over the whips, branding-irons, and mutilating knife of Ball the Hangman. Now Martin rarely goes beyond threatening the bishops with a *premunire*, and when he does he stops at a "hemp collar." The Martin Marprelate men were fighting in a now obsolete cause, in a style which has manifest faults of taste and temper. But they were on the right path, they set the example of pamphlet controversy from which the press was to come in time, and they did it in a way which only needed amending. The author of the *Anatomy of an Equivalent* had learnt that when you have proved your opponent to be "a sodden-headed ass," it is superfluous to pelt him with the name. Yet he was truly the successor of Martin, while the line of the anti-Martinists ended in Ned Ward.

It is sometimes said that the Martinists were routed by Lyly and Nash, which is certainly unfair to the Earl of Derby, and not quite just to Ball the Hangman.

As far as they were routed by literary weapons, the honour of defeating them is due to a very different hand. The doctrine of the Puritans was confuted in the *Ecclesiastical Polity* of Richard Hooker — the greatest masterpiece of Elizabethan prose.<sup>1</sup> Hooker

*Hooker.* was born at Heavitree, near Exeter, in 1553. His family was poor, and, like many of his contemporaries, he was educated by the kindness of patrons. Dr Jewel, the Bishop of Salisbury, and Edwin Sandys, then Bishop of London, and afterwards Archbishop of York, successively protected him at Oxford. He was tutor to Sandys' sons. If Isaac Walton was correctly informed, he was somewhat tamely annexed by a scheming landlady as husband for her daughter. He had to resign his fellowship upon his marriage in 1584, and was appointed to the living of Drayton Beauchamp, in Buckinghamshire. In the following year he was appointed Master of the Temple. Here he became widely known by a controversy with the Puritan Walter Travers, conducted on both sides with more moderation than was usual in those times. After holding the Mastership for seven years, he resigned it for a living in Wiltshire. He died at Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, in 1600.

In the chapter of his *Constitutional History* which deals with Elizabeth's laws against the Non-Conformists, Mr Hallam has written: "But while these scenes of pride and persecution on one hand, and of sectarian insolence on the other, were deforming the bosom of the English Church, she found a defender of

<sup>1</sup> Works of Richard Hooker. Oxford, 1841.

her institutions in one who mingled in these vulgar controversies like a knight of romance among caitiff brawlers, with arms of finer temper and worthy to be proved in a nobler field." If this sentence is to be understood to mean—as from the context it perhaps must—that Hooker mingled in the Martin Mar-

*The Ecclesi-  
astical Polity.* prelate conflict, it is inaccurate. He answered Cartwright and Travers, as Dr Bridges had done, and whatever may be said of these men it would be silly to call them caitiff brawlers, while it would be difficult to say what nobler field Hooker could have found for his arms than that in which he justified the faith and religious practices of Englishmen. Yet Mr Hallam has fairly singled out the predominant characteristic of Hooker. There is something knightly about him, something of the chivalry of Sir Galahad. He could strike with telling force, as he does in the one passage of fine scorn devoted to the jeering Puritan pamphlets—beside which all the scolding of their proper opponents is mere brutal noise. Yet what prevails with him so completely that the exceptions are hardly noticeable is the moderation which has earned him his name of "Judicious." It is not the easy moderation of one who does not care much, but of a man who was very convinced, very earnest, and also very good. The *Ecclesiastical Polity* is not chiefly valuable as a piece of reasoning. It has for one thing not reached us complete. The first four books, which must have been begun while he was at the Temple, were published in 1594. The long fifth book appeared in 1597. The

three, which make up the total number of eight, were left unfinished at his death, and passed into careless, if not unfaithful, hands. But the five undoubted books were enough to do Hooker's work for the Church of England, and they did not do it by presenting his readers with such a closely reasoned and compact system as they might have found in the *Institutions* of Calvin. Englishmen have never cared much for consistency of system. It was enough for them that Hooker justified usages, ceremonies, and forms of Church government to which they were accustomed, against the "Disciplinarians" who condemned them for wanting the express authority of the New Testament, by proving that they had prevailed among pious men of former times, were in themselves innocent, and could therefore be accepted by sincere Christians as convenient, pious, and of good example, even if they had no "divine right," when they were imposed by authority. In substance this was no new doctrine. Her Majesty in Council had been saying as much for years, and so had Whitgift and Bridges, and all the defenders of the Establishment. But what they did by dry injunction or laboured scholastic argument, Hooker did by persuasion, by pathos, and by noble rhetoric. The criticism that he sometimes gives eloquence where he ought to give argument, does not go far when the purpose of his book is allowed for. It was not by logic that God elected to save His Church in former centuries, nor yet in the sixteenth. In Hooker's case, as fully as in the case of any poet, literature vindi-

cated itself. The beauty of the style, always essentially pure English in spite of an occasional Latin turn of the sentence, is the great merit of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*. The famous eloquent passages arise naturally because they always correspond to the greater pathos, or sanctity, or the deeper passion of that part of his subject which he is handling at the moment. The Englishman stood between the Calvinist on the one hand and the Roman Catholic on the other, both appealing to him on religious grounds. There was a real danger that his own Church would find nothing to tell him except that decency was decent, that he had better not trouble himself about debatable matters he would never understand, and that he must obey the Queen. If this was all it could find to say, Englishmen who were concerned about religion—the majority of thinking men, whether ignorant or learned—would assuredly have gone either to Geneva or to Rome, while the unthinking mass alone would have remained to the Church. In that case it would have gone down for ever in the Civil War. From that fate it was saved by Hooker.

## CHAPTER X.

## FRANCE. POETRY OF THE LATER RENAISSANCE.

THE PLÉIADE — RONSARD — THE LESSER STARS — ‘THE DÉFENSE ET ILLUSTRATION DE LA LANGUE FRANÇAISE’ — THE WORK OF RONSARD — HIS PLACE IN POETRY — JOACHIM DU BELLAY — REMI BELLEAU — BAÏF — DU BARTAS — D’AUBIGNÉ — THE DRAMATIC WORK OF THE PLÉIADE — JODELLE — GREVIN AND LA TAILLE — MONTCHRESTIEN — THE COMEDY — ‘LA RECONNUE’ — CAUSES OF FAILURE OF EARLY DRAMATIC LITERATURE.

THE French literature of the later Renaissance is divided, almost as it were by visible mechanical barriers, from what had gone before, and from what was to come after. The distinction is less marked in prose, but even here it is real, while the poetry of the time is the work of a school, with a creed and a set of formulas all its own. It has ever been much the custom of the French, whether in politics, in art, or in literature, to move altogether, and to make a clean sweep. Every new school rejects its predecessor with more or less indiscriminate contempt, becomes a tyranny in its turn, and is, in the fulness of time, rebelled against, and destroyed. The process has never been shown more fully and with fewer disturbing



elements than in the history of the Pléiade. Exactly in the middle of the century a small body of young writers took possession of French poetry, dismissed the forms of their elders as "grocery" (*épiceries*), just as the romantic writers of this century labelled the classic style as "wig" (*perruque*), and ruled without opposition, till one fine day they were scored out by the equally irreverent, though more pedantic, and less generous pen of Malherbe.

The poets of the Pléiade are entitled to the respect of the historian of literature for several reasons, and to his gratitude for this, that they formed  
*The Pléiade.* a compact body which he need be at no trouble to disentangle, because they stood deliberately apart, or to define, because they did the work for him, by publishing an exhaustive manifesto of their principles. There is nowhere a better example of that *situation nette* which the French love. The Pléiade knew its own mind, and what it wanted to do. Moreover, if it did not always achieve its purpose, at least it knew how the work was to be done. Some slight doubt exists as to the names of the seven forming the original constellation. The most orthodox list gives Daurat, Ronsard, Du Bellay, Belleau, Baïf, Jodelle, and Pontus de Thyard, but another of less authority replaces the sixth and seventh by Scévole de Sainte Marthe and Muret. It does not matter which of the two is taken, since both include the important names. Jodelle has a notable place in French dramatic literature, but the drama is subordinate in the history of the Pléiade. Pontus de Thyard (1521-1603), though

the first-born and the last survivor of the fellowship, is not an essential member, and may pass behind his leaders, Ronsard, Du Bellay, Belleau, and Baïf.

All these poets were by birth gentlemen, and several of them were highly connected. Pierre de Ronsard, the master of them all, and the *Ronsard.* “Prince of Poets” of his century, not only in the opinion of his countrymen, but by the consent of many foreigners, was the son of the *maître d’hôtel* (steward of the household) of Francis I. He was born at Vendôme in 1524, and entered the service of the Duke of Orleans as page. When James V. brought back his second wife, Mary of Lorraine, to Scotland, Ronsard followed them, and spent thirty months in their service, returning to France by way of England. When *hors de page*, he was attached to the suite of more than one ambassador. Among them was Lazare de Baïf, whose natural son, Jean Antoine de Baïf, was receiving his education under the care of the humanist, Jean Dorat, Daurat, or D’Aurat (1508-1588). Ronsard showed a taste for reading from his early years, and if he rejected the forms of Clement Marot, it was not without knowing them. An illness, which may have been the result of his sufferings during a shipwreck on the coast of Scotland, left him deaf in 1546. He now, and as it would seem not unwillingly, left the service of the Court, and betook himself to study at the college of Coqueret under the direction of Daurat, and in company of Jean Antoine de Baïf. Remi Belleau was a pupil at the same college. An accidental meeting

between Ronsard and Joachim du Bellay added this latter to the fellowship. The four, Daurat *The lesser stars.* advising and approving, undertook to revolutionise French poetry, and they did it. The later dates in their biographies may be briefly noted. Ronsard enjoyed great favour at Court, earned not only by admiration of his poetry, but by his singularly amiable personal character. On the death of Charles IX., himself a fair verse-writer, Ronsard retired to the Abbey of Croix Val, of which he was lay abbot, and died in 1584. Remi Belleau (1528-1577) passed a peaceful life in the service of the house of Lorraine, and was carried to his grave by brother poets. Joachim du Bellay (1525?-1560), member of a very distinguished family of soldiers and statesmen, some of whom made their mark in French memoir literature, accompanied his kinsman the Cardinal du Bellay to Rome, but fell out of favour and returned to France. He was of weak health, and appears to have suffered from family troubles. He died suddenly of apoplexy at the age of thirty-six. Jean Antoine de Baif (1532-1589) had a busy life in public affairs, and suffered changes of fortune. Characteristically enough he founded an early French Academy, for which he received a patent from Charles IX. in 1570.<sup>1</sup> It lasted for several years.

The *Défense et Illustration de la Langue Française*, which is the manifesto of the school, was written by

<sup>1</sup> Sainte-Beuve, *Tableau historique et critique de la Poésie Française et du Théâtre Français au XVI<sup>m</sup>e. Siècle. Le Seizième Siècle en France.* Par MM. Darmsteter et Hatzfeld.

Joachim du Bellay. It was published in February 1550, according to the modern calendar, but 1549 in the old, which made the year begin on Lady Day. If Boileau, before dismissing Ronsard and his friends so contemptuously, had taken the trouble to read this treatise, he would have learnt that it was not their intention to speak Latin and Greek in French, or to make a new art after their own fashion. Their purpose was very different. It was their aim to write good French, but to use all the resources of the language in order to reproduce the forms of the great classic literatures—the Epic, the Drama, the Satire, the Ode, and the Italian models—the Canzone and the Sonnet. They held, and not unjustly, that the French verse of Marot's school was poor in rhythm, and "frivolous." It had come to be satisfied with turning out nine insignificant verses, if it can put "le petit mot pour rire" into the tenth. A sham Middle Age was lingering on—the mere remnants and echo of the *Roman de la Rose* allegory. Du Bellay speaks of the *Roman* and of its authors—Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung—with respect. He was sufficiently an admirer of French mediæval literature to quote the stories of Lancelot as fit to be used for epic. But he insists that the prosaic language used by the school of Marot was not adequate for poetry, and that a new poetic tongue must be formed, which could only be done by the ardent study of Greek and Latin. What the student learnt he was to assimilate and make French. There was nothing in this which

*The Défense et  
Illustration de  
la Langue  
Française.*

was not at once inevitable when the immense influence of the classic literatures in that generation is allowed for, and was not also in itself sound. It was a misfortune that the Pléiade cut itself off so completely from the mediæval tradition; and there is unanswerable force in Sainte-Beuve's criticism that if Ronsard and his school were looking for *épiceries*, they had as good cause to condemn the sonnet as the "rondeau" or the "ballade." Yet it was not the great mediæval literature which they had before them. That was already forgotten. They did a work by which the seventeenth century, while treating them with contempt, profited. If they did not achieve all they aimed at, it was because no one among them—not even Ronsard—was a man of the first rank of poetic genius, not because their principles and method were at fault. And there is this to be said—that if some of their followers fell into extravagances of language (the poets of the Pléiade proper and their contemporaries were not, at least in their earlier years, open to the reproach), they did not impoverish the French tongue. They did not reduce it, when used for literary purposes, to colourless general terms; nor did they tie the Alexandrine into sets of two lines by making a meaningless rule that the sense was never to be carried over into a third. Their revolution was more fruitful, and less merely destructive, than Malherbe's.

Although Du Bellay appeared as the spokesman of the school, he was instantly eclipsed by Ronsard. The Odes of the "Prince of Poets" were published

in 1550, at about the same time as the Sonnets to Olive (an anagram of Mlle. de Viole) of *The work of Ronsard.* Du Bellay. He was at once accepted as the poet of his time, and his supremacy endured till his death without question, except for one moment in his later years when it appeared to be shaken by the popularity of Du Bartas. The *Amours de Cassandre*<sup>1</sup> followed in 1552, with a second edition in the following years, which contains the famous "Mignonne allons voir si la rose." In 1555 appeared the Hymns, and in 1560 he collected all he had as yet written in a complete edition at the request of Queen Mary, who was his ardent admirer, as was also Queen Elizabeth. Between 1561 and 1574 he was attached to the service of Charles IX., who treated him with kindness, and whose "virtues" he celebrated, even after his death, in terms which sound strange to us. As Court poet he wrote "by command," which is not a favourable source of inspiration. It was to please the king that he wrote his fragmentary epic, *Franciade*, which his most sincere admirers have to confess is "dull." It had the misfortune to be published on the eve of the Saint Bartholomew. Yet his *Discours des Misères du Temps* (1562) and his *Remonstrance au Peuple de France* (1563) belong to these years, and they were drawn from him by the shocking miseries of the time. Henri III., though generous to some, was less a favourer of poets than his brother, and Ronsard was free to express himself in the lyrics and melan-

<sup>1</sup> *Œuvres complètes de P. de Ronsard*, edited by M. Prosper Blanchemain. Bibliothèque Elzévirienne, 1858.

choly sonnets of his last years. At the very end, when his health was broken down and his mind affected, he made an unfortunate and negligible revision of his work, published in 1584.

It is perhaps some excuse for the sweeping condemnation of Ronsard by Malherbe that even the Romantic reaction of this century has not succeeded in regaining favour for the part of the poetry of the chief of the Pléiade for which he was most admired by his contemporaries, and of which he was most proud. In the vigorous sonnet beginning "Ils ont menty, d'Aurat," written against Du Bartas—or at least against his admirers—Ronsard appealed to his own Francus, and

" Les neuf belles sœurs  
Qui trempèrent mes vers dans leurs graves douceurs,"

as witnesses that he was not less than the author of the *Semaine*. Now it is precisely this part of his poetry, that in which he would be an epic poet, or wear the Pindaric robe, which is dead, and can by no effort be brought to life again. When Malherbe condemned it he passed a sentence which no later admirer of the poetry of the sixteenth century has been able to reverse. The gross error of the later school was that it did not make allowance for the passing and temporary fashion of imitation of the classic models, and did shut its eyes to the fact that, besides Ronsard le Pindarique, there was Ronsard the author of "Mignonne allons voir si la Rose," and the beautiful sonnet to Hélène, "Quand tu seras bien vieille." This

Ronsard was a very genuine, and elegant, if not very great, poet. That he would not himself have been pleased to know that he was to be admired for these themes, and not for his *Franciade* and his Pindaric ode to Michel de L'Hospital, is possible. Yet his erroneous estimate of the relative values of different parts of his work does not affect his real glory, which is that he raised French verse from the condition of prose tagged with rhyme, into which it had fallen, gave it a new melody, and breathed into it a new poetic spirit. He did for France what Surrey and Wyatt began, and Spenser and Sidney completed for us, what the Spanish poets of the school of Boscan and Garcilaso attempted for Castilian. He set up a model of sweeter and statelier measures, and he brought the ancient classic inspiration out of pure scholarship into literature. If he had far less power than his English contemporaries, he was infinitely more original than the Spaniards. There is no mere slavish repetition of foreign models in him, but the constant and successful effort to give a genuine French equivalent, which is quite another thing.

The followers of "a prince" are inevitably eclipsed by their leader, and that is the more likely to be the case when a body of poets are memorable for their accomplishment, their general poetic spirit, their scholarship—for anything, in short, rather than for power. Power, indeed, is not what can be attributed to the poets of the *Pléiade*. When it appears among the younger men it is in the verse of the Huguenots Du Bartas and D'Aubigné, in whom

*Joachim du  
Bellay.*



there is again less scholarly accomplishment. Among the other poets of Ronsard's school, from his brother in literature Joachim du Bellay down to his last follower Jean Bertaut (1532-1611), the best is commonly what is melancholy or what is gay and graceful. Joachim du Bellay<sup>1</sup> published his first volume, which contained the Sonnets to Olive, the *Musagnæomachie*, or "Battle between the Muses and Ignorance," and some Odes in 1550, a little before Ronsard. The sonnet had already been written in French by Mellin de Saint-Gelais, but Du Bellay claimed, and was allowed, the honour of having first "acclimatised" it. The model adopted and constantly followed in France was the Petrarchan. His most memorable work was born of his new experiences in Italy. It was there that he wrote the *Antiquités de Rome*—the sonnets translated by Spenser under the name of *The Ruins*—his *Regrets*, in which he gives expression to his disgust at the papal capital and his home-sickness, and his *Jeux Rustiques*, inspired by the Latin poetry of Navigiero, the Venetian who advised Boscan to write in the Italian manner. Du Bellay himself wrote Latin verse. The *Jeux Rustiques*, published at the same time as the *Regrets*, 1558, contain his best known pieces, the perfectly gay and graceful *Vanneur* ("the Winnower"), and the lines to Venus, in which he has done all there was to be done with that very artificial product the pastoral poetry of learned poets. Withal Du Bellay carried beak and claws. He was praised for having put the epigram into the sonnet, and there are cer-

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Marty-Laveaux. 2 vols.

tainly few better examples how that can be achieved than in the numbers of the *Regrets* which contrast the outward courtesy and dignity with the inward treason and meanness of the Roman court. Du Bellay is more uniformly excellent than Ronsard, but the bulk of his work is far smaller and he tried less.

The *gentil* Belleau was a less strong man than Du Bellay, and it is to the honour of his critical faculty that he recognised the truth. He left the *Remi Belleau.* ode, Pindaric or Horatian, alone, and devoted himself either to translation (he translated Anacreon) or to poetry of the style of the *Jeux Rustiques*. His *Bergerie*, 1565, and his *Deuxième Journée de la Bergerie*, 1572, are of this order, while his *Amours et Nouveau Eschanges des pierres précieuses vertus et propriétés d'icelles* is an imitation, or adaptation, of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the poets of the Greek decadence, based on a book about the properties of precious stones, written by a Bishop of Rennes in the eleventh century. Our own Euphuists must have gone to the same source. The first *Bergerie* contains the really delightful

“Avril l'honneur et des Bois  
Et des Mois,”

which ranks with Du Bellay's *Vanneur* as the masterpiece of the style. It is a curious comment on the theory which accounts for literature by the “circumstances” that all this light verse about graceful things belongs to the years of the conspiracy of Amboise, when the streets of that town were, in the vehement

words of Regnier de la Planche, tapestried with the corpses of executed Huguenots, and while the wars of Religion, the Saint Bartholomew, and the League were deluging France in blood.

Like Belleau, J. B. de Baïf was a translator. His versions of the *Antigone*, and of the *Eunuchus* of Terence, were published in 1565, and other translations of Greek and Latin drama were left unpublished by him at his death, and have been lost. Baïf was also the author of a comedy imitated from Plautus, *Le Brave*, acted in 1567. His poetry includes the *Ravissement d'Europe* and *Les Amours de Méline*, 1552. *Les Amours de Francine*, 1555—these are sonnet cycles—the *Météores* of 1567, his *Étrennes de Poesie Française*, 1574, and the *Mimes*, 1576. Baïf, who was more scholar than poet, took the lead in an attempt to reform French spelling, which indeed at that time stood in no small need of being reduced to order, and he also was one of a small body of writers who repeated in France the hopeless attempt to force the poetry of modern languages to conform to classic metres. His Academy has already been mentioned. Jean Daurat and Pontus de Thyard are chiefly worth mention because their names are associated with those of more original men. Daurat was a humanist, whose share in producing the poetry of the Pléiade was to direct the reading of his pupils at the college of Coqueret, and to write Greek and Latin verse in praise of them. His French verse is insignificant. Pontus de Thyard could claim to be a forerunner of the Pléiade, for his *Erreurs Amoureuses* appeared

shortly before the first published verse of Ronsard and Du Bellay. But he soon renounced verse for theology and mathematics.<sup>1</sup>

Of most of the poets who followed "the conquering banner" of their Prince, Ronsard, as of the lesser learned poets of Spain, no detailed mention can be made here. The abundance of literary talent which has seldom been wanting in France accounts sufficiently for the "crop of poets" which sprang up "at the summons of Du Bellay, and under the hand of Ronsard." That time of war, oppression, and conspiracy might have seemed to be "wholly consecrated to the Muses." Olivier de Magny (d. 1560), Jacques Tahureau (1527-1555), Nicolas Denisot (1515-1559), called "le Comte d'Alsinois" by anagram, Louis le Caron (1536-1617), who called himself Charondas, Estienne de la Boetie (1530-1563), the friend of Montaigne, who indeed saved him from oblivion, and others whom it were tedious to mention, were men of talent, respectable members of the army of minor poets, which in nations of considerable literary faculty, and in times of literary vigour, has never been wanting. One really original poet usually makes many who are accomplished, but who without the example might never have written, and would certainly not have written so well. It was perhaps the necessity for finding a rhyme to *haut* which induced Boileau to quote, from among all the followers of Ronsard, the

<sup>1</sup> A Selection of Baïf's verse has been made by M. Beq de Fonquières, 1874, and his *Mimes* have been reprinted by M. Blanchemain.

names of "Desportes and Bertaut." His dogmatic assertion that they were made "more restrained" by the fall of Ronsard is perfectly unfounded. Desportes (1546-1606), who in character was a courtier of the baser kind, owed his great popularity at Court to the fact that he was an echo of one part of Ronsard.<sup>1</sup> Bertaut (1552-1611), another courtier, was also another Desportes. Their greater measure was mainly due to the fact that they represented the decadence of their school.

There are, however, three poets of the later sixteenth century in France who stand apart, though all are fairly describable as followers of Ronsard, and to one of them it was given, in the French phrase, to "tell its fact" to the meticulous criticism of Malherbe. They are Du Bartas, Aubigné, and Regnier.

Guillaume Salluste, Seigneur du Bartas, was born in or about 1544, at Montfort, near Auch, in Gascony.

*Du Bartas.* He served Henry IV. both in diplomacy

and in war, and died in 1590 of wounds received at the battle of Ivry. Du Bartas was one of the many of his time who in a once favourite phrase were "tam Marte quam Mercurio," equally devoted to arms and to letters. On the suggestion of Jeanne d'Albret, the Queen of Navarre, he began by writing a poem on the story of Judith; but his fame was gained by the *Semaine*, or "Week of Creation," published in 1579. It was followed by the *Uranie*, the *Triomphe de la Foi*, and the *Seconde Semaine*, of which part was published in 1584, and which remained unfinished at

<sup>1</sup> Ed. M. Alfred Michiels. 1858.

his death. Du Bartas is an interesting figure, and his literary fortune has been curious. With men of his class in France a profession of Protestantism was commonly only a form of political opposition. They were "of the Religion" because they were the enemies of the House of Guise, and the great majority of them fell away from it in the following generations. But with Du Bartas the religious enthusiasm was manifestly real. He was of the Puritan type, and in that lies part, at least, of the explanation of his strange literary fortune in his own country. He was at first extraordinarily popular. Even Ronsard praised him, and sent him a present of a pen. But his party began to claim that he was the superior of the courtier poet. This not unnaturally drew from Ronsard the emphatic denial of the sonnet to Daurat, and the opinion of Frenchmen has been favourable to the older poet. Du Bartas has been treated with neglect, and even contempt, by his own countrymen.<sup>1</sup> Abroad he has had better fortune. He was widely translated. The English version of Joshua Sylvester was long popular with us, and in comparatively recent times he has been praised by Goethe for showing qualities wanting in other Frenchmen. But Frenchmen, to whom the Puritan type has always been uncongenial, have disliked him on those very grounds. They have always insisted on looking exclusively at his faults, his want of taste, his provincialism, and his pedantry. All are undeniable, but the critics who

<sup>1</sup> There is still no modern edition of Du Bartas. The standard edition is that of 1610-1611, in 2 vols. folio.

have endeavoured to secure justice for the Pléiade ought to have remembered that this last was only an exaggeration of the teaching of Ronsard and Du Bellay. They had recommended adaptation of the language of classic poetry, Greek and Latin. They had used inversions, and had argued that French writers were entitled to form compound words on the Greek model. Du Bellay, for example, justifies the construction of such a word as "fervêtu." Du Bartas certainly took a very wide licence in this respect. He wrote such lines as—

"Le feu donne-clarté, porte-chaud jette-flamme ;"

and careful examiners have found more than three hundred examples of such words in his verse. As the French have not chosen to make use of a freedom legitimate enough in a language which contains such words as *marche-pied* and *aigredoux*, Du Bartas has suffered for his boldness. It is easy enough to find pedantry and bad taste in him; and it would be easy, by confining attention to the "Pindaric" side of Ronsard, to show that he was a stilted and pompous writer. But it is no less the case that there is a vehement grandeur in Du Bartas which is painfully rare in the correct poetry of France. It may be fairly said that if the quality of the French mind, which Frenchmen call "le bon sens français," achieved one of its triumphs when it wholly rejected Du Bartas, it also condemned its literature to possess no Milton. When it is your exclusive ambition to be without fault, to be merely correct, your safest course is to

abstain. If you will keep from the "wine cup" and "the red gold," from love, adventure, and ambition, then you may "easy live and quiet die"; but you will hardly do anything passionate. Nothing is so "correct" as cold water.

Theodore Agrippa D'Aubigné, the contemporary, friend, and kindred spirit of Du Bartas, was a gentleman of an ancient family in Saintonge.

*Agrippa  
D'Aubigné.*

His long life was full of agitation and many-sided activity. Jean D'Aubigné, his father, was Chancellor of Navarre. The son was born in 1550, and received a careful education, by which he unquestionably profited, though we may doubt the exact accuracy of his own assertion that he could read Greek, Latin, and Hebrew at the age of six. Jean D'Aubigné was a vehement Calvinist. It is one of the best-known stories of the time that he made his son, then a mere boy, swear, in the presence of the decapitated heads of La Renaudie and the other chiefs of the conspiracy of Amboise, to revenge their deaths. D'Aubigné kept this "oath of Hannibal" to the end of his life. When only nine years old he risked the stake, "his horror of the Mass having overcome his fear of the fire." He took part in the defence of Orleans in the first war of Religion, and from thence escaped to Geneva, where he studied under Theodore Beza. At a later time he served under Condé, and then attached himself to Henry of Navarre. It was his good fortune to be in hiding for a duel when the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew took place. He remained with Henry at the French Court. During



this period he seems to have so far departed from the rigidity of his principles as to bow down with his master "in the temple of Rimmon." At this time he certainly met Ronsard, and fell under his influence. He wrote court poetry, composed a tragedy, and belonged to the Academy of Baïf. When Henry of Navarre made his escape, D'Aubigné accompanied him. The Bearnais had no more daring or faithful servant, and none who spoke to him with a ruder frankness. The abjuration of Henry IV. was a bitter blow to D'Aubigné, and he risked his master's favour by his blunt condemnation of that politic act. Yet Henry knew the essential fidelity of D'Aubigné, and left him the possession of his offices of Governor of Saintonge and Vice-Admiral of Poitou. After the murder of the king he took part in the unfortunate opposition to Marie de Medici. The publication of his *Histoire Universelle* aroused enemies against him, and in 1620 he fled to Geneva, where he died in 1630, energetic to the last—"lassé de vains travaux, rassasié, et non ennuyé de vivre," as he describes himself in his will. The prose work of D'Aubigné is very large, and will be dealt with elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> His poetry is divided into the lighter verse which he wrote under the influence of Ronsard, and *Les Tragiques*, which unquestionably show the influence of Du Bartas. If his own words are to be taken in the literal sense, they were written in the very stress of

<sup>1</sup> An edition of the works of D'Aubigné, complete with the exception of *L'Histoire Universelle*, was published in Paris, 1873-1892, by MM. Réaume et de Caussade. Partial reprints are numerous.

the war with the League; but there is internal evidence that this can only be true of the three first. The others were at least largely written after the peace of Vervins in 1598. There are seven poems in *Les Tragiques*, called *Misères*, *Princes*, *La Chambre Dorée*, *Les Feux*, *Les Fers*, *Vengeances*, *Jugement*. They are historical poems, written in verse which is sometimes heavy, but often magnificent, and always animated by a grim force. D'Aubigné denounces wickedness in the form of a Latin satirist; but the spirit comes from the Hebrew prophet, and that is perhaps belittled if we call it satire.

It would be difficult to find a sharper contrast than is shown between the long restless life of D'Aubigné and the career of Mathurin Regnier. He was born at Chartres in 1573, in a family of the middle class, and was nephew to the prosperous court poet Desportes. His family destined him to the Church, and he was tonsured at the age of eleven. By the influence, in all probability, of his uncle, he was appointed to a place in the suite of the Cardinal Joyeuse, French Ambassador in Italy. Later on he was provided for by a canonry in his native town, and died there in 1613. The character of Regnier may unfortunately be described nearly in the terms which the Duke of Wellington used of an English military adventurer who had served under him in the Peninsula. He was, said the Duke, "a brave fellow, but a sad drunken dog." A considerable poet, but a sad drunken dog, is, it is to be feared, the description of Regnier. His habits rather than the quality of his verse justify the epithet

of "cynical" which has been applied to him.<sup>1</sup> Although he wrote other verse, including some fine lyrics, Regnier is chiefly memorable as a satirist. This he was in the proper sense of the word. He attacked vices, and did not only say savage things about people whom he disliked. In the form of his verse Regnier was so far correct that he escaped the condemnation which the school of Malherbe passed on all the other poets of his century. Yet he kept much of the freedom of the earlier time, and in his ninth satire he pointed out with admirable precision exactly what were the weaknesses of the reform of Malherbe. There is an individuality and an air of sincerity in Regnier which saves his work from the too common fault of modern satire—which is to be a mere echo of Juvenal, verse written not because the author feels any indignation, but only because he thought it a distinguished action to imitate the classics and scold his contemporaries.

The ambition of the Pléiade included the reform of dramatic as well as of other literature. Its poets wished to replace the Mysteries, Moralities, "Sotties," and "Farces" by tragedy and comedy. Their chances of success in this field might have seemed, if anything, more promising than elsewhere. The taste for the theatre was very strong in France. In Paris there existed a guild, established by charter from the king in 1402, for the performance of mysteries and moralities, which possessed a theatre at the Hospital de la Trinité, near the gate of St Denis. Two other

<sup>1</sup> Ed. M. Prosper Poitèvin.

societies, the Clercs de la Bazoche, or Clerks of the Parliament of Paris, and the Enfants sans Souci, a body of volunteers who performed farces, existed by the side of, and to some extent under the control of, the chief guild, which was called the Confrérie de la Passion. In the provinces there were numerous societies named *puy*s which existed to produce plays. And while the stage enjoyed so much popularity, a number of causes were at work to render it no longer possible to continue the religious plays of the Middle Ages. The influence of the Renaissance helped to discredit their form, while the spread of the Reformation began to make their old downright realistic piety look ridiculous. As early as 1540 the Parliament of Paris had protested against the performances of the Confrérie de la Passion as leading to scandal. In 1548 it was strictly forbidden to present religious mysteries.

As the poets of the Pléiade were just about organising themselves in those years, and were to present their first attempt to repeat the classic models in French in 1552, it would seem on the face of it that they had a singularly favourable opportunity. They had only to step into the place left vacant. But that was in reality far from being the case. Although the Confrérie de la Passion was forbidden to play sacred mysteries, it was left in possession of its exclusive privilege to open a theatre in Paris, and was thus able to silence all rivals. The tradesmen and artisans who formed the guild were little likely to favour their

*The dramatic  
work of the  
Pléiade.*

contemptuous literary rivals, while the poets were as little disposed to go cap in hand to such masters. Thus the men of letters were practically shut out from the real stage, and were driven to seek a chance of getting their pieces acted at Court or in colleges. They had no access to any body of actors. We need not attach too great importance to this exclusion from the real theatre. If Jodelle and Garnier had possessed dramatic genius of a high order, their works would bear witness for them. In time, too—the date is 1588—the Confrérie de la Passion did consent to the establishment of an independent theatre. After the restoration of peace in 1593 there was always one in Paris. Thenceforward it was within the power of any Frenchman who possessed the necessary faculties to be the Lope de Vega or the Shakespeare of his country. If none appeared, it was doubtless because no such Frenchman was born; and perhaps in the long-run the non-appearance of the right man is the one adequate explanation of the want of any form of literature in any country. Yet it may be allowed that the monopoly of the Confrérie did have a certain effect on the dramatic work of the Pléiade by confining them to coteries and colleges, and so intensifying whatever tendency there was in them to produce mere school exercises on a classic model. It must also be kept in mind that the sacred mysteries continued to be acted in the provinces. A few traces of them are to be found to this day in the form of the religious marionette plays performed in Brittany. In Paris itself the Confrérie de la

Passion continued to give profane mysteries, which appear to have been long straggling successions of scenes taken from history, or from the tales of chivalry through Ariosto. Its stage has this much vitality, that it was used for political purposes by the League. But all this belongs to the history of the stage proper or to curiosity, not to literature.

Whatever causes may be held to be responsible, the fact remains that the dramatic is the weakest part of the work of the poets of the Pléiade. Here they made little effort to assimilate and reproduce in genuine French form. They repeated the shape slavishly. In tragedy they did not try at all to go beyond the model given them by Buchanan in the Latin plays written for his pupils at Bordeaux, which again were taken from Seneca. In comedy there was less slavery, and less break with the mediæval literature. But the poets did comparatively little in comedy; and the liveliest comic writer of the later sixteenth century in France, Larivey, who was of Italian descent, did not achieve more than to give bold adaptations of Italian originals.

The title of father of modern French dramatic literature, tragic and comic, belongs to Estienne Jodelle, Seigneur de Lymodin. He was  
*Jodelle.* born at Paris in 1532. Jodelle was a copious miscellaneous writer; but only two tragedies, one comedy, and some poetry written in his youth, survive.<sup>1</sup> His *Cléopâtre Captive*, and the comedy

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Marty Laveaux, 1868-1870; and *Ancien Théâtre François* in the "Bibliothèque Elzévirienne," vol. iv.

*Eugène*, were performed before King Henry II. in 1552 by Jodelle himself and his friends. The king was so pleased that he gave the dramatist five hundred crowns, a handsome sum of money at the time. In the pardonable joy of their hearts, Jodelle and his friends celebrated their success by a supper at Arcueil, which became the excuse for a scandal. Being full of a classic zeal, not always according to knowledge, the poets impounded a goat, crowned it, and chanted some nonsense verses, largely composed of Greek words, the work of Baïf. The New Learning had always been open to the reproach of paganism, and the Reformers accused the party of having performed a heathen sacrifice. The Confrérie de la Passion, glad of an excuse to bring rivals into trouble, joined in the cry. Jodelle's second tragedy, *Didon se sacrifiant*, was written later, and apparently never played. In 1558 he fell into disgrace through the failure of a mask on the Argonauts, provided for the reception of Henry II. at the Hôtel de Ville. It is said that the stage carpenter mistook the word *rochers* for *clochers*, and provided bell-towers instead of rocks in the properties. Jodelle never recovered favour; but this accident is not accountable for the misfortunes of his later years. There is evidence that "much bad living kill'd Teste Noire at last," for Jodelle, unlike his brother poets, who seem to have been orderly people, was of the character of our own Bohemian forerunners of Shakespeare. He died worn out, and in great distress, in 1573.

Jodelle is of importance rather because of his date, and on the ground that he indicated the road which

French literary drama was to follow, than for his intrinsic merits. His tragedies are little more than school exercises. His model was the Latin tragedy of Seneca, which in itself is a thin dry copy of the mere machinery of the Greeks. The popularity of these very tiresome pieces during the Renaissance can be partly accounted for by the fact that Greek was far less familiar than Latin. But it is easy to make too much of this. Sophocles and Euripides were not unknown. Buchanan caused Greek plays to be performed by his pupils at Bordeaux; while, if Jodelle could not read Greek himself, he might have had the help of Daurat, and he had the translations of Sophocles by Lazare de Baïf and others to guide him to a better model than Seneca. They would have been quite enough for a writer who had any dramatic instinct. But Seneca was easy to imitate. A well-known story, told mostly in long speeches, by a messenger or other "utility," no play of character, and a chorus which chants common-places, having only a very general relation to the story—these are the notes of the Senecan tragedy. It is obvious that they are easy to reproduce. The opening they afforded for serious moral reflection must have had an attraction for the poets of the Pléiade, who had a very definite purpose—to expel "frivolity" from poetry.

A tragedy which began in such conditions as those described here could hardly hope to become a national drama. It is certainly the fact that very little which was written before the seventeenth century has much



interest except as a curiosity. Jodelle and his immediate successors can hardly be said even to have written for the stage in the proper sense of the word. When they were acted at all, it was at the Court or in colleges. They had so far an influence that they succeeded in establishing the chorus as a necessity. It was introduced even into the wild anti-Royalist pieces of the League; but these writers understood the classic model so little that they treated the chorus as a mere means of filling in the intervals between the acts, and not as an integral part of the play. They in fact exaggerated one of the defects of Seneca, as is the way with the mere imitator. We have to wait for the generation of Rotrou and Corneille before seeing how an intelligent attempt could be made to give a new form to the principles of the classic drama. As for the earlier poets, as they chose to allow themselves to be bound by the pedantic rules laid down by Joseph Scaliger in his *De Tragediis et Comediis* (1560), which said that this and the other must be done by every right-minded man because Seneca had done them, their plays were doomed to want life.

Of Jodelle's two tragedies, the *Cléopâtre* possesses, though by no merit of his, the better plot. The story of the death of the Queen of Egypt is in itself so picturesque and so complete that it would be difficult to spoil it altogether. His second tragedy is rather better written. There is more force in the dialogue, more poetry in the moral reflections of the chorus of *Didon*; but then the plot is inevitably inferior. It is difficult indeed to see what could be done with the

story of Dido and Æneas on the stage, unless the intention is to make the hero odious or ridiculous. It is true that Jodelle does not fail to attain to a comic effect, which is, however, too obviously undesigned. The last words he puts into the mouth of Æneas are—

“Pauvre Didon, hélas ! mettras-tu l'assurance  
Sur les vaisseaux marins, que n'ont point de constance.”

These are too like the sailor's traditional excuse to be worthy of the son of Anchises, who at least had the grace to sail “*multa gemens, magnoque animum labefactus amore.*” It is but just to add that not dissimilar plunges into the ridiculous where what was called for was the sublime, might be found in the great, the truly great, Corneille. It must also be remembered that Jodelle established the Alexandrine as the metre of French tragedy, though he did not submit to the strict rules enforced in the next century.

The names of Jacques Grévin and Jean de la Taille are entitled to little more than bare mention among the followers of Jodelle. Grévin (1540 ?-  
*Grévin and* 1570) was for a time a favourite with  
*La Taille.* Ronsard ; but he was a strong Calvinist, and broke with the Prince of Poets in resentment against the *Discours sur les Misères du Temps*. Ronsard retaliated by cancelling his praise of Grévin. One tragedy, *César*, and two comedies, *La Trésorière* and *Les Esbahis*, all three written in his youth, still survive.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ed. 1562, but *Les Esbahis* is in the *Ancien Théâtre Français*.

Jacques de la Taille (1540?-1608), a soldier, and in poetry a follower of Ronsard, lives in all literary histories by a piece of unjust ill-luck. He wrote the two famous lines at which everybody has laughed—

“Ma mère et mes enfans aye en recommanda . . .  
Il ne put achever car la mort l’engarda (l’empêcha).”

M. Suard, who habitually took a contemptuous tone to the early dramatists of his country, made the remark—a very fair example of the silly would-be clever—that La Taille found it easier to shorten his words than to lengthen his line. Yet such a stroke of mistaken realism as this is less essentially foolish than the flat absurdity which Jodelle puts into the mouth of Æneas. The attempt to be true to life was at least meritorious in intention, and there is force in La Taille’s tragedy of *Les Gabaonites*, on the story of the sons of Rizpah.<sup>1</sup>

Robert Garnier (1545-1601) was a far stronger man than any of these three. He was born at La Ferté-

*Garnier.*

Bernard, was a magistrate all his life, and was finally made Counsellor of State by Henry IV. Garnier was much less open to the reproach of being “a barren rascal” than Jodelle, Grevin, or La Taille. His list of plays is of respectable length. *Porcie* was written in 1568, *Cornélie* (translated into English by Kyd) in 1574, and *Marc Antoine* in 1578. *L’Hippolyte*, the *Troade*, and the *Antigone* are translations or adaptations of Sophocles and Euripides. There are two other plays

<sup>1</sup> Ed. M. René de Maulde. 4 vols., 1878-1882.

more original than either of these—*Les Juives* (1583), a “Sacred Tragedy” founded on the story of Zedekiah; and *Bradamante* (1582), a romantic drama founded on passages in Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*.<sup>1</sup> These two plays are of special interest. *Les Juives* is an example of all that could be done with Garnier’s model. The story supplies just such a catastrophe as was fit to be treated in the measured, and, when good, stately Senecan fashion. The prophet, to whom Garnier gives no name, Zedekiah and his mother Amutal (Sédécie and Amital in the French), the King of Babylon and his general Nabuzardan, are exactly the characters required; while the chorus is abundantly provided with matter for lamentations, reflections on the instability of all human things, the justice of God, and the cruelty of the wicked. In this case also the chorus of Jewesses, to which the play owes its name, though less truly a personage in the drama than it is in the *Œdipus the King* or the *Agamemnon*, is not a mere voice used to fill up the intervals between the acts. Garnier was very free from the want of taste which allowed Jodelle to drop into vulgarity. He had an instinct for the “grand manner,” and does not fall below his subject. The *Bradamante* is a still more interesting play than *Les Juives*. There is something almost pathetic about it, for in the *Bradamante* Garnier may be said to have brought French literary drama to within touch of emancipa-

<sup>1</sup> Ed. of 1585 reprinted in *Sammlung Französischer Neudrucke*. Heilbronn, by Herr Wendelin Förster.

tion from the tyranny of Seneca's form. If he had gone a step further, or had found a worthy follower, the work of Corneille might have been antedated by half a century, and in happier circumstances. The subject is neither classical nor Biblical, and this perhaps gave Garnier the courage to drop the chorus. As the *Bradamante* is not, in the full sense of the word, a tragedy, since it has a happy ending, the chorus was not strictly necessary; but as it was not meant to be a comic piece, the natural course at the time would have been to supply one. As has been noted above, the chorus was habitually introduced into pieces which were meant to be serious even when the subject was not classical. At the same time Garnier showed, by introducing a "confidant," that he had a real sense of the theatre. He knew that over and above the main personages there must always be some who explain, or to whom explanations are made, and to whom it falls to render the action intelligible. The name does not alter the nature of the thing. Horatio is a confidant, and Mercutio is not much else, though we do not call them by the title. That they are also interesting human beings is an argument for incorporating the chorus in the play, not a proof that some such wheel in the machinery is superfluous.<sup>1</sup> Then, as he was

<sup>1</sup> It is advisable not to burden one's page with illustrations, but it may be pointed out that the modern "well-made play" supplies copious examples of what is said above. The Jalin of Alexandre Dumas fils, in the *Demi Monde*, or the Duc de Montmeyran in *Le Gendre de M. Poirier* of Emile Angier, are chorus; and it may be added that they are also legion.

not under the obligation to maintain the perpetual gravity proper to classical and Biblical subjects, Garnier felt free to relieve the heroic passages by comedy. Aymon, the father of Bradamante, is a human, peppery, and peremptory old gentleman, very much the *barba* of the Spanish *comedia*, and a true figure of comedy. This, it need hardly be said, is quite a different thing from the introduction of scenes of clowns who have nothing to do with the action. It is a detail worth noting that Garnier, who does not seem to have cared much whether his play was acted or not, adds a note to his preliminary argument to tell any manager who chooses to bring it out that he is free to replace the absent chorus by interludes between the acts, "in order that they may not be confounded, and not to join together what requires a certain interval of time." This, besides proving how fully the French dramatists of the day accepted Scaliger's most disputable theory, that the chorus served only to separate the acts, is an example of what has already been said of the Spanish and the English stages—namely, that an audience expected something more than the play, which the Spaniards gave in *saynetes* and dances between the acts, and the English inserted in the body of the piece.

Antoine de Montchrestien, the last survivor of the French dramatists of the sixteenth century, may by a slight stretch of charity be described as *Montchrestien*. the Racine of the epoch in which Garnier was the Corneille. The date of his birth is unknown, but he was killed in a skirmish during a Huguenot

rising in 1621, after a very agitated life. At one time he was an exile in England on a charge of homicide, and owed his pardon to the intercession of James I., whose favour he had earned by a play on the death of Mary Queen of Scots, called *L'Écossaise*. It is sad to relate that he was afterwards accused of coining false money. In 1615 he published a *Traité de l'Économie Politique*, and was indeed the first to use the term. Montchrestien wrote a poem *Suzanne*, and a *Bergerie*, or Pastoral, in addition to his six tragedies—*Sophonisbe*, or *La Cartagénoise* (translated from Trissino), *Les Lacènes*, *David*, *Aman*, *Hector*, and *L'Écossaise*. Montchrestien was an accomplished writer of the school to which he belonged, but his plays show no great originality. They were published in 1601, and were probably all written in his youth. It does not appear that they were ever acted.

The comedy of this school was less a pure imitation of classic models, but it was also on the whole less interesting, and cannot be described as original, since it took freely from the Italians. Every one of the nine surviving plays of Pierre Larivey (1540?-1611?) has an Italian original. He was descended from the family of the Giunti, printers at Florence and Venice.<sup>1</sup> His father had settled at Troyes, and had translated his name into L'Arrivé, which was again corrupted into Larivey. Pierre was a copious translator from his father's native language. The nine comedies he left are

<sup>1</sup> *Ancien Théâtre Français*. Bibliothèque Elzévirienne. Vols. v. and vi.

adaptations as well as translations. He subjected his originals to the revision which the English playwright has so often applied to French plays, but it was not for the purpose of forcing them to become decent. Through Larivey much of the common matter of comedy was handed on to Molière, who may also have owed his predecessor something on the side of the technical skill. It is, however, mainly on this ground that they belong to French literature. The comedy of the later sixteenth century is on the whole unimportant. It cannot be said to have had any particular character of its own. One piece has indeed some promise and considerable merit of execution. This is the *Reconnue* of Belleau.<sup>1</sup>

The story has the merit of being drawn from the real life of the time. A young lady named Henriette has been placed while a child in a religious house at Poitiers. She has no vocation, and escapes from the convent to become a Huguenot. In the storm of the city by the king's army she is made prize by a certain Captain Rodomont, whom (a pleasing touch of the manners of the age) she fully recognises as her lawful master. The captain is a very honest man, who is well disposed to marry his captive. But he is summoned away to take part in the recovery of Havre from the English, and leaves her, having always "treated her as a sister," in charge of an old lawyer in Paris. At this point the play begins. The old lawyer falls in love with Henriette, and thereby arouses the jealousy of his wife. To

*La Reconnue.*

<sup>1</sup> *Ancien Théâtre Français*, vol. iv.



quiet her he arranges to marry Henriette to his clerk, Jehan, who is likely to prove a complacent husband. He tells Henriette that the captain has been killed at Havre. In the meantime we learn that a certain young advocate has fallen in love with Henriette. She, who would willingly marry either the captain or the advocate—for she is a downright though honest young person—nevertheless resigns herself to marry Jehan, seeing that the captain is dead, and she dare not go home. At this crisis the captain turns up enriched by booty, and immediately afterwards Henriette's father. The "recognition" gives its name to the play. Henriette is married to the advocate. The captain is consoled with the promise of another wife, and all ends happily. Here are the elements of a very lively play, and one can imagine what Lope de Vega or Dekker would have made of them. Belleau falls much short of what was possible, largely because his respect for classic models made him feel it incumbent on him to tell his story, not by dialogue and action, but by narratives. The return of the captain, for instance, which might have made an excellent scene, is only described by the old lawyer's servant. The merits of the comedy are none the less considerable. They lie in the brisk flowing verse of the dialogue, which, as was to be expected of "le gentil Belleau," is wholly free from mere grossness, and in the human truth of the characters. Even the author's excessive deference to the classics is partly atoned for. His descriptions of what it would have been better to tell by action are mostly given by Jeanne, the lawyer's servant, who is an

excellent study of that very French personage, the *Bonne à tout faire*, the general servant, who is partly the drudge, but also partly the friend, and a little the tyrant, of the family. Jeanne is truly the ancestress of the *servante* of Molière. With *La Reconnuë*, as with Garnier's *Bradamante*, we feel that only a little was wanted to make a complete success. But that little was not supplied, and the difference between the complete and the incomplete is in itself infinite. Of the dramatic work of the French poets of the later sixteenth century it has to be said that on the whole it was lost labour. The tragedy is too artificial, too slavishly imitated from a poor model. The comedy, as all can see who will look at the *Eugène* of Jodelle, or the *Esbahis* of Grévin, was incoherent, being partly a rehandling of the "sotties" and the "farces" of the Middle Ages, partly an imitation of Plautus and Terence, nowhere an original growth. Its authors were men of letters, doing exercises in kinds of literature to which they were attracted by their prestige. They did not really work for the stage. Now the theatre, in the material sense, is as necessary to the dramatist as the model is to the painter. The most "learned" of artists will soon find that his work loses life and reality unless he keeps the living figure constantly before his eyes. A play is meant to be talked and acted to an audience. When it is written only to be read, it soon loses life. From "the cart of Thespis" down to the "four boards" of Lope de Rueda in the Spanish market-place, there has always been the stage first, and then the dramatic

*Causes of failure of the early dramatic literature.*

literature. That is equally true in France. The history of the French stage is continuous from the Confrérie de la Passion, through the Enfants sans Souci, and the professional actors who succeeded them at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, down to the "maison de Molière." But in the sixteenth century it skirted literature, and the alliance was not made between them till the time of Rotrou and Corneille. So the earlier dramatic literature remains a curiosity, or at the most an indication of what was to come. Its best tragedy is an "essai pâle et noble," and its comedy a rough experiment, too often the very reverse of noble. In order to show how the writers of the great time, and of the eighteenth century classic school, while working on the same fund of principles, and with similar aims, differed from their predecessors, it would be necessary to go beyond the scope of this book.

## CHAPTER XI.

FRENCH PROSE-WRITERS OF THE LATER SIXTEENTH  
CENTURY.

ABUNDANCE OF LATER SIXTEENTH-CENTURY PROSE—A DISTINCTION—SULLY  
—BODIN — THE GREAT MEMOIR - WRITERS — CARLOIX — LA NOUE—  
D'AUBIGNÉ — MONLUC — BRANTÔME — THE 'SATYRE MÉNIPÉE' — ITS  
ORIGIN — ITS AUTHORS — ITS FORM AND SPIRIT — MONTAIGNE — HIS  
'ESSAYS' — THE SCEPTICISM OF MONTAIGNE — HIS STYLE — CHARRON  
AND DU VAIR.

No race has ever allowed less of what it has done, suffered, or even only seen, to be lost than the French.

*Abundance of later sixteenth-century prose.* It has ever been the ambition of the men of that people to leave some record of themselves. We have to thank what an ill-conditioned critic might call its vanity for a memoir - literature which would be inadequately praised if it were only called the first in the world. The world has not only no equal, but no second, to be used as a comparison. The France of the wars of Religion, agitated as it was, was exceptionally rich in these delightful books. For that we have good reason to be grateful, since this time, full as it was of colour,

of ability, of passion, and of the most remote extremes in character, has left us the means of knowing it more fully than we can know our own generation. As it was also an age of great political and religious strife, treatises on politics and religion were naturally written, seeing that amid all the turmoil and fury men continued to write. There is more cause for surprise when we meet also with works of science, or on the arts—though the surprise is not perhaps fully justified, since even in the wildest times the great mass of men live their lives very much as in peace. When commotions have reached the point of causing universal disturbance, they soon end. Mankind would starve if they were not suspended.

Out of all the mass of writing produced in the second half of the sixteenth century in France (or by men who must be assigned to that period *A distinction.* but who lived into the seventeenth), which is valuable for one reason or another, all is not literature. Only a part can be read from any other motive than interest in the matter. The historians Palma Cayet, Jean de Serres, and his brother Olivier de Serres, author of the *Théâtre d'Agriculture*, for instance, will hardly be read for their style, or except by students.

As much must be said of the memoirs of *Sully.* Sully, which are called for short *Les Economies Royales*.<sup>1</sup> It is not because this book

<sup>1</sup> The true title, which is too characteristic not to be given in full, is, "Des Sages et Royales Economies domestiques, politiques, et militaires de Henri le Grand, le prince des vertus, des armes, et des lois, et le père en effet [i.e., *en réalité*] de ses peuples français. Et

began to be published at the Château de Sully in 1638 that we must leave it aside, for in matter and spirit it belongs to the previous century. Nor is it because *Les Economies Royales* are wanting in interest. They are of great historical value, and the form is attractive from its mere oddity. Sully employed four secretaries to tell him his own life, so that they are found informing their master, "Monsieur your father had four sons, for whom he had no other ambition than to make them such gallant men that they might raise their house to its ancient splendour, from which the fall of the elder line to the distaff [*i.e.*, to female heirs] three times, and the unthrifty courses of his ancestors, and especially of his father, had much diminished it in goods." Or a little further on, "This [*viz.*, to be a faithful and obedient servant] you also swore to him in such fair terms, with so much confidence, and in so agreeable a tone of voice, that he at once conceived great hopes of you." Yet the oddity and the matter are the virtues of the *Economies Royales*. Something equivalent must needs be said of the memoirs of Castelnau, of Gaspard de Saulx-

des servitudes utiles, obéissantes, convenables, et administrations loyales de Maximilien de Béthune, l'un des plus confidens familiers et utiles soldats et serviteurs du grand Mars des François. Dédiés à la France, à tous les bons soldats et tous peuples François." It is described as printed at Amestelredam (Amsterdam), at the sign of the three immortal virtues crowned with amaranth—*i.e.*, Faith, Hope, Charity (of which last Sully had no great share), by Alethinographe of Clearétimée, and Graphexechon of Pistariste—*i.e.*, Veracious - Writer of Glory - Virtue - Care, and Emeritus Secretary of High Probity. The *Economies Royales* are included by M. Petitot in his collection of memoirs, 2nd series, vols. i.-ix.

Tavannes—written by his son Jean—of Condé, of François de Guise, and many others.<sup>1</sup>

Jean Bodin (1530-1596) is a great name in political science. His *République*, first published in French in

*Bodin.*

1578 and then enlarged and translated into Latin by the author in 1586, must always remain of value, if for no other reason than because it shows how it was possible for men of the sixteenth century who were not merely servile courtiers, to believe in the “right divine” of kings and the excellence of despotism. Bodin’s influence, even among ourselves, was strong in the seventeenth century. Strafford was almost certainly thinking of him when he told the Council that the king was entitled, as representative of the State, to act *legibus solutus*; and his doctrine was taught in incomparable English by Hobbes. Yet Bodin will hardly be read for his French, and what we cannot read for the form cannot be called literature.

It shows, as fully as anything well could, the wealth of French prose that we can leave aside so many

*The great  
memoir-  
writers.*

writers, even in what is not one of the great periods, and yet retain a considerable body of literature in the very fullest sense of the word. Montaigne, who is pre-eminent, stands

<sup>1</sup> These memoirs are included in the great collections of Petitot, and Michaud and Poujoulat. M. Zeller, in two volumes of his excellent *Histoire de France racontée par les contemporains*, has made up a consecutive story by extracts from the writers named above and others. No other literature could supply so much good reading of the same kind, and they are to be obtained for the “ridiculous sum” of tenpence each.

by himself, alike in form and in matter, and so for other reasons does the *Satyre Ménippée*. But among the memoir-writers who also were in some cases historians, there are five who would of themselves be enough to make the wealth of any other literature in this kind—Carloix, La Noue, D'Aubigné, Monluc, and Brantôme. They came indeed in a happy hour. The generation was full of strong and violent characters, and of sudden picturesque events to supply them with matter. The language had been developed and shaped by Rabelais, Calvin, and the translators with Amyot at their head, while it had not yet been pruned by the pedantry of the seventeenth century. It still kept its colour. In history the classics and the Italians had supplied models of more capability than the chronicles which Comines had followed. For the model of the memoir, a people who could look back to Joinville and Villehardouin had no need of foreign influence.

The five writers just named are not only excellent in themselves, but each of them is either in his own person the representative of a class, or

*Carloix.* makes us acquainted with one. Vincent Carloix wrote, not his own life, but that of his master, François de Scépeaux, Marshal de Vieilleville (1509-1571).<sup>1</sup> Carloix was the Marshal's secretary for thirty-five years, and was fully trusted by him. It was by Vieilleville's direction that the secretary undertook the memoirs, for which he was supplied with ample materials. He gives, as to the matter, the picture of

<sup>1</sup> Petitot, vols. xxvi.-xxviii.



a very important member of the party called "Les Politiques"—that is, those Frenchmen who, with no wish to separate from the Church of Rome, had yet no fanatical enmity to the Huguenots on religious grounds, but who were the enemies of the Dukes of Guise of the house of Lorraine. "Les Politiques" conquered in the end by alliance with Henry IV., and from them, years after the death of Vieilleville, came one of the most remarkable of political satires, the *Satyre Ménippée*. The style of Carloix is one of singular life and colour, "although," as the editor of the edition of 1757 says, "it is full of Gaulish, and antiquated, phrases and expressions." It would now appear more proper to put "because." Carloix has been said to have taken "Le Loyal Serviteur," who wrote the life of Bayard, as his model. But if so, he followed him only in his plain narrative. Carloix has a wit and a share of the quality called by the French *malice*, wanting to Bayard's simple-hearted squire. Under his air of candour he is a shrewd experienced man of the world.

François de la Noue, called Iron Arm, was born in Brittany of a well-connected family in 1531, and was killed at the siege of Lamballe in 1591.

*La Noue.*

His character was drawn in the concise words of Henry IV.: "He was a thorough good soldier, and, still more, a thorough good man." "C'était un grand homme de guerre, encore plus un grand homme de bien." What are called his memoirs form the twenty-sixth book of his *Discours Politiques et Militaires*, a great work of description, criticism, and

reflection, rather than history, composed while he was a prisoner in the hands of the Spaniards in the Low Countries.<sup>1</sup> La Noue, who was converted to "the religion" by the chaplain of Coligny, was a type of all that was best among the Huguenots. He did not embrace the fanaticism together with the principles of his party. The memoirs, which are in fact an account of the wars of Religion, from the first "taking up of arms" in 1562 till 1570, are remarkably impartial. La Noue was one of the small body of men who can be perfectly loyal to their own party, and yet never falsify the story in its favour. He is just to the chiefs on the other side. Though a profoundly moral man, he was saved from priggery by a very real sense of humour. He could see the laughable side of things. His style wants the inimitable flash of Monluc, and it has not got the very peculiar flavour of the prose of D'Aubigné, but it is nervous, clear, exact, and thoroughly excellent in its own way—the way of a wise temperate man, a quiet gentleman, and modest valiant soldier.

The title of memoir-writer must be understood in a very wide sense when it is applied to D'Aubigné.

Strictly speaking, the short *Vie à ses Enfants* is his memoir.<sup>2</sup> The *Histoire Universelle*, his main work in prose, is a great general history of contemporary events at home and abroad. But then it is also a history of events in which D'Aubigné himself played an active part, and which

<sup>1</sup> The memoirs are printed in the thirty-fourth volume of Petitot.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. of M. L. Lalanne, 1854.

he tells from an intensely personal point of view. It is to be noted that it ends with the wars of Religion, and the peace which was brought about by the abjuration of the king—that is to say, when D'Aubigné himself ceased to take a prominent share in public affairs. To judge by his other prose work, which is considerable,<sup>1</sup> D'Aubigné was by nature a vehement—or even virulent—pamphleteer. His *Baron de Feneste* and his *Confession de Sancy* are fiercely satirical. They are also rather obscure, and not easily readable. It was on the suggestion of Henry IV. that he first began to think of writing the history of his time. He was to have worked in co-operation with the President Jeannin, an ex-Leaguer, and another thorough-going partisan. It is difficult to imagine what they could have produced between them. This fantastic scheme was dropped, and the *Histoire Universelle* was written after the king's death. The style of D'Aubigné shows the influence of his learned education, and of his practice in the poetic school of Ronsard. He sometimes uses purely pedantic words, as when he says that his father put him under the charge of a tutor, "Jean Costin, homme astorge et impiteux." Astorge is a Greek word (ἄστοργος), which would never have been used by Carloix, La Noue, or Monluc. Again, he deliberately followed classic models in the long speeches, frequently delivered by himself, which abound in his History, and are the most carefully written

<sup>1</sup> Much remained unprinted till it was published by MM. Réaume and Caussade.

parts. When he tells Henry IV. in one of these addresses that it is useless for him to endeavour to make peace with the Court, because "you are guilty of your birth, and of the wrongs which have been done you," the echo of Sallust and of Tacitus is distinctly audible; yet he can also be colloquial, and has no scruple in using idiomatic and proverbial phrases which a later generation would have rejected as unworthy of the "dignity of history." Dignity is not wanting to D'Aubigné, but it is given by the force of his thoughts and of his character, which is that of a man who might be a tyrannical friend and an exacting servant, but who was brave and high-minded.

For a perfect picture of a partisan on the other side we have only to go to the *Commentaries* of one whom

*Monluc.* D'Aubigné describes as "ce vieux renard de Monluc." Yet Blaise de Lasseran-Massencome,

Seigneur de Monluc, is perhaps hardly to be called a party man. Like the Lord Byron of our own civil war, he "was passionately the king's." He was born in or about 1503, near Condom, of an ancient and impoverished family of Gascony. Though the eldest son, he had even less than the traditional cadet's portion. He could boast that, though a gentleman born, he had fought his way up from the lowest rank. After serving in the wars of Italy, he was named Governor of Guyenne by the king, and there distinguished himself by a ferocity exceptional even in those times. An arquebuse-wound in the face at the siege of Rabastens in 1570 disabled him for active service. His *Commentaries* were dictated in his last

years, and he died in 1577.<sup>1</sup> It is one of the many sayings attributed to Henry IV. that the *Commentaries* of Monluc are "the Soldier's Bible." Whether the king said it or not, no truer description of this delightful book could be given. Monluc was a man of his time and his race. He "had the honour to be a Gascon" in every sense of the word, having all the valour, enterprise, craft, humour, and expansive vanity of the type. But he was also a perfect soldier, and profoundly convinced that his business was the greatest a man could follow. His *Commentaries* were avowedly written to show the "captains and lieutenants of France" what a soldier ought to be, by the example of Blaise de Monluc. The very thoroughness of his vanity gives the book a sincere tone. We feel that he was far too well pleased with himself to think it necessary to lie. That he saw things through the colouring medium of his self-sufficiency is possible—even certain—but at least he gives them as he saw them. Monluc was also a very able man, who was not wanting in appreciation of the humorous side of his own *gasconnades*, and therefore his vanity is never silly. The style is that of a book dictated by a man with a boundless *faconde*—that is to say, command of ready language; but it is too vivid and has too much substance ever to be garrulous. At times he can strike out images of great force.

<sup>1</sup> The *Commentaries* of Monluc are included in Petitot's Collection, vols. xx.-xxii., but the definitive edition is that of M. Alphonse de Ruble, published by the Société de l'Histoire de France. The first three volumes contain the *Commentaries*; the fourth and fifth the *Letters*, which M. de Ruble discovered in Russia.

Different though they were in life and character, there is a certain resemblance between Monluc and Brantôme. Both have the same air of perfect satisfaction with themselves, and both pour out the fruits of their varied experience with the same appearance of colloquial confidence.<sup>1</sup> Pierre de Bourdeilles, called Brantôme from the name of an abbey of which he was lay abbot—that is to say, of which he drew the abbot's portion by favour of the king, without taking the vows—was a younger son of a distinguished family of Perigord. He was born about 1540, and died in 1614. During many years he travelled much, fought more or less, and lived at Court in the intervals of journeys or campaigns. Being disappointed of a place which the king had promised him, he was preparing to revenge himself by treason, when his horse fell with him, and crippled him for life. Brantôme now betook himself to writing his reminiscences as a consolation. Though he professed a certain contempt for letters, he spent great pains on his work, and its bulk is considerable. In addition to some minor treatises—the so-called *Discours des Duels*, the *Rodomontades Espagnoles*, and a few others—he made two great collections, which he named *Des Hommes* and *Des Femmes*. These he rewrote and revised not a little. It was his wish that they should be published as he left them, but his heirs neglected his directions. His manuscripts were copied, handed

<sup>1</sup> The best edition of Brantôme is that of the Société de l'Histoire de France. Prosper Mérimée edited an incomplete edition in the "Bibliothèque Elzévirienne." Partial reprints are numerous.

about, and finally straggled into print by fragments, to which the booksellers gave fancy names, such as *Les Grandes Dames*, *Les Dames Galantes*, and so forth. The admiration which Monluc felt for his own business of soldiering, Brantôme extended to every manifestation of energetic character by deed or word, moral or immoral, with a marked, but mainly artistic, preference for good sayings and immorality. He is not to be trusted in details, but he is in himself an invaluable witness to the time which produced him. Nowhere else can we see so fully the combination of the French love of showy action, and indifference to what we call morality, with the cruel wickedness of Italy, which distinguished the Court of the later Valois. He does not seem to have been in himself a bad man, and yet it does not appear that he saw any difference between right and wrong. Murders, and breaches of the seventh commandment, committed by ladies and gentlemen in a spirited way, have his admiration quite as easily as the most honourable actions. He tells all in the same brightly coloured, rapid, gossiping style, and stops to rejoice over every striking story which runs from his pen, whether it be a trait of magnanimity on the part of the Duke of Guise, or the brutal murder of three unarmed traders by one of his own friends, who was angry, and relieved his feelings by a butchery.

The attempt to enumerate all the writers who may be classed with one or another of the five just named could lead to nothing but a catalogue of mere names. Marguerite de Valois (1553-1615), the wife whom Henry IV. married at the "red wedding" of Saint

Bartholomew, and afterwards repudiated, wrote memoirs under the direct inspiration of her friend and admirer Brantôme. Pierre de l'Estoile (1545-1611)<sup>1</sup> wrote *Mémoires-Journaux*—i.e., a diary of his time. The *Correspondence* of Catherine de Medici—recently edited by M. de Ferrière—of Duplessis-Mornay (1549-1623), and of the Cardinal D'Ossat (1557-1604), which have long been known, the *Negotiations* of Pierre Jeannin (1546-1632), the great *History* of De Thou, written in Latin, are all of value, and are all well written. The list could easily be swollen, but it would be to little purpose where space does not allow of more than mention. From the literary point of view they are notable as showing that the autobiographical, anecdotic, historical, and, in short, average practical writing faculty of the French, which has given their literature its unrivalled continuity, was in full vigour during these generations, when, as one is tempted to think, men must have been far too intent on keeping themselves alive in the prevailing anarchy to have leisure for the use of the pen. Spain, in its happier days, produced something approaching the French historical and memoir work of the later sixteenth century. Elizabethan England, rich beyond comparison in poetic genius, has nothing like it to show. It could not be, of course; and yet we could have spared, not Marlowe, but perhaps Greene and Peele, and certainly Nash, Lodge (the lyrics apart), and Breton, to see the Armada, and the voyages to the Isles, through the eyes of an English Monluc, or the pacifi-

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Brunet et Champollion, 1875-1881.



cation of Ireland as told by a La Noue of our own, or such a picture of the Court of Elizabeth as could have been painted by the nearest conceivable English approach to Brantôme.

There is, however, one piece of French prose of what may be called the practical order—written, that is to say, to secure a definite business end—  
*The Satyre Ménippée.* which is far too good in itself, as well as too important in its consequences, to be passed with a mere mention. This is the famous, and in some ways still unrivalled, *Satyre Ménippée*.<sup>1</sup> The book is a small collection of pamphlets, burlesques, and satiric verse. When due precaution is taken to avoid exaggeration and misunderstanding, it may be compared to our own Martin Mar-Prelate pamphlets. Both were the work of a body of men not individually of importance, who yet produced a great effect by combined action for a cause. Each is the beginning of journalism in its own country. They were nearly contemporary, but Martin Mar-Prelate came a little earlier. His dates are 1589-1592, and the *Satyre Ménippée* belongs to 1593 and 1594. The comparison must not be pushed further, since the *Satyre Ménippée* is markedly superior to Martin in artistic skill, and, it must be allowed, in dignity of purpose also, however kindly we may wish to think of the Puritan writers. Neither is there any reason to suppose that any connection existed between the two. If the writers of the *Satyre Ménippée* had any inspiration other than their own desire to answer the

<sup>1</sup> Ed. M. Ch. Read, Paris, 1880, in Jouaust's "Librairie des Bibliophiles."

virulent sermons and speeches of the League, they probably found it in Erasmus, and in the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* of Ulrich von Hutten. The fact that the *Satyre* and Martin appeared almost side by side, only shows that the causes which were making for the establishment of journalism were working in France as well as in England. Use had already been made of the printing-press, the pulpit, and, in France at least, of the stage, for controversy. But much had been written in Latin, whether of the study or of the kennel. The anti-papal "sotties" of Gringore, played by the encouragement of Louis XII., the anti-Church farces of the Reformers, the sermons and the pamphlets of the League, were individual work, the still uncollected raw material of possible journalism. The next step was to organise collective action. It was done roughly, and unhappily for a party purpose, in England, but in France with skill, with much literary finish, and for a national cause.

In order to appreciate the full merit of the *Satyre Ménippée*, the reader must call to mind that after the

*Its origin.* murder of Henry III. his cousin of Navarre became King of France by inheritance.

Henry IV. had the support not only of his own subjects and the Huguenots, but of the "Politiques,"—the moderate men, as we might say, among the Roman Catholics. The ardent partisans of the Church turned against him, and banded themselves with the princes of the house of Guise. The Catholic League, which had been first founded by Gaspard de Saulx-Tavannes nearly thirty years before, after the conspiracy of

Amboise, was extended, and became a great organisation for the purpose of setting aside the heretic King of Navarre, and putting some assured Romanist on the throne. In reality it was little more than a cloak for the ambition of the Guises, and the partisans who saw a chance of profiting by anarchy. It had the support of the King of Spain. Paris was held, partly by the help of the more fanatical Roman Catholic clergy and the mob, partly by a so-called Spanish garrison—Moors, Neapolitans, and what not—made up out of the sweepings of Philip II.'s army. Even the conversion of Henry did not disarm the League. It called a sham meeting of the Estates of the realm to debate the question of setting him aside. At this moment a body of men in Paris combined to assail these so-called États with ridicule; and when we remember how brutally the "Guisards" had disposed of opponents and critics, it is hard to exaggerate the courage they showed.

The leader of the band was Pierre Leroy, canon of the Sainte Chapelle. It was to him that the idea first suggested itself, and he drew about  
*Its authors.* him his friends Gillot, Passerat, Rapin, Chrestien, Pithou, and Durant. As may well be supposed, the early history of an anonymous work is somewhat obscure. It was at first a small manuscript pamphlet, handed about quietly. Additions were made. The verse seems to have been introduced at the later stages. Whether it was actually printed in 1593 appears very doubtful. The first known example is of 1594, and, as was natural

enough, the *Satyre* was subject to a good deal of modification. The names of men who had been attacked, and who passed over later to Henry IV., were dropped out. Even the title was altered. The first chosen was "Abbrégé et l'Amé des Estatz convoquez à Paris en l'an 1593 le 10 Febvrier. Jouxte la relation de Mademoiselle de la Lande, Messieurs Domay et Victon Penitens blancqs." An alternative title was "Le Catholicum de la Ligue, 1593." The name of *Satyre Ménippée* (taken from Lucian) seems to have been given by common consent rather than by the authors, and the first undoubted edition is called "La Vertu du Catholicon d'Espagne, avec un Abrégé de la tenue des Estats de Paris convoquez aux de Febvrier 1593 par les chefs de la Ligue. Tiré des mémoires de Mademoiselle de la Lande, alias la Bayonnoise, et des secrettes confabulations d'elle et du Père Commelaid."

In its final form the *Satyre Ménippée* has some resemblance in form, and a marked likeness in spirit, *Its form and spirit.* to our own *Anti-Jacobin* as it was in the first and most militant stage. The authors of both were fighting with a combination of ridicule and argument against anarchy, and in the name of common-sense and patriotism. There is the same resistance to the foreigner in both. The Gallican clergy of the stamp of Leroy were no friends to the interference of the Pope in French affairs. That Philip II. was a foreigner could be disputed by nobody; and though the Lorraine princes had played a great part in France, and were connected with

the Valois by marriage, they were still considered strangers. The *Satyre Ménippée* opens by a burlesque speech delivered by a quack in praise of the Catholicon or universal cure of Spain—of the bribes which Philip II. was lavishing in order to promote the misfortunes of his neighbours. Then comes a description of the procession at the opening of the Estates, and of the tapestry on the walls, in which the different chiefs of the League are ridiculed, and the misfortunes they were bringing on the country shown. Then Mayenne makes a speech as Lieutenant-General of the kingdom—the sort of speech he would have made if he had told the truth. Various churchmen then speak—Italian or Italianate priests who were prepared to sacrifice France to the Pope, or mere beaters of the drum ecclesiastic. Then comes what is perhaps the best single thing in the *Satyre*, the speech of M. des Rieux, who speaks for the noblesse. The choice of this man—an historical character who was finally hanged as a brigand—to speak for the nobles is in itself a most ingenious stroke. He was a thorough military ruffian of the worst stamp, low-born and ignorant, who had obtained command of a castle, and who lived by plundering his neighbours. Des Rieux begins by giving it as his opinion that nothing could prove the excellence of the League more fully than just this, that the like of him could come to speak for the nobles. He goes on in the same tone, which is the swagger of a vulgar adventurer who feels himself safe. No more artful way of showing to what the League was reducing

France could have been chosen. The speech of Des Rieux is attributed to Jacques Gillot, clerk to the Parliament of Paris. Then the tone of burlesque is dropped, and a vigorous denunciation of the League is delivered by M. d'Aubray as the spokesman of the Third Estate, the Burgesses. This, the longest of all, is said to be the work of Pierre Pithou. The verse, partly scattered through the book and partly collected at the end, belongs to Jean Passerat, the successor of Ramus at the Collège Royal, and to Gilles Durant, a lawyer and country gentleman. Both Passerat and Durant wrote other verse of excellence.

All this memoir, history, and satire is interesting, but no part of it belongs to the literature which every thinking man in every country has read, or knows that it would be good to read. They may be all left aside, not without loss indeed, yet without irreparable loss. But whoever has not read the *Essays* of Montaigne has missed something necessary for the "criticism of life"—the exposition of a habit of thought, a way of looking at things, of discussing and deciding questions of conduct and principle, which are not only French and peculiar to one time, but human and universal.

Michel Eyquem, Seigneur de Montaigne, was born at the Château de Montaigne in Perigord, near Bordeaux, in 1533. A legend, which appears *Montaigne.* to have no foundation, asserts that the family was of English origin. It had risen by the salt-fish trade, and its nobility was of recent origin,

facts which Montaigne did not recognise so calmly as a philosopher should. His father served under Francis I. in the wars of Italy, and increased the considerable fortune he had inherited, by a rich marriage with Antoinette de Louppes, or Lopes, a Spanish Jewess by descent. Michel was educated at the College of Bordeaux by Buchanan, Muretus, and other famous scholars. By a fad of his father's, he was surrounded from the beginning by people who only spoke Latin, and so learned the language naturally. His schooling came to an end when he was thirteen. Although he inherited a strong frame from his father, and did possibly serve one or two campaigns, he applied himself to the law, and not to arms, as a profession. He held a judicial post, first at Périgueux, then at Bordeaux, but resigned it early, and retired to his own house. Montaigne was known at Court, which he visited several times, even before he published the first two books of his *Essays* in 1580. During one visit to Paris in 1588 to superintend the publication of the third book, he was an eye-witness of the "day of the barricades," and was imprisoned in the Bastille by Leaguers. He travelled abroad, and returned to hold municipal office at Bordeaux, where he showed more caution than courage during a visitation of the plague. He died at his own house of Montaigne in 1592, just as the long anarchy of the wars of Religion, which he had never allowed to ruffle the calm of his life, was coming to an end.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The standard edition of Montaigne's *Essays* is still that of Le Clerc, reprinted in 1865-66. There have been two recent reprints of

The fame of Montaigne was great in his own time, and has never suffered eclipse. Nor is it possible that it ever should, since, in addition to personal qualities of an amusing and attractive kind, he was the thorough type of a certain stamp of intellect. He was as complete a Gascon as his countryman Monluc, and may even be said to have carried the peculiar quality of his race to a yet higher pitch. Monluc was resolved that all the world should know him for the astute and intrepid soldier he was. Montaigne did not condescend to justify himself by his deeds. He asked the world to be interested in him, not as a soldier, nor indeed as anything, except just a thinking man. And the world has never denied that the man

*His Essays.*

and his thoughts were worth knowing. The subject of his *Essays* is always substantially Michel of Montaigne, his health, his reading, his views of men, things, and opinions, his habits of mind and body. In matter, in form, and in intellectual scope he is all the world apart from Brantôme, and yet he is not wholly unlike the old disappointed courtier of the Valois, discoursing *Des Hommes* and *Des Femmes*. Both talk out all that was in them, with a certain affectation of carelessness, but in reality with thought, and no small toil over the manner of saying. During his later years Montaigne employed himself much in covering the

our own excellent and contemporary translation by John Florio; one, very handsome, in Mr Henley's "Tudor Translations"; and another, cheap and pretty, edited by Mr Waller, in six small volumes.



margins of a copy of the so-called fifth edition of his *Essays* with corrections and additions. The book still exists in the library at Bordeaux. After his death his widow intrusted his friend, Pierre de Brach, with the task of editing a revised edition. Brach, who had the help of Montaigne's adopted daughter, Mdlle. de Gournay, produced what was for long the accepted text in the edition of 1595. But though Pierre de Brach and Mdlle. de Gournay worked with care, they omitted a good deal, and misunderstood something. Successive editors in this century have laboured to correct their errors of omission and commission, but the text of Montaigne has never yet been fixed to the satisfaction of exacting critics.

It is but natural that a writer who deals with permanently interesting questions of principle and conduct, and who has always been read, should have been diversely judged during the very different centuries which have passed since his death. The judgments of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries on the scepticism of Montaigne are in fact examples of a truth which he has himself most excellently stated—namely, that we read much of ourselves into our authors. During the strong Roman Catholic reaction of the seventeenth century his amused interest in both sides of all questions, and his favourite thesis that no doctrine is so sure that we are justified in killing men for it, were found exasperating by those who were terribly in earnest. In the eighteenth century he was praised, and accepted as a forerunner of Voltaire, on these very grounds. What

*The scepticism  
of Montaigne.*

one body of critics called poorness of spirit and coldness of heart, another called wisdom. For that he would himself have been prepared. In the first of his *Essays*, "By divers meanes men come unto a like end," he states what was perhaps the firmest of his convictions—to wit, that "surely man is a wonderfull, vaine, divers, and wavering subject; it is very hard to ground any directly-constant and uniforme judgement upon him." We shall perhaps not go far wrong if we describe the scepticism of Montaigne as a constant recollection that whatever men have said, thought, or done, has been necessarily the work of this "vaine, divers, and wavering subject," and is not to be taken too seriously. A wise man will accept the social and religious order of his country, even with its vices, since we have so little wisdom that our efforts at amendment will probably produce more mischief than they will correct. In any case, what has existed and stood the test of experience has more claim on our loyalty than the mere guesses of the reformer. Yet, while accepting existing order, he need not believe in it too much, and he certainly need not deny himself the pleasure of noting the innumerable absurdities of even the most respectable parts of man's handiwork. Science is vain, since it is but speculation on subjects we shall never really understand. Conduct is the important thing. Do not lie, do not be cruel, do not be a pedant (on these points indeed there was no scepticism in Montaigne); do not strive after unattainable ideals of truth (for what is truth except what we think about the causes and nature of things, and what

are we but “vaine, diverse, and wavering subjects”?), or of virtue, or of chastity. Let us live our lives, exercising all our faculties of body and mind—in prudent moderation, and with due regard to our time of life. It is not the greatest advice which can be given to man. If the human race had acted up to Montaigne’s standard of wisdom, there would have been no prophets, no saints, no martyrs, hardly any great thinkers, or great explorers. It would be possible to follow Montaigne and be a haberdasher of small-wares. One could not follow him and be a bigot, “une bonne ligne droite de ferocité sotté,” in any cause, or disgrace knowledge by pedantry, or conquest and discovery by cruelty and avarice. But it is an idle question whether he was better or worse than Luther or Saint Francis de Sales. He was different, and he is a perfect example of a stamp of man who will never fail while the human race lasts and thinks—the sagacious man who is naturally kind and honest, but is not virtuous in any lofty sense, or capable of strong conviction. Amid the clash of dogmatists, all fanatically sure they were right, and all cruel, which filled the sixteenth century with tumult, the voice of Montaigne supplied something which was sorely needed.

As a writer the importance of Montaigne can hardly be exaggerated. To him modern literature owes the essay, which of itself would be a claim to immortality. He first set the example of discussing great questions in the tone of the man of the world speaking to men of the world.

*His style.*

His style, which can be eloquent to the highest degree, is more commonly easy and "savoury"—full, that is to say, of colour and character. His amplifications, and his constant use of quotations, his lawless wanderings away from his subject, and then through many turnings back to it—when he has a subject at all—his amazing indiscretions concerning his health, his morals, and his family history, his frequent sudden appeals to the reader, as of one speaking in confidence and on the spur of the moment, make up a combination which cannot be defined in its inexhaustible variety. It is not the least charm of the *Essays* that they invite desultory reading. If advice in this matter were ever of much value, we might recommend the reader who has Montaigne to begin, to start with the "Apologie for Raymond of Sebonde," which will give him the whole spirit and way of thinking, and then to read as accident dictates. Orderly study is quite unnecessary with an author who starts from no premiss to arrive at no conclusion, whose unity is due not to doctrine but to character, and who "rays out curious observations on life" all illuminated by a vast learning and by humour.

The teaching of Montaigne was expounded by Pierre Charron (1541-1603), a lawyer, who took *Charron and* orders, and had written against the League *Du Vair.* and the Protestants, before he fell under the influence of the author of the *Essays*. His most famous—or rather, his one surviving—work, the *Traité de la Sagesse* (1601),<sup>1</sup> is a restatement in more

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Amaury Duval, 1828.

scholastic form of the ideas of Montaigne. Charron also drew largely, for he was not by any means an original writer, on Guillaume du Vair (1556-1621). Du Vair, who is considered one of the best prose-writers of his time, was the author of many treatises on philosophical subjects;<sup>1</sup> but he is remembered mainly for his famous *Suasion*, or plea for the Salic Law, delivered before the Estates summoned by the League in 1593. He represented the magistracy, and it is said that his argument persuaded the Estates to reject the candidature of the Infanta of Spain, who had been brought forward by the extreme Catholic party as rival to Henry IV.

<sup>1</sup> Œuvres Complètes, 1641.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE LATER RENAISSANCE IN ITALY.

THE LATER RENAISSANCE IN ITALY—TORQUATO TASSO—HIS WORK—THE  
 ‘GERUSALEMME LIBERATA’—GIORDANO BRUNO—LITERARY CHARAC-  
 TER OF HIS WORK—GIAMBATTISTA GUARINI.

THE Later Renaissance, which was so great in Spain and in England, and in France was important, was elsewhere a time of decline, of silence, or of very faint beginnings. The literature of Germany has been broken into periods of vigour, with long intervals of silence between. The second half of the sixteenth century was one of these. Among the smaller peoples, with Holland at their head, there was as yet little more than the attempt to produce literature. The case of Italy was more fortunate than that of Germany. She at least can count two of her most interesting sons among the men of letters of this time, Tasso and Bruno. But here the decadence had begun, and had made no small progress towards the sheer dexterous futility which was to be personified in Marini. The spirit of the Renaissance was

worn out, and was replaced by mere accomplishment, and by the nervous fear which is visible all through the life of Tasso. The Roman Catholic reaction was not favourable to literature. It brought with it the tyranny, or at least the predominance, of a religion which could no longer inspire. The Popes of the time endeavoured to make Rome moral by methods which might have commended themselves to the strictest sect of the Puritans; and commendable as this effort to restrain the licence of the earlier Renaissance and the period of the Italian wars may have been, still it was an example of the attempt to repress which was being made everywhere in Italy, and which succeeded, since it had only to deal with men of a weak generation. Giordano Bruno was, indeed, indisciplined enough; but he spent the active part of his life out of Italy, and when he did return, his fate was a severe warning against independence of character.

The life of Torquato Tasso is of itself enough to show under what a gloomy cloud literature had to work in Italy all through the later sixteenth century. It was a life of dependence, and was dominated by fear—fear of rivals, of envy, of accusations of heresy, and even of murder. That this fear was not quite sane in Tasso's case is true; but though his contemporaries saw it to be unfounded, they do not seem to have thought it absurd. He was born in 1544, the third son of Bernardo Tasso of Bergamo, who was secretary to Ferrante Sanseverino, Prince of Salerno. His mother was Porzia de Rossi, a

lady of a distinguished Neapolitan family. Bernardo Tasso, who was himself a verse-writer, and who gained some fame in his time as the author of a long epic founded on the *Amadis of Gaul*, was compelled to fly when his patron was driven from his principality of Salerno. Porzia, his wife, was detained in Naples by her family, which was meanly anxious not to pay her dowry. She died without again seeing her husband, but the young Torquato was allowed to return to his father. Bernardo, who found a refuge in the service of the Dukes of Urbino, sent his son to the famous legal university of Padua. Here Torquato read, but not at the law, and wrote his epic poem the *Rinaldo*—little to the satisfaction of his father, who, though a verse-writer himself, wished his son to qualify for a lucrative trade. But the son was resolved to be a poet, and not a lawyer, which decision brought with it the absolute necessity of finding a patron. The Cardinal Luigi d'Este introduced him to the Court of Ferrara. Tasso had already begun his *Jerusalem Delivered* and his play of *Torrismondo*, and had written his *Discourses on Epic Poetry*. Alphonso II. d'Este, the Duke of Ferrara, received him, and seems to have treated him in the main with great kindness. The story of Tasso's stay at this typical Italian Court, of his passion for Leonora d'Este, of the Duke's discovery, and of the false accusation of madness, on which the poet was imprisoned for years, is one of the best known romances of literary history; but that it is a romance there can be no doubt. From his early



years Tasso seems to have suffered from a continual fear of persecution and the plots of enemies. When he accompanied the Cardinal Luigi d'Este to Paris, he imagined that some treason was being plotted against him at home. Later he thought he had been accused of heresy, and refused to be pacified by the assurances of the Duke and the head of the Inquisition, to whom he subjected his writings. He fled twice from Ferrara, and twice came back. He began to accuse the Duke of intending to have him murdered, and finally drew his dagger in the Palace on a servant whom he suspected of trying to poison him. Duke Alphonso vindicated his own character, and also gave the exact measure of the morality of the time by saying that it was absurd to suppose that he thought of killing "il Signor Tasso," since if he wished to do so he had only to give the order. At last, and not until the Duke had displayed a patience which is sufficient evidence that he had no animosity against his servant, Tasso in 1579 was imprisoned as mad in the hospital of Saint Anne. The treatment of the mad was everywhere harsh at that time, but the poet appears to have received exceptional kindness. Friends exerted themselves for him, some from pity, others moved by the desire to be thought patrons of literature. In 1586 he was released, on condition that he would not return to Ferrara. During the last years of his life he wandered from one Italian Court to another, always quarrelling with his patrons, but always finding protectors. He died at Rome in 1595, when he was about to be

crowned as Poet Laureate on the Capitol. His *Jerusalem Delivered* was printed in a pirated edition during his imprisonment.<sup>1</sup>

The bulk of Tasso's work is very great. In addition to the *Rinaldo*, and two forms of the *Jerusalem*, he wrote the pastoral play *Aminta*, the His work. tragedy of *Torrismondo*, much minor verse, many sonnets, and many treatises in prose. A large number of his letters have been preserved. In his latter years, and in the undeniable decadence of his powers, he wrote a long poem in blank verse on the *Seven Days of Creation*.

Tasso's minor work is no doubt of value for the study of his genius. His philosophic treatises, mostly in dialogue, would, I presume, for I cannot profess to speak of them with knowledge, be useful to the student of Italian thought under the Roman Catholic reaction. Even his play of *Torrismondo*, begun in his youth, and finished after his imprisonment in the hospital of Saint Anne, has a place in the history of the "classic" drama. In itself it is not attractive. It is an unpleasant, and even rather commonplace, story of suicide and accidental incest, frigidly told, with all the Senecan apparatus. The pastoral poem of *Aminta* is of more historical importance, and has some biographical interest, while the subject suited Tasso's faculty for tender images and luscious verse. But he owes his place in literature to his *Jerusalem Delivered*.

Something has been said of the history of this poem.

<sup>1</sup> *Opere*. Edited by Giov. Rosini. Pisa, 33 vols., 1821-1832.

It was begun in his youth, was continued during his stay at the Court of Ferrara, was read in parts to his patrons, and subjected to the criticism of friends. The desire to secure the honour of the dedication for the house of Este, which had already patronised Ariosto, is said, very plausibly, to have had a good deal to do with the Duke's long-suffering towards the author. When published it was made the excuse for a dispute between the Academies which overran all Italy in the sixteenth century, and were already become the homes of mere word-splitting. The *Jerusalem* in fact became almost an affair of State at Ferrara. Its publication in a very inaccurate form in a pirated edition during his imprisonment was one of the most bitter, and certainly not the least genuine, of the grievances of a poet who had an artistic care about the execution of the work he published. The pirated edition bore the name which Tasso had chosen, *Godfrey of Boulogne*, but which he changed for *Gerusalemme Liberata* in the first authorised edition of 1581. Under the influence of the fretful piety of his later years he made his ill-advised recension, to which he gave the name of *Gerusalemme Conquistata*.

The enduring popularity of the *Jerusalem Delivered* in Italy has been vouched for by such well-known

*The Gerusalemme Liberata.*

stories as that which tells how it was sung by gondoliers and country people even into this century. Ugo Foscolo has recorded that he heard a passage chanted by galley-slaves. Its acceptance among poets and men of letters, both in the sixteenth century and since, is

not a matter of legend. Milton admired Tasso, and Spenser did him the signal honour of direct imitation. Acrasia's Bower of Bliss, and indeed the final adventure of Sir Guyon and the Palmer in the Second Book of the *Faërie Queen*, are modelled on, and in some passages are taken directly from, the description of the garden of Armida, and the rescue of Rinaldo in the fifteenth and sixteenth cantos of the *Jerusalem*. The poem was three times translated in whole or in part into English before 1600, and one of these versions, Fairfax's, has been given rank as a classic.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *Godfrey of Bulloigne* of Fairfax has been praised well beyond the full extent of its merits. The sober fact concerning it is that though the language has a real interest, the translation has not the merit of great accuracy, and it is wanting in those flashes of original power with which Fairfax's contemporaries seldom failed to redeem their infidelity to their author. He, on the contrary, is too often far below Tasso, and he is addicted to the detestable practice of replacing the simplicity of the Italian by classic commonplaces. Now and then he is inept, or shirks a difficulty which he ought to have faced. Examples of all three vices may be found in the beginning of the fifteenth canto. Tasso opens with the simple and direct words—

“ Già richiamava il bel nascente raggio  
All' opere ogni animal che 'n terra alberga.”

For this Fairfax writes—

“ The rosy-fingered morn with gladsome ray  
Rose to her task from old Tithonus' lap ”—

the commonplace of a boy doing a copy of Latin verse. In the second stanza, where the Italian has—

“ Erano essi già sorti, e l' arme intorno  
Alle robuste membra avean già messe ”—

Fairfax renders—

“ They started up, and every tender limb  
In sturdy steel and stubborn plate they dight.”

The popularity of Tasso's epic with those Italians, who would inevitably know nothing of Dante, and very little of Ariosto, and the admiration expressed for it by poets or men of letters, are both well justified, though for different reasons. The *Jerusalem Delivered* has a beauty of form which naturally delights people who have a real love of melody, while the matter is no less acceptable to all who are attracted rather by the pretty and the sympathetic than by the great or brilliant. The allegory, which Tasso himself afterwards expounded at length, is of the order which "bites" nobody, and we can watch the fortunes of Tancred and Clorinda, of Rinaldo and Armida, of Godfrey and the crusaders, "as if we looked on that scene through an inverted telescope, whereby the whole was carried far away into the distance, the life-large figures compressed into brilliant miniatures, so clear, so real, yet tiny elf-like and beautified as well as lessened, their colours being now closer and brighter, the shadows and trivial features no longer visible." Carlyle was kinder and less critical than

The *tender* limbs of two hardened old soldiers is surely weak.

At the end of the next stanza, we have in the Italian—

" E in poppa quella  
Che guidar gli dovea, fatal donzella."

The word "fatal," an appropriate epithet for Fortune, who sits in the stern to steer the boat, disappears in Fairfax, and we get the colourless line—

"Wherein a damsel sate the stern to guide."

And these are not exceptions. Fairfax constantly gives the inapplicable adjective, or the vague general term, where Tasso is faultless in his precision.

was his wont, when he classed the *Jerusalem Delivered* with the *Nibelungen Lied*—for Dresden china shepherdesses are not more unlike the statues of Michelangelo than are the personages of Tasso to Kriemhilda or Hagen von Tronegk. Yet he has summed up the general impression left by the poem, as of a small, graceful, and, in spite of its great historical original, unimportant series of events transacting itself without passion. There is little life in its heroes and heroines. We never hear the “dreadful clamour” of battle, and the duels of the champions smack of the school of arms, for Tasso, though no fighter, was an accomplished swordsman. Yet the story is unquestionably pretty, and the tiny elf-like figures have charm. To the poet and the man of letters, though his fame is less in the world than it was, Tasso must always be admirable, because he was a thorough workman. He was the poet of a decline. The choice of words, the use of the file, the avoidance of improprieties of metre, are more with him than inspiration. But he did at least reap the benefit of all that his predecessors had done for the language, and he left a finished example of the “learned” poetry of Southern Europe in the later sixteenth century.

It would tax the power of the greatest creative dramatist to draw two conceivable human beings who should differ so widely as Tasso and his  
*Giordano* only Italian contemporary who can be  
*Bruno.* said to stand on a corresponding level of genius—Giordano Bruno. The Nolan, to give him the title which he habitually used, was probably the more con-

siderable man of the two in intrinsic power, while both his life and his character are more interesting. But then he is incomparably more difficult to understand. I cannot profess to deal with what, to the majority of those who have paid much attention to his work, is most valuable in him—his philosophic ideas, and the influence he may have had on later thinkers. His life is of the kind which it is a pleasure to tell, in spite of the final tragedy, so full is it of incident and of manifestations of a certain stamp of character.<sup>1</sup> Giordano Bruno was born at Nola, near Naples, in 1548. His father was a soldier, and his mother a German woman. He became a Dominican friar very early, and his unruly character brought him speedily into difficulties with his superiors. Before he was twenty he fled from his Order, and escaped to Geneva by way of Genoa. This was in 1576. For fourteen years he led a wandering life. His movements can be traced from Geneva to Lyons, thence to Toulouse, Paris, England, once more to Paris, and from thence to Wittenberg, Prague, and Frankfort. Wherever he went he asked leave to teach, and he speedily entangled himself in a quarrel with the authorities. He defended the doctrines of Copernicus, and he expounded, more or less obscurely, his doctrines on the soul and the nature of man. Bruno had an “art of memory” which was founded upon, or was an adaptation of, the curious reasoning machine invented by Raymond Lully, the Catalan scholastic and mystic

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Giordano Bruno*, by Mr L. Frith: London, 1897. *Opere de Giordano Bruno*, ed. Wagner: Leipzig, 1830.

of the thirteenth century. Even if I could profess to understand his doctrines, which I do not, this would not be the place to expound them. What does appear very clearly is, that he was a man of extreme and passionate arrogance. The doctrine he most certainly held is, that the Nolan was the one man who had even a glimpse of the only important truths, and that official teachers who did not accept him at his own valuation were pigs, dogs, brutes, and beasts. He poured these epithets over the heads of houses at Oxford, whither he had been taken by Sir Philip Sidney, who was kind to him, and on whom he may have had some influence. The only place in which he escaped a violent quarrel with authority was at Wittenberg. Even there he could not rest, and he committed himself to a public and sweeping denunciation of the Papacy. At last he received an invitation from a Venetian *magnifico* of the house of Mocenigo to come and be his teacher. Mocenigo had heard of Bruno's "art of memory," and probably also believed him to be a wizard who could make gold. In an evil hour Bruno accepted the invitation, and went to Venice on the hopeless errand of making Mocenigo so wise that the Council of Ten would no longer be able to treat him as a person of no importance. Within a very few months this strange bargain bore its fruit. The *magnifico* discovered that he was no wiser than before, and that so far from being richer, he had given money to the Nolan for which no equivalent had been returned. He accused his teacher of being a cheat; and



Bruno, whose temper had never been under restraint, answered, with more truth than prudence, that his employer was a fool. Mocenigo denounced him to the Inquisition. The Pope claimed him, and after some demur he was surrendered by the Serene Republic. On his trial before the Inquisition Bruno protested that he was a loyal son of the Church, and that if he had spoken heresy it was when he was speaking philosophically, and not theologically. The distinction would not serve, and he was condemned to death. Whether he was burnt in the body or only in effigy has been disputed. The balance of evidence is in favour of the contention that he actually suffered. In that case the date of his death is 1599.

Some anti-clerical writers on the Continent, and a few Englishmen who sympathise with them, have been attracted to Bruno because they can use his name as a weapon in their warfare with ecclesiastical authority. It is needless to add that numbers quote him as an example of papal tyranny who have never made the certainly not inconsiderable effort required to read any one of his treatises. We can speak of him here only as a man of letters, and can put aside his Latin treatises and purely philosophic work. His wandering life, and perhaps the restless explosive nature of the man, made it impossible for him to produce books on a large scale. Bruno was essentially a writer of pamphlets, which he produced as opportunity served. Three of these may be mentioned here as especially

*Literary character of his work.*

characteristic of the Nolan's genius and spirit—*La Cena del le Ceneri* ('The Ash Wednesday Supper'), dedicated to Castelnau de Mauvissière, French ambassador in London; the *Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante* ('The Driving out of the Triumphant Beast'); and *Gli Eroiici Furori* ('The Heroic Furies'), the latter two dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney. All are in dialogue, and the last-named contains much verse. Although he excuses himself for part of what appears in *Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante* by saying that it is the personages who speak in their character, not he, the dialogue form (the most difficult perhaps of all in literature) does not appear to me to be well managed. There is too much of the Nolan, and the other personages are apt to be too obviously dummies, who either repeat him, or are put up merely to be knocked over. But this in itself is typical of the author. The dialogues are the literary expression of the very remarkable human being who was Giordano Bruno, the most volcanic and fuliginous of men. He is for ever bursting into rockets of rhetoric, while the epithets fly out in sheets as of sparks from an anvil. What he means or is endeavouring to prove is far from being always clear, not because his language is obscure, for on the contrary his sentences are commonly simple enough, but because there was always far more passion and emotion in Giordano Bruno than reasoning power. The title of his dialogues, 'The Heroic Furies,' is in a way a description of his whole work. There is in him a constant heroic fury of effort towards some vaguely indicated manifestations of individual force

and greatness. This of itself is attractive. With all his smoky obscurity there is a very real fire in Giordano Bruno, which finds its best expression in verse. Whether he is profitable to read is perhaps doubtful, but he is most interesting to look at. He was a real Faust, who strove to grasp—

“Was die Welt  
Im Innersten zusammenhält ;”

who thought he had read the riddle, and who justified an illimitable intellectual arrogance, often superbly expressed, by his imaginary discovery.

The fall from Tasso and Bruno to any of their contemporaries is very great. There was abundant interest of a kind in literary matters, there was no want of criticism, and the Academies were active. The long controversy over the *Jerusalem* in which Tasso allowed himself to be entangled is, if valuable for nothing else, at least a proof that Italians read poetry, and could talk about it.<sup>1</sup> What they could not at this period do was to produce anything original and valuable—with the exception of Tasso himself, and of Bruno. The once famous *Pastor Fido* of Giambattista Guarini (1537-1612) is in fact a terrible example of what may happen to a literature when its writers have become extremely cultivated in all that is mere matter of language, but have unfortunately nothing to say—or, if they have something to

<sup>1</sup> This controversy has its place in every life of Tasso, and is told at length by Serassi, *Vita de Tasso*: Bergamo, 1790. My own trifling acquaintance with it has given me the impression that it can be profitable to no mortal, except perhaps a historian of criticism.

say, are cowed into insignificance by the fear of compromising themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Guarini was a man of character, a little querulous, and afflicted by a vanity which caused him to be forever comparing himself to Tasso, and complaining of his contemporary's greater fame, but by no means without parts or knowledge. Yet his *Pastor Fido* is a mere echo of the *Aminta*. Guarini's play—if play it can be called—was first acted at Turin in 1585, and was published in Venice in 1590. From the *Aminta*, and through the *Pastor Fido*, came the line of the Italian literary opera of later times. The verse is flowing with touches of a somewhat sensual lusciousness—but withal it is nerveless and imitative.

<sup>1</sup> *Il Pastor Fido*. Verona, 1735.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## CONCLUSION.

THE wealth of the period which we here call the Later Renaissance makes the task of giving the results of a survey of its manifold activities one of extreme difficulty. It is, indeed, sufficiently easy to point out the common element of the time—namely, the revival or the development of the literary genius of Spain, England, and France, under the influence of the classic models, and of Italy. In Italy itself the classic impulse had been felt earlier and had borne its best fruits before the middle of the sixteenth century. The time there was one of decadence. Tasso and Giordano Bruno are unquestionably, though in widely different ways, writers of original force. But the author of the *Jerusalem Delivered* was a survivor,—one, too, who had lived into an unhappy time. His weakness of health and character may have—or rather must have—made him suffer with exaggerated acuteness from the forces which were weighing on the intellect of Italy. Yet on that

very account he shows only the more clearly the exhaustion of the race, and the deadening influence of the Roman Catholic revival. As for Bruno, interesting, and in a way attractive, figure as he is, it is doubtful whether he can be said to have had any literary influence at all. His modern fame is even not quite legitimate, since he owes it in some measure to the circumstances of his death. In his own age he fell rapidly into obscurity. He also had lived into an unhappy time, though he bore himself in it very differently from Tasso. Too Italian to reconcile himself to Calvinism or Lutheranism, too independent in mind to be an obedient son of the Church, from the moment he was asked for more than mere outward conformity to ceremonies, he was destined to be crushed between hammer and anvil in an age of religious strife. There was no room for independence of mind in Italy, and there was to be none for long, as the lives of Galileo and of Fra Paolo Sarpi were to show. It required all the power, and the strong political anti-papal spirit of Venice, to preserve Fra Paolo. In literature nothing was any longer quite safe except the more or less elegant presentment of harmless matter. Tasso did the utmost which it was now allowed to an Italian poet to achieve. Beyond him there could only be mere echo, as in the case of Guarini. Beyond Guarini the downward path of Italian literature led only to the preciousities and affectations of Marini.

The difficulty of summing up and defining becomes really sensible when an attempt has to be made to

estimate the different ways, and the different degrees, in which the influence of the Renaissance made itself felt in Spain, England, and France. In all three countries it met a strong national genius which it could stimulate, but could not affect in essentials. Garcilaso, Spenser, and Ronsard were all equally intent on making a new poetry for their countries, and all three succeeded. Yet they remained respectively a Spaniard, an Englishman, and a Frenchman, and in their works were as unlike one another as they were to their common models.

It is, I think, fairly accurate to say that the Renaissance influenced each of the three Western countries with increasing force in the order in which they are arranged here. Spain felt it least and France most. The case is emphatically one for the use of the *distinguo*. When we wish to measure the influence which one literature has had on another, it is surely very necessary to keep the form and the spirit well apart. When only the bulk of what was written, and the bare form, and the mere language, are allowed for, then it is obvious that the Renaissance did affect Spain very much. The hendecasyllabic, the prevailing use of the double rhyme, the *ottava rima*, the *capitolo*, and the *canzone*, were all taken by the Spaniards with slavish fidelity. The very close connection between the languages and the peoples may have made this minute imitation inevitable. Again, it is not to be denied that Italian had a marked influence on literary Castilian as it was written in the later sixteenth century. Very strict critics have noted the

presence of Italian constructions in Cervantes. The point is not one on which I care to speak as having authority, and for two reasons. Experience only increases my sense of the danger of expressing opinions as to what is legitimate in a language which is not one's own—and even in one which is. Then, too, before a new phrase is condemned for being foreign, we have to settle the preliminary questions, Was it taken from a sister tongue or not? Was it superfluous or not? The Spaniard who wishes to say, "Of two things the one," &c., and who uses the words "De dos cosas, una," is guilty of a Gallicism, and is wrong, because his own Castilian supplies him with the terser and equally lucid formula, "De dos, una." Yet the French original might have been taken with profit, and very legitimately, if it had been wanted, since it comes from a kindred tongue, and does no violence to the genius of Spanish. Such a word as "reliable" is an offence mainly because it is displacing an excellent equivalent, and because in itself it is a barbarism only to be excused on the ground of necessity.

Yet while noting that Italian models were profusely imitated in Spain and Portugal, and that Castilian was perfected as a literary instrument by Italian influence, we can still maintain that the Renaissance bore less fruit in the Peninsula than in France or England. By "fruit" we ought to mean not mere writing, be its mechanical dexterity what it may, but that combination of form and matter which makes literature, and which before we can call it "national" must savour of the qualities of some one race. Now, when we look at



the literary activity of the Peninsula during the Golden Age, we can find very little which will stand the triple test in matter, form, and national character, and of which we can yet say that it shows the spirit of the Renaissance. Portugal can be left aside with the due passing salute to the great name, and the real, though hardly proportionate, merit of Camoens. What else we find there<sup>1</sup> is no more than a somewhat weaker version of the learned poetry of Spain, of which it has to be said that it might be deducted without reducing the place of Spanish literature in the world. All men who have written well are entitled to their honour. They were skilful workmen, and that too in no mean matter. Yet there is a wide difference between the man of whom we can say that if he had never taken pen in hand, his form and his matter might yet be found in equal perfection elsewhere and in foreign tongues, and that other of whom we are bound to say that if he had remained silent then something would have been missing which no other race could have supplied. Now, if Boscan had never taken the advice of Navagiero, if Garcilaso had never written, if all the learned poets had remained silent, then Spain would not have shown her capacity to produce men who could handle Italian metres competently—and yet her place in the literature of the world would be essentially what it is. The *Celestina*, from which, through the *Novela de Pícaros*, came Le

<sup>1</sup> The names of Corte-Real (1540-1593), P. de Andrade (1576-1660), Sá de Menezes (—?-1664), may represent this class. Others, with the classical prose of Vieira and G. de Andrade, which continued the work of Barros (1496-1570), may be referred to in the next volume.

Sage and Smollett and Dickens, would remain, and so would the *Amadis of Gaul*, the *romances*, the *comedia*, *Don Quixote*, the great adventurers, and Santa Teresa—all in short that makes Spain in literature.

And now, allowing that there was something Spanish which found adequate expression in the Golden Age, and is also the best of the national literature, there comes the difficulty, which I dread to find insuperable, of finding a definition of that something. To say that there is Spanish quality in *las cosas de España*, and that this is why they are Spanish, is the explanation of Molière's doctors. Again, it is mere reasoning in a circle to begin by taking it for granted that the learned poets who copied the Italian forms were not truly Spanish, and that therefore Spain was not in essentials influenced by the Renaissance. Either form of absurdity is to be avoided. Perhaps the only way of escape lies in defining what we mean by the spirit of the Renaissance. Without professing to be equal to so great a task, it is permissible to assert that there are certain notes which we describe as of the Renaissance, and to which the Italian, the Frenchman, or the Englishman gave expression in forms proper to himself. A love of beauty, a sense of joy, a vehement longing for strong expressions of individual character and of passion, a delight in the exercise of a bold, inquisitive intellect—all these, and the reaction from them, which is a deep melancholy, are the notes of the Renaissance. In the learned poetry of Spain they are rarely heard. The commonplaces of form, with here and there a piety and patriotism which are mediæval

and Spanish, are given in their stead. Therefore it is quite fair to say that the Spaniard was not greatly influenced by the Renaissance—that there was something in it not congenial to him.

There remains the difficulty of saying exactly what is the Spanish quality of the true *cosas de España*. Mr Ford, who knew the flavour well, gave it a name—the *borracha*—which, being interpreted, is the wine-skin, and the smack it lends to the juice of the grape. The Spaniards say that there are three natural perfumes, and the first of them is the smell of the dry earth after rain. The *borracha*, and the pungent scent of the “*dura tellus Iberiæ*” when wet, are not to everybody’s taste. Neither is their equivalent in literature, except where we find it purified and humanised by the genius of Cervantes. There has at all times been little love of beauty in the Spaniard, and not much faculty for ideal perfection of form. His greatest painting is realistic, the exact forcible rendering of the things seen with the eye of the flesh, selected, arranged, kept in their proper proportions in the picture, but rarely imagined. The things seen need not be the vulgar realities of life only. Velasquez is every whit as real in his presentment of the frigid dignity of the King, or in the “*Lances*,” as he is in the “*Spinners*” or the “*Water-Seller*.” Zurbaran’s friars are perfectly real, and their ecstatic devotion was also *chose vue*. It is the extent of his range of vision which gives Velasquez his solitary eminence among Spanish painters. Among their brother artists, the men of letters, there is the same faculty for seeing

and reproducing the common life, though this must be understood to include that devotion to the Church which was far from being the least genuine thing in Spain. All did not see with the same breadth of vision. A Velasquez is rare. It is comparatively easy to be Zurbaran. As a rule the Spaniard could express types better than individuals. The jealous husband, the adventurer, heroic as in *Amadis*, or rascally as in *Lazarillo*, a rigid ideal of honour, an orthodox pattern of piety, are what the Spaniard gives us—these, and the stirring action of which they form a part. He drew from the world he saw around him, and fitted his materials into a pattern for the stage, or for the story. The *goût du terroir*, the essentially Spanish *borracha*, is on it all. The flavour is not delicate. There is little gaiety in the Spaniard, but instead of it a hard jocularly. He very rarely says the profound and universally true thing. It would be hard to make a collection of "beauties" from his literature. In so far as he has helped the general literature of the world, it has been by supplying a model of machinery for the play and the prose story. Therefore his literature stands apart in the modern world. If you are to enjoy it you must be prepared to be satisfied with the action, the ideal of honour, the enthusiastic piety which he can give. And to enjoy them you must read them in his own Castilian. All translation is as the back of the tapestry, but no original loses more than does the Spaniard when he is divested of his own language and lets slip the merits of its terse gravity, its varied picturesque force.

In Spain, then, the Renaissance met something on which it could secure no hold, something in a sense barbarous, not quite European, and recalcitrant to all classic influences. In England it met a strong national genius, but not one which was entirely alien. Sidney, Spenser, and Marlowe showed the influence of the Renaissance, not as mere imitators of forms, but as Englishmen, and yet fully. In Shakespeare it was included with much more. Its love of beauty and its sense of form were never better expressed than in the lyrics. The difference between the two nations is profound. The Spaniard either copied the mere form, or produced what one feels would have come as a natural growth from the Middle Ages, the *Libro de Caballerías*, the *Novela de Pícaros*, the *Auto Sacramental*, and even the *comedia*, in which no trace of the classic influence is to be seen. A drama which is in no sense classic might have developed from the morality and the farce. As much might be said of the form of the English drama. Seneca might have been forgotten, and Tansillo might never have written (without Seneca he never would have written as he did), as far as the construction of the English play is concerned. But then much of the Renaissance spirit did pass into Elizabethan literature. We could not deduct what it shared with Italy without fatal loss. The genius of Spenser could perhaps have dispensed with a teacher, but as a matter of fact it did not. With no model save Chaucer he would yet have been one of the greatest of poets. He would not have been exactly the poet he was

without Ariosto, Tasso, and Du Bellay. Shakespeare had, of all sons of Adam, the least need to borrow, and yet without the influence of the Renaissance we should not have the *Sonnets*, *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, or many passages in the plays. The English genius, in fact, accepted and absorbed the Renaissance without losing its native independence. All the manifestations of its freedom were not equally admirable. The wild incoherence of the early dramatists is not good in itself. When we see it at its worst, we are half tempted to wish that Greene and Marlowe had been more subservient. Yet it was good in so far as it was a striving after an ideal both national and good. It was the necessary preparation for Shakespeare and the great things of the Elizabethan drama. If the time was less mighty in prose than in verse, yet the germs of all that was to come were in Hooker. He had the secret of lucid arrangement, the art of dealing with the greatest questions in his own tongue, and in a form at once unaffected, instantly intelligible to the average thoughtful man, and yet eloquent where the occasion required him to rise above the usual level of speech.

The natural aptitude of the French for discipline in literature, and their tendency to form schools, to set up a doctrine, and to reject all that is not compatible with it, have never been more strongly shown than during the Later Renaissance. Other influences were at work. It would be very rash to say that classic or Italian models had a visible influence on Carloix's memoirs of Vielleville, or the commentaries of Monluc, or even

the vast unnamed, or misnamed, compilation of *Bran-tôme*. Yet the Renaissance did, on the whole, dominate France, though it could not eliminate, or suppress, what was essentially French. Its intense interest in the life and the character of man was never better shown than by Montaigne. In poetry the attempt to adapt the classic and Italian models to French use swept all before it. Nowhere was the French disposition to find its freedom in the service of a classic model more clearly seen than in the drama of the *Pléiade*. It is true that Jodelle, Garnier, Belleau, Grévin, and the others may be said to have failed. They did not produce any dramatic literature which has much more than an interest of curiosity. Yet the later history of the French stage proves that they were making their efforts on lines congenial to their nation. The dramatists of the Augustan age did no more than work in the same spirit, and to the same ends as their forgotten predecessors, with altered—and but slightly altered—means.

A comparison between the three literatures will go far to explain their respective fates. For the Spanish there could not well be any future. A strong national character, unchanging, and so close in the fibre that it never really admits a foreign influence, could not well do more than express itself once. The time came when it had said its say—and nothing then remained except, first mere juggling with words, and then silence—*Góngorism* and *Decadence*. In England and in France there was the hope, and even the assurance, of far more to come. Though the Spanish story has

been carried beyond the dates allowed for France and England, there is no unfairness in this sentence. In 1616 Lope had still much of his best work to do. Quevedo, Calderon, and Góngora were to come; but the first and second brought nothing, or at least very little, absolutely new, and the third brought destruction. Lope was only to do what he had done already. When Shakespeare died in England and Mathurin Regnier in France, a long succession was to follow them. Englishmen and Frenchmen had learnt their lesson from the Renaissance, and were to use their knowledge.



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