With Lady Holland's kind compts to C. P. Cooper Esq
1839

SOME ACCOUNT

OF THE

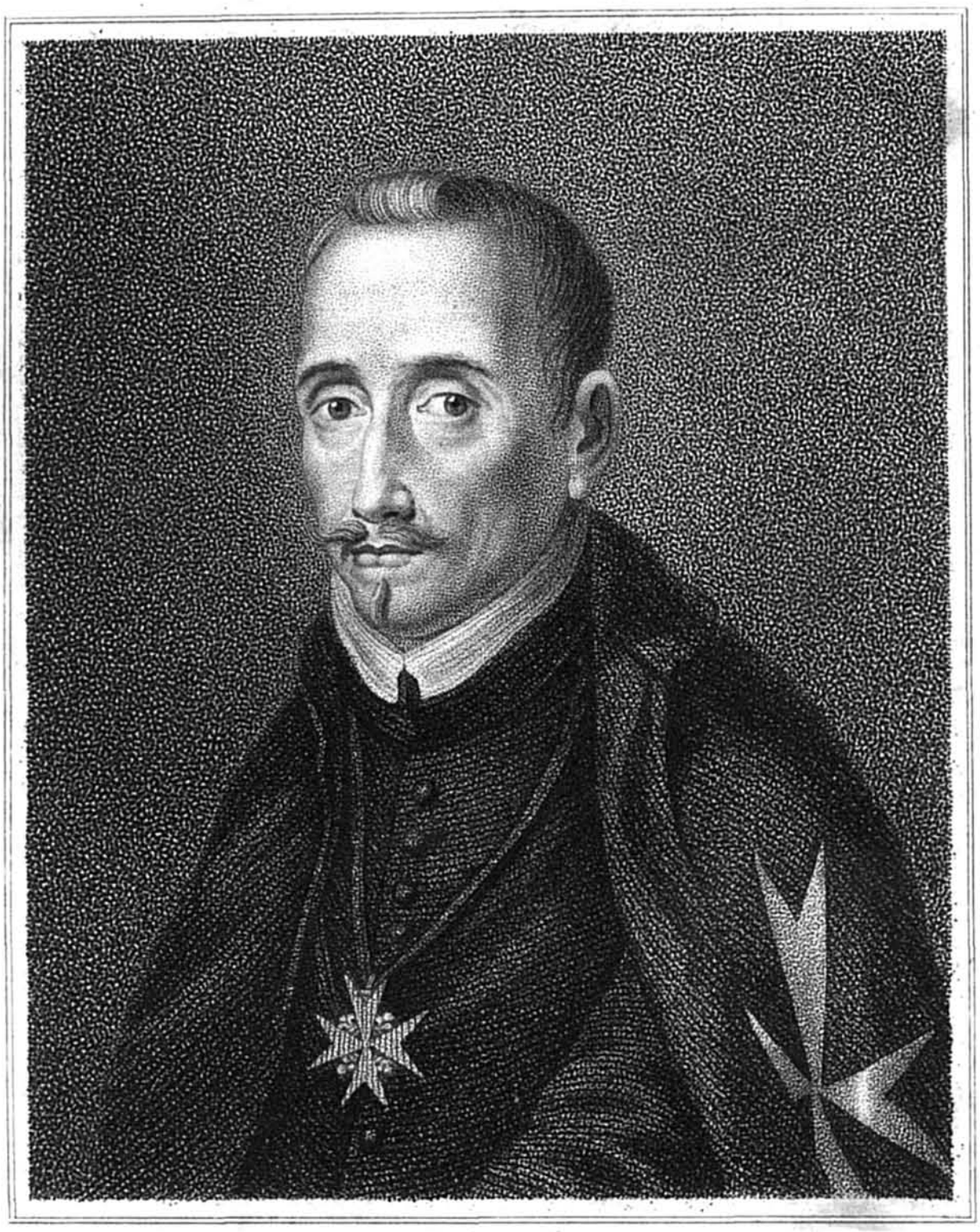
LIVES AND WRITINGS

OF

LOPE FELIX DE VEGA CARPIO

AND

GUILLEN DE CASTRO



Scriven sculp.

Frey Lope Felix de Vega Carpio.

Nat. 1562. Ob. 1635.

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SOME ACCOUNT

OF THE

LIVES AND WRITINGS

OF

LOPE FELIX DE VEGA CARPIO

AND

GUILLEN DE CASTRO

BY

HENRY RICHARD LORD HOLLAND

VOL I

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DEDICATION.

TO

DON MANUEL JOSEPH QUINTANA.

SIR,

In dedicating the following pages to you, I am not without apprehensions that my readers may accuse me of being actuated by motives very different from those which I should wish to assign. What is offered as a testimony of friendship, and an acknowledgment of obligations, they may

very plausibly suspect of being an artifice of authorship, and a gratification of vanity. Indeed, if I were disposed to assume authority with my countrymen on subjects of Castilian literature, how could I accomplish it more effectually than by insinuating that my researches were directed, and my studies assisted, by a Spaniard so eminent for purity of taste and discernment in literature as yourself? How could I more artfully imply my qualifications for judging of celebrated Spanish poets who are dead, than by proclaiming the intimacy and friendship with which I am honoured by one of the most distinguished of those now living? As, however, I had rather incur the imputation of vanity with the public,

than deserve that of ingratitude from you, I cannot allow these sheets to go to the press without acknowledging the advantages I have derived from your advice and conversation in collecting the materials necessary to the task which I had undertaken. Indeed, the only circumstance which could make me contemplate a work so imperfect and superficial with any complacency, would be, that it is associated in my mind with the recollection of the many pleasant hours I passed, and the many valuable acquaintances I formed in the country to the literature of which it is devoted.

VASSALL HOLLAND.

Holland House, Kensington,
July 19, 1806.

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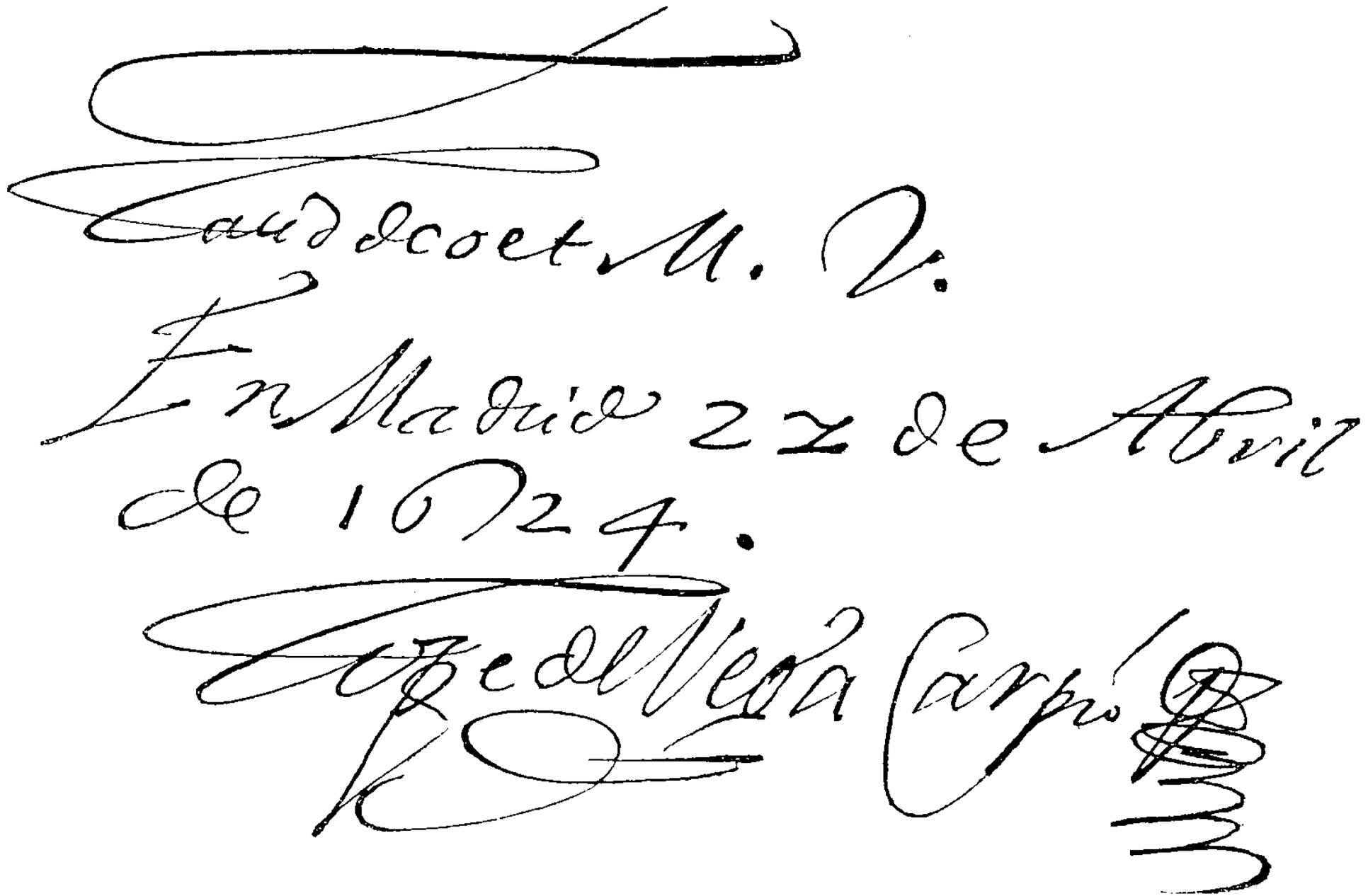

Signature of Lope de Vega, affixed to the original Copy of the Play, entitled *El Marques de las Navas.*

No digan que es menester
mucho tiempo para amar
que el Amor que ha de matar
del primer golpe ha de ser
Amor que comienza ingrato
y el trato le da valor
no se ha de llamar Amor
si no costumbre del trato
que quien vio, quien y mato
ese es Amor Verdadero

y mas quando fue el primero
como el que te tengo yo
mirar, escrivir, abrazar
amor un galan, y dama
es tener amor con ama
que se han dado a criar
onde ha de saber Amor.
luego ~~[illegible]~~ andar, y ser galan
que el Amor que no es Adan
no puede tener valor.

Fac-simile of a Passage in *El Marques de las Navas*, from original M. S.

SOME ACCOUNT

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

LOPE DE VEGA.

Spanish authors.

It is so trite an observation, that the life of a man of letters is too uniform to render the relation of it interesting, that the remark is become as regular an introduction to literary biography, as the title-page and dedication are to a book. But if in compliance with established usage we place it in our account of a Spanish poet, it must be for the sole purpose of refuting it. The advancement of literature has, in many instances, kept pace with the political influence of a country; but it has happened

more frequently in Spain than elsewhere, that the same persons have contributed to the progress of both. Garcilaso * de la

Garcilaso de la Vega.

* The surname of La Vega was, according to the romantic history of the wars of Grenada, bestowed on Garcilaso, a young Spaniard, for his prowess in vanquishing a gigantic Moor who had defied the Christian warriors by parading before Ferdinand's camp in the *Vega de Grenada* with the words *Ave Maria* fixed to his horse's tail: but this story is related of another man, with very little variation, in the Chronicle of Alonzo XI., written long before the siege of Grenada. The poet Garcilaso has written little more than pastorals and sonnets, compositions at best of an inferior order: yet he may be considered as the most classical poet in the Castilian language. Indeed there are few authors, antient or modern, who, had they died at the same period of life, would have left works more perfect in their kind behind them. He unfortunately did not live long enough to fix the taste of his countrymen; and the race of poets who succeeded him were more remarkable for wit and imagination than for correctness of thought, or purity of expression. Because Horace ran away from Philippi, or for some reason equally cogent, courage has been supposed to be a rare virtue among poets; and Menage observes, that Garcilaso is the only bard upon record who actually fell in the field.

Vega, whose family is celebrated for military exploits both in history and romance, and who is himself, from the harmony of his verse, called the Petrarch of Spain, fell at the age of thirty-three before a little fortress near Frejus; and his death became the more remarkable, from the merciless manner in which Charles V. avenged it, by putting the whole garrison to the sword. The negotiations and personal character of Mendoza * had no inconsiderable influence Mendoza.

* Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza was born at Grenada very early in the 16th century. His abilities in various embassies to Rome, Venice, and Trent, were universally acknowledged by his contemporaries, though an infamous plot formed by him against the liberties of Sienna seems to have been as imprudently conducted as it was wickedly designed. His literary reputation is founded on his munificent patronage of learning, as well as on his own works. He wrote the history of the revolt of the Moriscoes of Grenada, which is highly esteemed both for style and matter. It is a professed imitation of Sallust; but his terseness often degenerates into affectation, and he wants that

Ercilla. on the fate of Italy and Europe. Ercilla * was a witness of the scenes he describes, an actual soldier in the wild wars which he

Cervantes. recounts; and Cervantes, the inimitable Cervantes, went through a series of adventures † which might have composed a

---

perspicuity of method so remarkable in his model. He does justice however to the Moors; and as they had a better cause, the speech in which their motives to insurrection are urged, does not yield to that of Catiline in energy of diction or sentiment. He is the supposed author of Lazarillo de Tormes, a popular novel. Some of his best poems are too licentious for the prudish press of Spain, which tolerates no indecency but in the works of a casuist. His printed verses are full of sprightliness, and display wit as well as learning; but in correctness of taste and sweetness of numbers he falls very short of Garcilaso.

* The author of the Araucana. For an account of him and his work, I must refer the reader to Mr. Hayley's notes on his Epistle on Poetry. If that good-natured critic's judgment of the poem be somewhat too favourable, he gains over the English reader to it by the most agreeable of methods, the improvement of the Spanish author in his translation.

† Various Lives of Cervantes.

volume in the library of Don Quixote himself.

Lope de Vega.

The wonders of Lope de Vega's life consist indeed more in the number of his productions than the singularity of his adventures; yet at an early period of life he was not exempt from that spirit of enterprise which pervaded all ranks and descriptions of his countrymen. His friend and encomiast Perez de Montalvan * relates that at about the age of thirteen or fourteen he was impelled by so restless a desire of seeing the world, that he resolved to escape from school. He concerted his project with a schoolfellow, who resolved to accompany him, and they actually left Madrid together without the knowledge of their relations or their masters. They had

Escape from school.

* Elogio por Montalvan, published in Sancha's edition of Lope de Vega's works.

taken the precaution of providing some money for their expedition, but they had not been equally provident in calculating the duration of their finances; for, after buying a mule at Segovia, it was not till their arrival at Astorga that they perceived that the scantiness of their purse would not permit them to proceed any farther on their travels. This unforeseen difficulty disconcerted our young adventurers, and they resolved to abandon their scheme as hastily as they had undertaken it. They had returned as far as Segovia, when the necessity of procuring money compelled them to offer some trinkets to sale at a silversmith's. The tradesman was a cautious Spaniard: he suspected that they had stolen the trinkets, and prudently conducted them before the magistrate of the place. He was fortunately a man of moderation, and confined the exercise of his

authority to appointing a constable to conduct them back to Madrid.

The admiration and surprise with which the wisdom of this decision and the small expence attending its execution are mentioned by Montalvan, are striking proofs that vexatious and expensive practices had already infected the administration of police in Spain.

Lope, according to his biographers *, betrayed marks of genius at a very early age, as well as a singular propensity to poetry. They assure us that at two years old these qualities were perceptible in the brilliancy of his eyes; that ere he attained the age of five he could read Spanish and Latin; and that before his hand was strong enough to guide the pen, he recited verses of his own composition, which he had the good for- Early marks of genius.

* Parnaso Español.—Montalvan.

tune to barter for prints and toys with his playfellows. Thus even in his childhood he not only wrote poetry, but turned his poetry to account; an art in which he must be allowed afterwards to have excelled all poets antient or modern. The date however of his early productions must be collected from his own assertions, from probable circumstances, and the corresponding testimony of his friends and contemporaries; for they were either not printed at the time, or all copies of the impression have long since been lost.

Birth, Nov. 25, 1562.

He was born at Madrid on the 25th of November 1562; and as he informs us in the Laurel de Apolo that his father was a poet, we might conjecture from this circumstance that his example had its effect in deciding Lope's early propensity to versification; but he seems to imply, in the same passage, that the discovery of

his father's talent was accidental and after his death. The exact period when that event happened is uncertain; but Lope was an orphan when he escaped from school, and before that time he had by his own account not only written verses, but composed dramas in four acts, which, as he tells us, was then the custom:

Wrote plays of four acts.

El capitan Virues, insigne ingenio,
Puso en tres actos la comedia, que antes
Andaba en quatro como pies de niño,
Que eran entonces niñas las comedias.—
Y yo las escribi de onçe y doçe años
De a quatro actos, y de a quatro pliegos,
Porque cada acto un pliego contenia *.

Plays of three acts we owe to Virues' pen,
Which ne'er had crawl'd but on all fours till then;
An action suited to that helpless age,
The infancy of wit, the childhood of the stage.
Such plays not twelve years old did I complete,
Four sheets to every play, an act on every sheet.

Upon his return to Madrid † he aban-

* Arte de hacer comedias.

† Parnaso Español.—Montalvan.

doned this mode of composition, and ingratiated himself with the bishop of Avila by several pastorals, and a comedy in three acts called La Pastoral de Jacinto. In his prologue to the Pelegrino, where he enumerates the plays he had then published, this comedy is not mentioned; from which we must infer that he did not print it, or that it is there inserted by some other name; as it is extremely common for Spanish plays of that period to have two titles. His friend Montalvan represents the production of this comedy as an epoch in the annals of the theatre, and a prelude to the reform which Lope was destined to introduce. It is probable that during this interval, between school and university, he composed several juvenile poems, which he may have retouched at a period when his name was sufficient to make any performance acceptable to the public. But

La Pastoral de Jacinto.

the obscurity in which this part of his life is involved seems to prove that his efforts for literary fame were not hitherto attended with any extraordinary success. He shortly after studied philosophy at Alcalá.

Exaggerations of Montalvan.

Montalvan makes a pompous relation of the satisfaction and delight which the duke of Alva experienced in receiving the young poet among the crowds that thronged to pay him court, and of the eagerness with which he engaged him in his service upon his return from the university. A passage in the eclogue to Claudio implies that this event did not take place till after the unsuccessful expedition of the Armada. At any rate it does not appear what wonders he had hitherto performed to render his incense so peculiarly acceptable at that powerful shrine, and the subsequent events of his life seem to contradict Montalvan's impro-

Arcadia written at the instance of the duke of Alva.

bable relation. He wrote however his Arcadia at the instance of the duke of Alva. It is a mixture * of prose and verse; of romance and poetry; of pastoral and heroic; the design of which was avowedly taken from Sannazaro, though its execution is pronounced by the Spanish critics to be decidedly superior to the model.

Pastorals common in Spain.

Pastoral works, however, in prose and verse, had already met with considerable success in Spain; of which the Diana by Montemayor was the first in point of merit, and I believe in time. The species of composition is in itself tedious, and the conduct of the Arcadia evidently absurd. A pastoral in five long books of prose run mad, in which the shepherds of Arcadia woo their Dulcineas in the language of Amadis rather than of Theocritus, in which they

* Montalvan.

occasionally talk theology, and discuss in verse the origin and nature of grammar, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, astrology, and poetry, and which they enliven by epitaphs on Castilian generals, and a long poem on the achievements of the duke of Alva, and the birth of his son, is not well adapted to the taste of common readers, or likely to escape the censure of critics. In most instances, however, the abstract of a work of this nature, for it must be considered as a poem, forms a very unfair criterion of its merit.

The chief objects of poetry are to delineate strongly the characters and passions of mankind, to paint the appearances of nature, and to describe their effects upon our sensations. To accomplish these ends the versification must be smooth, the language pure and impressive, and the images just, natural, and appropriate; our interest

should be excited by the nature of the subject, and kept up by the spirit of the narration. The probability of the story, the connexion of the tale, the regularity of the design, are indeed beauties; but beauties which are ornamental rather than necessary, which have often been attained by persons who had no poetical turn whatever, and as often neglected by those whose genius and productions have placed them in the first rank in the province of poetry. Novels and comedies derive indeed a great advantage from an attention to these niceties. But in the higher branches of invention they are the less necessary, because the justness of the imitation of passions inherent in the general nature of man, depends less upon the probability of the situations, than that of manners and opinions resulting from the accidental and temporary forms of society.

To judge therefore by another criterion of the parts of the Arcadia which I have read, and especially of the verses, there are in it many harmonious lines, some eloquence, great facility, occasional beauty of expression, and above all a prodigious variety of maxims, similes, and illustrations. These merits however are disfigured by great deformities. The language, though easy and fluent, is not the language of nature; the versification is often eked out by unnecessary exclamations and unmeaning expletives, and the eloquence is at one time distorted into extravagant hyperbole, and at another degenerates into low and tedious commonplace. The maxims, as in all Spanish authors of that time, are often trivial and often untrue. When they have produced an antithesis, they think they have struck out a truth. The illustrations are some-

The Arcadia.

times so forced and unnatural, that though they may display erudition and excite surprise, they cannot elucidate the subject, and are not likely to delight the imagination. They seem to be the result of labour, not the creation of fancy, and partake more of the nature of conundrums and enigmas than of similes and images. Forced conceits and play upon words are indeed common in this as in every work of Lope de Vega; for he was one of the authors who contributed to introduce that taste for false wit, which soon afterwards became so universally prevalent throughout Europe. Marino *, the champion of that style in Italy, with the highest expressions of admiration for his model, acknowledges that he imbibed this taste from Lope, and owed his merit in poetry to the perusal of his

* *Essequie poetiche*, vol. xxi. Lope de Vega.

works. There is one species of this false taste, which is particularly common in the Arcadia, and at the same time very characteristic of the poet's style in general. It is an accumulation of strained illustrations upon some particular subject, each generally included in the same number of lines, and all recapitulated at the end of the passage. The song of the Giant to Chrisalda in the first book contains the most singular instance of this conceit, but it is much too long to be transcribed. It is divided into seven strophes or paragraphs, most of which are subdivided into seven stanzas of four lines; in each stanza of the three first strophes the beauty of Chrisalda is illustrated by two comparisons; and the names of the things to which she is compared are enumerated in the last stanza of each strophe, which alone consists of six lines, and which is not un-

The Arcadia.

like a passage in the *Propria quæ maribus*, being chiefly composed of nouns substantive without the intervention of a single verb. In the first strophe she is compared to fourteen different celestial objects; in the next to ten species of flowers; in the third to as many metals and precious stones. Here the similes end; but the style of poetry is preserved; and in order to introduce a corresponding catalogue of nouns in the four remaining strophes, the giant offers his mistress, in the fourth, eleven birds of different sorts; in the fifth twelve trees of different names; in the sixth as many quadrupeds; and in the seventh an equal number of marine productions. After having recapitulated each of these in their respective strophe, in a strain not unworthy of a vocabulary, he sums up the whole by observing with great truth,

Y quanto el mar, el ayre, el suelo encierra,
Si me quieres, ofrezco a tu belleza.

Thus what contains or sea, or earth, or air,
If she but love, I offer to my fair.

I subjoin another instance of this strange and laborious species of conceit in a sonnet from the first book of the Arcadia. It contains many of the common-place illustrations which form so large a portion of that voluminous work:

No queda mas lustroso y cristalino
  Por altas sierras el arroyo helado,
  Ni esta mas negro el evano labrado,
Ni mas azul la flor del verde lino,
Mas rubio el oro que de oriente vino,
  Ni mas puro, lascivo y regalado
  Espira olor el ambar estimado,
Ni esta en la concha el carmesi mas fino;
  Que frente, cejas, ojos, y cabellos,
Aliento, y boca de mi nympha bella,
Angélica figura en vista humana:
  Que puesto que ella se parece a ellos,
Vivos estan alli, muertos sin ella,
Cristal, evano, lino, oro, ambar, grana.

Not winter chrystal ever was more clear,
  That checks the current of the mountain stream;
  Not high-wrought ebony can blacker seem;
Nor bluer doth the flax its blossom rear;
Not yellower doth the eastern gold appear;
  Nor purer can arise the scented steam
  Of amber, which luxurious men esteem;
Nor brighter scarlet doth the sea-shell bear;
  Than in the forehead, eyebrows, eyes, and hair,
The breath and lips of my most beauteous queen,
Are seen to dwell on earth, in face divine.
  And since like all together is my fair,
Lifeless elsewhere, alive in her are seen,
Ice, ebon, flax, gold, amber, and carmine.

In the second book there are some verses on jealousy in the metre de Redondilla mayor, which are not devoid of that peculiar merit which distinguishes what Johnson has called metaphysical poetry. They are full of ingenuity and fancy, which

"Play round the head, but come not to the heart."

The Spanish writers, I know not on what authority, affirm with great confidence that Metastasio was a constant reader and

avowed admirer of Castilian poetry. Those who recollect the celebrated verses to Nice, may compare the different sentiments which a similar subject suggests to Lope in the following ode of the fifth book. It is no unfavourable specimen of his style; and from the satisfaction with which he mentions it in the second part of his Philomena, we may infer that it was a great favourite with the author:

La verde primavera
De mis floridos años
Pasé cautivo, amor, en tus prisiones,
Y en la cadena fiera
Cantando mis engaños,
Lloré con mi razon tus sinrazones;
Amargas confusiones
Del tiempo, que ha tenido
Ciega mi alma, y loco mi sentido!

Mas ya que el fiero yugo
Que mi cerviz domaba,
Desata el desengaño con tu afrenta,
Y al mismo sol enjugo,
Que un tiempo me abrasaba,

La ropa que saqué de la tormenta,
Con voz libre y esenta
Al desengaño santo
Consagro altares, y alabanzas canto.

Quanto contento encierra,
Contar su herida el sano,
Y en la patria su carcel el cautivo,
Entre la paz la guerra,
Y el libre del tyrano;
Tanto en cantar mi libertad recibo.
O mar! O fuego vivo!
Que fuiste al alma mia
Herida, carcel, guerra, y tyrania.

Quedate, falso amigo,
Para engañar aquellos
Que siempre estan contentos y quejosos;
Que desde aqui maldigo
Los mismos ojos bellos,
Y aquellos lazos dulces y amorosos
Que un tiempo tan hermosos
Tuvieron, aunque injusto,
Asida el alma y engañado el gusto.

1.

In the green season of my flowering years,
I liv'd, O Love! a captive in thy chains;
Sang of delusive hopes and idle fears,
And wept thy follies in my wisest strains:

Sad sport of time when under thy controul,
So wild was grown my wit, so blind my soul.

2.

But from the yoke which once my courage tam'd
I, undeceiv'd, at length have slipp'd my head,
And in that sun whose rays my soul enflam'd,
What scraps I rescued at my ease I spread.
So shall I altars to *Indifference* * raise,
And chaunt without alarm returning freedom's praise.

3.

So on their chains the ransom'd captives dwell;
So carols one who cured relates his wound;
So slaves of masters, troops of battle tell,
As I my cheerful liberty resound.
Freed, sea and burning fire, from thy controul,
Prison, wound, war, and tyrant of my soul.

4.

Remain then, faithless friend, thy arts to try
On such as court alternate joy and pain;
For me, I dare her very eyes defy,
I scorn the amorous snare, the pleasing chain,
That held enthrall'd my cheated heart so long,
And charm'd my erring soul unconscious of its wrong.

On the second stanza of the above there is an evident confusion of meta-

* There is no word in our language for desengaño.

phor; for though the sun may formerly have scorched him, and may now dry his garments dripping from the storm, it cannot possibly be identified with the storm, nor in any way be represented as the cause of the condition of his garments: but such are the unavoidable blunders of hasty writers. Though Lope imitated Horace and Garcilaso, he learnt this careless way of writing neither from the *Quis multâ gracilis*, &c., of the former, nor from the following sonnet of the latter, in which most of his allusions may be found, but in which there is no confusion of metaphor, nor, as far as I can judge, any thing inconsistent with the strict simplicity of a sonnet:

Sonnet of Garcilaso.

Gracias al cielo doy, que ya del cuello
Del todo el grave yugo he sacudido;
Y que del viento el mar embravecido
Veré desde la tierra, sin temello;

Veré colgada de un sutil cabello
La vida del amante embebecido,
En engañoso error adormecido,
Sordo á las voces que le avisan dello.

Alegraráme el mal de los mortales;
Aunque en aquesto no tan inhumano
Seré contra mi sér quanto parece;
Alegraréme, como hace el sano,
No de vér á los otros en los males,
Sino de vér que dellos él carece *.

A good sonnet is not easily translated into any language, especially into English; and as in the following I have not surmounted the difficulties, I subjoin it merely to shew the English reader how much Lope de Vega has borrowed from his predecessor:

Thank heaven, I've lived then from my neck to tear
The heavy yoke that long my strength opprest;
The heaving sea which boisterous winds infest
I now can view from shore, and feel no fear;
Can see suspended by a single hair
The lover's life, with fancied bliss possest,
In danger slumbering, cheated into rest,
Deaf to advice that would his ills declare.

* Parnaso Español, ii. 20.

So shall I smile at other mortals' ill;
Nor yet, though joy to me their pains afford,
Shall I unfeeling to my race be found;
For I will smile as one to health restored
Joys not to see his fellows suffering still,
But joys indeed to find himself is sound.

The Arcadia.

There are several imitations and even translations of the antients in the course of the Arcadia which have great merit; for as the chief defect of Lope was want of judgment, and his great excellence facility of verse and happiness of expression, his genius was peculiarly adapted to translation, where the sense of the original confined his imagination and gave a full scope to the exercise of his happiest talent. In general this work furnishes striking instances of the defects and of the beauties of Lope's style; and by the passionate defence he published of it in his prologue to the Pelegrino, and in the Philomena, he seems himself to have been singularly partial to it. These reasons have induced me to dwell upon it

longer perhaps than its merits appear to justify.

Leaves the duke of Alva, and marries.

Soon after he had executed the command of the duke of Alva, he left his service and married. The duties of matrimony did not interfere with his favourite studies. He seems to have cultivated poetry with increased enthusiasm, till an unfortunate event compelled him to quit Madrid and his newly-established family *.

Fights a duel.

A gentleman of considerable rank and importance having indulged his wit at the expence of Lope and his compositions, the poet was incensed, hitched his critic into verse, and exposed him to the ridicule of the town in a poem called *a Romance* †. His

* Parnaso Español.

† From *Romance*, which was originally the name of the vernacular tongue in Spain, the Castilian word for ballad, the French word for a novel, and our term for a tale of knight-errantry or wonderful adventures, are all derived.

antagonist took fire, and challenged him to a contest in which he hoped to meet a poet to greater advantage than in a war of wit; but Lope de Vega had not neglected his fencing-master in his education, and accordingly

> Tomando ya la espada, ya la pluma *,
> Now taking up the sword, and now the pen,

wounded his adversary so severely, that his life was despaired of, and Lope compelled to fly. He fixed upon Valencia as the place of his retreat. Here he probably first formed a friendship with Vicente Mariner, a Latin poet of that town, whose muse was as prolific as that of Lope himself, and not more parsimonious of her praise †. He wrote panegyrics on most contemporary poets, and composed those

Retires to Valencia.

Mariner, a Latin poet.

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* Laurel de Apolo.

† Pellicer, Life of Cervantes. Velasquez.

on Quevedo in Greek. Among the millions of lines preserved in the king of Spain's libraries, are to be found several to the honour and memory of Lope, and one written in answer to his enemies, which, if it does not leave a favourable impression of the manners or of the poetry of the author, proves that he made common cause with talents so congenial to his own. The unhappy critic who had ventured to attack the phœnix of Spain, was sufficiently refuted by being called an ass:

Voce onager, vultuque onager, pedibusque sinuque,
Ut nil non onagri nunc tua vita refert *.

An ass in voice, face, feet, and senses too,
Nothing remains that is not ass in you.

It is to be hoped that the two bards employed themselves better at Valencia than in composing such strains as these.

---

* Pellicer, Life of Cervantes.

Lope returns to Madrid.

Lope returned to Madrid in a few years, when all apprehensions of evil consequences from his adventure were allayed. He was probably soothing his imagination with prospects of domestic happiness, which his late absence had suspended, when he had the misfortune to lose his wife *. The residence of Madrid, which he had so lately regarded as the summit of his wishes, now became insupportable; and scenes which had long been associated in his mind with ideas of present comfort and future reputation served only to remind him of their loss. To fly from such painful recollections he hastily embarked on board the memorable Armada †, which was then fitting out to invade our coasts. The fate of that expedition is well known; and Lope, in addition to his share in the difficulties

Loses his wife.

Embarks in the invincible Armada.

* Montalvan. † Montalvan, and Ecloga a Claudio.

and dangers of the voyage, saw his brother, to whose society he had run for refuge in his late calamity, expire in his arms. If there be any truth in the supposition that poets have a greater portion of sensibility in their frames than other men, it is fortunate that they are furnished by the nature of their occupations with the means of withdrawing themselves from its effects. The act of composition, especially of verse, abstracts the mind most powerfully from external objects. The poet therefore has always a refuge within reach; by inventing fictitious distress, he may be blunting the poignancy of real grief; while he is raising the affections of his readers, he may be allaying the violence of his own, and thus find an emblem of his own susceptibility of impression in that poetical spear which is represented as curing with one end the wounds it had inflicted with

the other. Whether this fanciful theory be true or not, it is certain that poets have continued their pursuits with ardour under the pressure of calamity. Some indeed assert that the genius of Ovid drooped during his banishment; but we have his own testimony, and what, notwithstanding all such criticisms, is more valuable, many hundreds of his verses, to prove that this event, however it might have depressed his spirits, riveted him to the habits of composition, and taught him to seek for consolation where he had hitherto only found amusement. Thus, in an eclogue which the friendship of Pedro de Medina Medinilla consecrated to the memory of Lope's wife, the lamentations of the husband are supposed to have been actually furnished by our author. Two or three odes on the same subject are to be found in his works, and he informs us himself that during his

Continues to write.

unfortunate voyage he composed * the Hermosura de Angelica, a poem which professes to take up the story of that princess where Ariosto had dropped it. The motive he assigns for this choice is curious. He found in Turpin that most of her remaining adventures took place in Spain, and, thinking it for the honour of his country, related them in twenty cantos.

Hermosura de Angelica.

To complete what Ariosto had begun was no light undertaking, and the difficulty was not diminished by the publication only two years before of a poem on the same subject called Las Lagrimas de Angelica. This was written by Luis Barahona de Soto, and has always been esteemed one of the best poems in the Spanish language. It is mentioned with great praise by the curate in the examination of Don Quixote's library.

* Egloga a Claudio.

Hermosura de Angelica.

The first canto of Lope's poem is taken up with the invocation, and with the rivalry between Lido king of Seville and Cardiloro son of Mandricardo; in the second, the latter enters a cave where are painted the Moorish wars in Spain, and all the events of Ariosto's poem. These are related in about twenty stanzas without spirit, circumstance, or poetry, if we except the indignation of Cardiloro at the sight of his father's death:

Y con Rugero
Viene á dar de su vida el postrer paso,
Que aun viendole pintado Cardiloro
Matar quisiera al victorioso Moro.

How with Rogero in unlucky strife,
He closed the last sad passage of his life,
Fain, as he saw, had angry Cardilore,
E'en in the picture, slain the conquering Moor.

The death of Clorinarda, who died of grief on her marriage with Lido, is la-

mented at length by her disconsolate husband; but in a strain which bears no traces of the author having so lately experienced a similar calamity. But if the grief expressed in the speech of his hero falls short of that which we must suppose to have affected the breast of Lope, yet in the violence of its consequences it must be allowed to surpass it. Lido actually dies of his despair, and leaves his kingdom of Seville to the most beautiful man and woman who shall appear. Most of the third and all the fourth canto are taken up with the enumeration and description of the persons who thronged to Seville for the prize. There is some sprightliness and more quaintness in his remarks on the old, the ugly, and the decrepid, leaving their homes, and travelling through dangers and difficulties in the hope that their personal charms may procure them a kingdom.

Hermosura de Angelica.

After much discussion, he seems inclined to attribute this vanity to the invention of looking-glasses, and ridicules with some spirit the pedantry of those who wished to decide the contest by the exactness of proportion in features and limbs, and to prove the beauty of a woman by rule and by compass. Angelica and Medoro arrive the last; and immediately after Zerdan king of Numidia, and Nereida queen of Media, the most hideous of mankind. Of Angelica he gives a long, cold, minute, and common-place description; but there is more discrimination in the character of Medoro's beauty than is usual in Lope's poetry:

Extracts from the Hermosura de Angelica.

Entró con ella aquel que tantos daños
Causó en el mundo por su dicha y gozo,
Aquel esclavo, rey de mil estraños,
Aquel dichoso y envidiado mozo;
Era Medoro un mozo de veinte años,
Ensortijado el pelo, y rubio el bozo,
De mediana estatura, y de ojos graves,
Graves mirados, y en mirar suaves.

Tierno en extremo, y algo afeminado,
Mas de lo que merece un caballero,
Gran llorador, y musico extremado,
Humilde en obras, y en palabras fiero;
Guardado en ambar, siempre regalado,
Sutil, discreto, vario, lisongero,
Noble, apacible, alegre, generoso,
A pie gallardo, y á caballo ayroso.

And with her he, at whose success and joy
The jealous world such ills had suffer'd, came,
Now king, whom late as slave did kings employ,
The young Medoro, happy envied name!
Scarce twenty years had seen the lovely boy,
As ringlet locks and yellow down proclaim;
Fair was his height; and grave to gazers seem'd
Those eyes which where they turned with love and softness beam'd.

Tender was he, and of a gentler kind,
A softer frame than haply knighthood needs;
To pity apt, to music much inclin'd,
In language haughty, somewhat meek in deeds;
Dainty in dress, and of accomplish'd mind,
A wit that kindles, and a tongue that leads;
Gay, noble, kind, and generous to the sight,
On foot a gallant youth, on horse an airy knight.

After the decision in their favour, and a short but not inelegant compliment to

his mistress Lucinda, who at this time must have been an imaginary person, he proceeds to the love which the beauty of Medoro and Angelica inspired in some of their rivals, and the rage which they excited in others. Among these, the speech of Rostubaldo, king of Toledo, affords a specimen of a different kind of poetry from any we have hitherto inserted:

Qué furia, dixo, O barbaro senado
De mugeres al fin cercado entorno,
Te incita inadvertido, acelerado,
Movido de lascivia y de soborno
A dar el premio á un hombre afeminado,
Con habla, trage, y mugeril adorno,
Adonde están con tan famosos nombres
Robustos cuerpos de perfectos hombres?

Mandaba el muerto rey, ó mandar quiso,
Si bien la ley entiendo y interpreto,
Que en este breve termino improviso
Juzgasedes qual era el mas perfeto.
En un caso tan grave y indeciso,
Digno de advertimiento y de secreto,
Por un estruendo de mugeres locas
Dais lauro á un hombre que merece tocas?

Hermosura de Angelica.

A un hombre que es verguenza que se llame
Hombre, quien tanto á la muger parece.
Neron por qué fue vil? Comodo infame?
Bastante causa su retrato ofrece.
Hile, tuerza, devane, texa, trame,
Guarde el estrado, oficios que merece,
O toque á su muger, pues es su espejo,
Mas no trate las armas, ni el consejo.

Bordarle puede ropas y basquiñas
Con perlas y oro, lazos y perfiles;
O con ella cazar por las campiñas
Liebres cobardes y conejos viles;
Los ojos alce, &c. &c. &c.

What rage your barbarous councils has possest,
Senate beset with women round? he cries;
That heedless, hasty thus, by love carest,
Won by the wanton tricks their sex devise,
To one in lisp, in dress, in air confest
A woman more than man, you grant a prize
Due to the nervous arm and daring face
Of those whose mighty limbs proclaim a manly race?

The dying king or said or meant to say,
For so I dare interpret his bequest,
That you ere long should choose, the realm to sway,
Of graceful knights the fairest and the best.
Then in the mighty business of the day
Shall the wild noise of women half possest
Accord the prize to one whose girlish air
Deserves, instead of crowns, the caps his patrons wear?

One whom I call not man, for that's a name
I blush to squander on so soft a mien.
What covered Nero, Commodus with shame?
In their unmanly cheeks the answer's seen.—
The loom, the distaff, be Medoro's fame,
So let him spin, or deck his beauteous queen,
For mirror-like his form reflects her charms,—
But quit the cares of state, and shun the din of arms.

So may he trim her robe, her gems may place,
Adjust the gold, and wreathe her flowing hair;
Secure with her o'er open meads may chase
The harmless rabbit or the tim'rous hare;
May turn his eyes enamour'd on her face, &c. &c.

He pursues the same train of thought for several stanzas, and concludes his speech with an insult and threat that many will deem too ludicrous for any thing approaching to epic poetry:

Pues defended el reyno rostros bellos,
Que yo pondre la planta en vuestros cuellos.

Your crown then let your pretty looks defend,
For on your abject necks to trample I intend.

Being vehemently opposed by Turcatheo the Scythian, a general war ensues; and in

the course of two or three cantos, in which the adventures of Linodoro and Thisbe are related, and a long list of Spanish kings since Tubal inserted, Nereida succeeds in bewitching Medoro to love her. She conveys him and Angelica to an island, where the latter is carried away by Zerban. In the mean while Rostubaldo besieges Seville. The thirteenth canto is taken up with the story of a man who falls in love with Belcorayda upon seeing her picture; which, as it has no connexion with the subject of the poem, seems to have been introduced for the sake of an eulogium upon painting, and a compliment to Spagnoletto and the king of Spain. Lope was extremely fond of painting, and, among his many accomplishments, had I believe made some little proficiency in that art. Medoro is persecuted in various ways by Nereida, and Angelica is in the utmost danger of vio-

Hermosura de Angelica.

Hermosura de Angelica.

lence from Zerban. Rostubaldo visits a cave where the glories of the Spanish arms till the final conquest of Grenada are foretold. In the seventeenth canto, the subject of which is the siege of Seville, Cardiloro, the original lover of Clorinarda, coming to the assistance of the besiegers, vents his grief at her death, in dull, common-place, and miserable antitheses. At last Nereida changes the object of her love from Medoro to Rostubaldo; and, after a variety of adventures, Medoro finds his son in an island, and his speedy recovery of Angelica is foretold by a prophetess. This fortunate event is however delayed; for the poet sees a vision in the beginning of the twentieth canto, in which all the kings of Arragon as well as Castile, and most of the battles of Philip II. and the duke of Alva are represented by images. He sees also an inscription under a golden

statue of Philip III., which, unless the imaginary vision was a real prophecy, proves that much of the poem was written after the period to which he refers it. I transcribe the passage, as they are probably the only eight Latin lines of titles and names which are to be found in modern metre, and in a poem written in a modern language:

Latin stanza.

Phillippo Tertio, Cæsari invictissimo,
  Omnium maximo regum triumphatori,
Orbis utriusque et maris felicissimo,
  Catholici secundi successori,
Totius Hispaniæ principi dignissimo,
  Ecclesiæ Christi et fidei defensori,
Fama, præcingens tempora alma lauro,
Hoc simulacrum dedicat ex auro.

At the end of this canto Medoro finds Angelica; laments his late delusion; embraces her as Atlas does the heavens; she dies away with joy, and the converse of the soul beginning, the lovers, as well as

the recording muse, with great propriety become mute.

Such was the employment of Lope during this voyage of hardships, which, however alleviated, seem never totally to have been forgotten. The tyranny, cruelty, and above all the heresy of queen Elizabeth, are the perpetual objects of his poetical invective. When in 1602 he published this poem, written on board the Armada, he had the satisfaction of adding another on the death of a man who had contributed to complete the discomfiture of that formidable expedition. The Dragontea is an epic poem on the death of sir Francis Drake; and the reader is informed, by a note in the first page, that wherever the word Dragon occurs, it is to be taken for the name of that commander. Tyrant, slave, butcher, and even coward, are supposed to be so applicable to his character,

Hermosura de Angelica, published 1602.

Dragontea.

that they are frequently bestowed upon him in the course of the work without the assistance of an explanatory note.

He returned a second time to Madrid in 1590, and soon after married again.

Lope married a second time in 1590.

In 1598, on the canonization of St. Isidore, a native of Madrid, he entered the list with several authors, and overpowered them all with the number if not with the merit of his performances. Prizes had been assigned for every style of poetry, but above one could not be obtained by the same person. Lope succeeded in the hymns; but his fertile muse, not content with producing a poem of ten cantos in short verse, as well as innumerable sonnets and romances, and two comedies on the subject, celebrated by an act of supererogation both the saint and the poetical competition of the day, in a volume of sprightly poems under the feigned name of

Poems on St. Isidore, 1598.

Poems of Tomé de Burguillos.

Tomé de Burguillos *. These were probably the best of Lope's productions on the occasion; but the concurring testimonies of critics agree that most of his verses were appropriate and easy, and that they far excelled those of his numerous competitors. This success raised him no doubt in the estimation of the public, to whom he was already known by the number and excellence of his dramatic writings. Henceforward the licences prefixed to his books do not confine themselves to their immediate object, the simple permission to publish, but contain long and laboured en-

* Parnaso Español, and late edit. of Lope de Vega's works. It is true that these poems were lately printed at the Imprenta Real with a preface, asserting Tomé de Burguillos to be a real personage, and author of the works which bear his name: but there seems to be no ground for depriving Lope of compositions which his contemporaries, as well as subsequent critics, have all concurred in attributing to him.

comiums upon the particular merit of the work, and the general character and style of the author. This was probably the most fortunate period of his life. He had not, it is true, attained the summit of his glory, but he was rising in literary reputation every day; and as hope is often more delightful than possession, and there is something more animating to our exertions while we are panting to acquire than when we are labouring to maintain superiority, it was probably in this part of his life that he derived most satisfaction from his pursuits. About this time also we must fix the short date of his domestic comforts, of which, while he alludes to the loss of them, he gives a short but feeling description in his Eclogue to Claudio:

Lope's happiness.

Subsequent afflictions.

Yo vi mi pobre mesa en testimonio,
  Cercada y rica de fragmentos mios,
  Dulces y amargos rios
Del mar del matrimonio,

Y vi, pagando su fatal tributo,
De tan alegre bien tan triste luto.

The expressions of the above are very difficult, if not impossible, to translate, as the metaphors are such as none but the Spanish language will admit. The following is rather a paraphrase than a translation:

I saw a group my board surround,
And sure to me, though poorly spread,
'Twas rich with such fair objects crown'd,
Dear bitter presents of my bed!
I saw them pay their tribute to the tomb,
And scenes so cheerful change to mourning and to gloom.

Of the three persons who formed this family group, the son died at eight years, and was soon followed by his mother: the daughter alone survived our poet. The spirit of Lope seems to have sunk under such repeated losses. At a more enterprising period of life, he had endeavoured to drown his grief in the noise and bustle

of a military life; he now resolved to sooth it in the exercise of devotion. Accordingly, having been secretary to the Inquisition, he shortly afterwards became a priest, and in 1609 a sort of honorary member * of the brotherhood of St. Francis. But devotion itself could not break in upon his habits of composition. He had about this time acquired sufficient reputation to attract the envy of his fellow poets, and spared no exertions to maintain his post, and repel the criticisms of his enemies. Among these the Spanish editors reckon the formidable names of Gongora † and Cervantes ‡.

Becomes a priest and brother of St. Francis in 1609.

Controversies between him and his contemporaries.

The former, Don Luis de Góngora y

* Pellicer Life of Cervantes.

† The jealousy between Gongora and Lope sufficiently appears from their works. For further proof, vide Prologo to the Treatise Sobre el Origen y Progressos de la Comedia, by Casiano. Pellicer ed. Madrid, 1804.

‡ La Huerta and Pellicer.

Gongora. Argote, though now little known out of Spain, had so extensive and so pernicious an effect on literature, that the reader's curiosity may be gratified by a short account of him and his writings. He was born of noble parents at Cordova in 1561, and educated at Salamanca. Such was his genius and imagination, that he seemed destined by nature to reach the highest points of excellence, both in humorous and serious poetry. But his judgment was not equal to his wit. He soon learnt to prefer novelty to nature; and was so anxious to attain the praise of originality, that, in pursuit of it, he abandoned all justness of thought, and discarded every simple expression from his vocabulary. Before his taste was utterly perverted, he published some poems, which are still justly esteemed the best models of that popular kind of ballad, called in Spain, *Romance*.

The metre and character of such compositions are peculiar to the country in which they were written. The verse is trochaic, and never exceeds eight syllables in length: the *consonante* *, or full rhyme, was originally used in them as in all Castilian poetry. The *asonante* *, or rhyme in vowels only, became common at the end of the sixteenth century, and has ever since been usually adopted in the *romances*. It was about the same period, when Lope de Vega had attained his reputation, and Gongora was in the vigour of life, that the first collections of these little pieces were published under the title of *Romanceros*. The approbation with which they were received stimulated those eminent writers to try their talent in a species of production which, though popular before them, had not hitherto extended the fame of any au-

Spanish *Romances*.

* Vide Appendix.

thor's name, or attracted the notice of literary men.

The peculiar and national character of the *romances* or Spanish ballads is thus eloquently described by Don Manuel Quintana, in his preface to a selection of Spanish poetry.

Romances. "They were properly the lyric poetry of our country. In them the accents of our music were heard at night in our streets and public places, to the sound of the harp or the guitar. They were at once the vehicles and incentives of love, as well as the shafts of satire and revenge. They painted the manners of our Moriscoes and our shepherds, and preserved in the memory of our people the exploits of the Cid and other favourite champions. In short, more flexible than all other compositions, they could be applied to every object; and whether clothed in rich and majestic language, or

tinged with the milder colours of sweetness and sensibility, they always exhibited that characteristic ease, nature, and freshness, which originality alone can produce without exaggeration or research. *Romances.*

"In them are to be found more beautiful and spirited expressions, more delicate and ingenious passages, than in the whole range of Castilian poetry. The Morisco ballads in particular are written with a vigour and sprightliness of style which enchant the reader. The union of courage and of love, the gallantry and tenderness of the Moors, the sonorous harmony of the names, each and all, contribute to give novelty and poetry to the compositions in which they are portrayed. Our writers afterwards becoming weary of Moorish disguises, transferred the ballads to pastoral subjects. Fields and rivulets, flowers and names carved upon trees, then took the place of

Romances. challenges, tournaments, and devices: but whatever the ballads may have lost in strength, they gained by the change in sweetness and simplicity.

"In both classes the invention was beautiful; and it is wonderful with how little effort, and with what conciseness of language, the scenery, the hero, and his emotions are delineated in such short compositions. At one time it is the Alcayde of Molina, who, entering the town at full speed, alarms the Moors with the report of a Christian incursion, which is laying waste their fields; at another it is the ill-fated Aliatar borne with the melancholy pomp of a military funeral through the very gate whence he had issued the day before full of exultation and spirit. Sometimes it is a simple country girl, who, having lost her ear-rings, the keepsake of her sweetheart, dreads the reproaches

which await her: and sometimes it is the solitary and rejected shepherd, who, indignant that two doves should coo in the neighbouring poplar, interrupts their loves, and scares them away with a stone *." *Romances.*

The first of the following ballads is alluded to in the above quotation; the second is the production of Gongora, and may be regarded as a favourable specimen of his best style of composition:

No en azules taheliés,
Corbos alfanges dorados,
Ni coronados de plumas
Los bonetes Africanos,
Sino de luto vestidos
Entraron de quatro en quatro
Del malogrado Aliatar
Los afligidos soldados,
Tristes marchando
Las trompas roncas,
Los tambores destemplados.

* Poesias selectas. Introduccion. Madrid, 1807.

La gran empresa de Fenix,
Que en la bandera volando,
Apenas la trató el viento
Temiendo el fuego tan alto,
Ya por señas de dolor
Barre el suelo, y dexa el campo,
Arrasado con la seda
Que el Alferez va arrastrando.
Tristes marchando, &c. &c.

Salió el gallardo Aliatar
Con cien Moriscos gallardos
En defensa de Motril,
Y socorro de su hermano;
A' caballo salió el Moro,
Y otro dia desdichado
En negras andas le vuelven
Por donde salió a caballo.
Tristes marchando, &c. &c.

Caballeros del Maestre,
Que en el camino encontraron
Encubiertos de unas cañas,
Furiosos le saltearon;
Hiriéronle malamente
Murió Aliatar malogrado,
Y los suyos, aunque rotos
No vencidos se tornaron,
Tristes marchando, &c. &c.

¡O! cómo lo siente Zayda! *Romances.*
¡Y cómo vierten llorando
Mas que las heridas sangre,
Sus ojos aljofar blanco!
Dilo tú, Amor, si lo viste;
¡Mas ay! que de lastimado
Diste otro nudo á la venda,
Por no ver lo que ha pasado.
Tristes marchando, &c. &c.

No solo le llora Zayda,
Pero acompáñanla quantos
Del Albaicin á la Alhambra
Beben de Genil y Darro.
Las damas como á galan
Los valientes como á bravo
Los Alcaydes como á igual
Los plebeyos como á amparo.
Tristes marchando
Las trompas roncas,
Los tambores des templados.

No gilded sabres by their side,
No azure sashes bright and gay,
No Lybian plumes with nodding pride,
Announce the long, the sad array;
As mournfully in solemn state,
Clad in sable, four by four,
Enter through the city gate
The soldiers of the hapless Moor.

Mute is now their martial song,
Sullen sounds the muffled drum,
Hoarse the trumpet, as along,
Sadly slow, the mourners come.

The Phœnix on their banners spread,
A fiery emblem, waving high,
That seemed, so bright the gleam it shed,
To scorch the wind and fire the sky.
Now, sad reverse! in sign of woe,
Trailed by its downcast bearer's hand,
Smooths in its course the dust below,
And sweeps with silken folds the sand.
Mute is now, &c. &c.

A hundred gallant Moors attend
By gallant Aliatar's side,
As late, his brother to defend,
And save Motril, we saw him ride:
Through that same gate he took his way,
Mounted amidst a gazing crowd;
And, lo! they bear him back to-day,
Wrapt in his cold and sable shroud.
Mute is now, &c. &c.

The Master's knights he chanced to meet,
Ambushed in reeds the Christians lay,
And sallying from their green retreat,
With fury they assailed their prey:

And thus was Aliátar slain,
A Christian javelin fixed his doom;
Repulsed, but unsubdued, his train,
Lo! bear his mangled body home.
Mute is now, &c. &c.

Alas! poor Zayda's grief how deep!
More tears than blood are surely shed,
And those bright eyes more freely weep
Than wounded Aliátar bled:
Say, Love, couldst thou her sorrow bear?
Or didst thou not, to spare the sight,
Blind thy bound eyes with double care,
And draw the friendly band more tight.
Mute is now, &c. &c.

For blended with poor Zayda's woe
Is that of all the great and good,
Who bathe where Darro's waters flow,
Or drink of Genil's limpid flood.
The fair their lover lost bemoan,
The brave lament their bravest chief,
The nobles miss a comrade gone,
The poor bewail their best relief.
Mute is now the martial song,
Sullen sounds the muffled drum,
Hoarse the trumpet, as along,
Sadly slow, the mourners come.

ROMANCE * DE GONGORA.

Gongora.

Amarrado al duro banco
De una galera turquesca,
Ambas manos en el remo,
Y ámbos ojos en la tierra,
Un forzado de Dragut
En la playa de Marbella
Se quejaba al ronco son
Del remo y de la cadena.
¡O sagrado mar de España!
Famosa playa serena,
Teatro donde se han hecho
Cien mil navales tragedias!
Pues eres tú el mismo mar
Que con tus crecientes besas
Las murallas de mi patria
Coronadas y soberbias;
Traeme nuevas de mi esposa,
Y dime si han sido ciertas
Las lagrimas y suspiros
Que me dice por sus letras;
Porque si es verdad que llora
Mi cautiverio en tu arena
Bien puedes al mar del Sur
Vencer en lucientes perlas.

---

* Poesias escogidas, 1796, Madrid, t. 17. p. 84.— Obras de Gongora, 1648, Sevilla, Rom. 35, p. 97; Rom. Lin. 27.

Gongora.

Dame ya, sagrado mar,
A mis demandas respuesta,
Que bien puedes, si es verdad
Que las aguas tienen lengua.
Pero pues no me respondes
Sin duda alguna que es muerta,
Aunque no lo debe ser
Pues que yo vivo en su ausencia.
Pues he vivido diez años
Sin libertad y sin ella,
Siempre al remo condenado
A nadie matarán penas.
En esto se descubrieron
De la religion seis velas,
Y el Cómitre mandó usar
Al forzado de su fuerza.

I fear the following is rather a paraphrase than a translation of the above elegant and melancholy little composition.

As near Marbella's shelving strand
Stern Dragut's Turkish galley bore,
His eyes fixed stedfastly on land,
His hands both resting on his oar;

To his hard bench a Christian bound,
Thus of his cruel lot complains
To the sad, dull, unvarying sound
Of labouring oars and clanking chains.

"Oh, sacred sea of Spain!" he cries,
"And thou, not less illustrious shore!
How many naval tragedies
Have on this stage been acted o'er!

And are these waters then the same
That with their gently flowing tide
Kiss the high walls from whence I came,
And bathe my native turrets' pride?

Tell me of her my heart holds dear;
Say, if reported sighs be true?—
Say, can I trust the frequent tear
That seems her letters to bedew?

For if her bright, her beauteous eyes
On thy calm shore shed tears for me,
The pearls you waft may surely vie
With hidden gems of Indian sea.

To my poor heart some comfort bring,
And prove my sad surmises wrong;
For sure, if true what poets sing,
Your murmuring waters have a tongue *:

And since you make me no reply,
Shall I from that her death infer?
Ah, no! if absence killed, could I
Have lived so long bereft of her?—

---

* *Lengua*, in Spanish, means the edge of water as well as tongue. The play of words is neither to be translated nor regretted.

Bereft of freedom and of love,
Ten years I drag the loathsome chain;
By length of suffering doomed to prove
That mortals never die of pain."

Thus, as he speaks, above the wave
Six Christian vessels heave in sight,
And the stern master bids the slave
Ply his sad oar with double might.

Though these early productions of Gongora are full of merit, they are not entirely exempt from that bad taste which afterwards disfigured his writings. Some such blemishes may be detected in the above beautiful ballad. The judicious editor of the modern selection has omitted them; but as my object is to give a specimen of the defects as well as beauties of the author, I have transcribed the ballad from his original works *.

Defects of Gongora.

His desire of novelty led him in his subsequent poems to adopt a style of writing

* Obras de Gongora. Seville edition, 1648. P. 97.

so vicious and affected, that Lope, with all his extravagancies, is a model of purity in comparison with him. He was the founder of a sect in literature *. The style called in Castilian *cultismo* owes its origin to him. This affectation consists in using language so pedantic, metaphors so strained, and constructions so involved, that few readers have the knowledge requisite to understand the words, and still fewer ingenuity to discover the allusion, or patience to unravel the sentences. These authors do not avail themselves of the invention of letters for the purpose of conveying, but of concealing their ideas. The art of writing reduces itself with them to the talent of puzzling and perplexing; and they require in their readers a degree of ingenuity at least equal to their own. I recollect to have read in Gongora, or one of his imitators, a sonnet on the extension

Style called *cultismo*.

* Luzan's Poetica, c. 3. l. 1.

of the buildings at Madrid, in which it is said *that the red river had overflowed the silver path on its banks.* After some enquiry, I discovered that the meaning of the passage was, that several houses with red tiles had been built on the very bed of the Manzanares, which during the greater part of the year is nearly dry, and is formed of pebbles and sand, at least as silvery as any water that constitutes its stream. Thus by the magick of metaphor, a row of new built houses is transformed into a *red river*, and the river itself which really flows by their side converted into *a silver path on the bank*. The works of Gongora are not common in England, but for a further specimen of his style the reader may refer to Luzan's*

Gongora and *Cultismo.*

* Luzan, whose object was to explode this taste, prevalent even in his time, quotes the defects of Gongora without mentioning those poems which are nearly exempt from them, or those beauties which rendered his extravagant style so palatable to the public.

criticism, ch. 15. l. 2. of his Poetica. He will there find that *the pen of the historian opens the gates of memory, and that memory stamps shadows on mounds of foam;* expressions which, in this enigmatical poet, are meant to convey a description of the art of writing on paper.

The obscurity of Persius is said to have ruffled the temper of a saint, and an indignant father of the church to have condemned his satires to the flames, with this passionate but sensible observation: *Si non vis intelligi non debes legi.* It might be reasonable to suppose that the public would generally acquiesce in the truth of this maxim. The application of it seems one of the few points of taste in which their verdict might be trusted. But it is the fate of genius undirected by judgment to render its very defects the chief object of applause and imitation: of this the example of Gongora

furnishes a singular illustration. For near a century after his death, his works had such an influence on Castilian poetry, that little or nothing was admired which could be easily understood. Every word appeared a metaphor, and every sentence a riddle. Nor was the infection confined to Spain. The literature of all Europe was, in some measure, tainted by his example. Marini, the great corrupter of Italian style, was a professed admirer of Spanish literature, and an imitator of Gongora and his disciples. Johnson supposes that the false taste of those English writers whom he denominates the metaphysical poets, is to be traced to the Italian author. The study, however, of Castilian was not uncommon in England towards the middle of the seventeenth century; and the learning of Donne, Cleveland, and their followers, leads me to suspect that their forced con-

Gongora.

ceits and extravagant metaphors were more directly imported from Spain. That strange affectation in style, called by our ancestors Euphuism, had possibly the same origin.

Gongora himself was disappointed at the reception given to the *new poetry*, and the little success that attended his first efforts at innovation is supposed to have inflamed his animosity against his more popular contemporaries *. Lope did not escape his censures; and galled by his virulent lampoons, as well as alarmed at the progress which his new style of writing was gradually making, he occasionally satirised the style without naming the authors. Even in his plays are to be found several strokes of ridicule on this subject. Thus, when Severo comes to recommend himself as a poet to a bridegroom in the *Amistad y Obligacion*, Lope the bridegroom asks him:

Lope's dispute with Gongora.

* Parnaso Español, vol. vi.

Cultismo ridiculed by Lope.

Lop. Sois vulgar o culterano?
Sev. Culto soy.
Lop. Quedaos en casa
Y escribireis mis secretos.
Sev. Sus secretos! por que causa?
Lop. Porque nadie los entienda.....

Lop. A plain or polish'd bard?
Sev. My style's polite.
Lop. My secrets then remain with me to write.
Sev. Your secrets? Why?
Lop. Because, politely penn'd,
Their meaning sure no soul shall comprehend.

And again in the Bizarrias de Belisa, the heroine of that piece, in describing the bad qualities of her rival, represents her as a pupil of the new school:

Aquella que escribe en culto,
Por aquel Griego lenguage;
Que no le supo Castilla,
Ni se le enseñó su madre.

She who writes in that high polish'd style,
That language so charmingly Greek,
Which never was heard in Castile,
And her mother ne'er taught her to speak.

His plays indeed abound in such pas-

sages; but not content with these random shafts of wit, he seriously examined its principles, and exposed its absurdities, in a letter prefixed to an eclogue on the death of doña Ysabel de Urbino in 1621. This is written with great temper and judgment, but in a tone which betrays an apprehension that the stamp of Gongora's authority might very possibly give currency to his new invention. The character of Lope throughout this contest appears to great advantage, and exhibits a degree of moderation, generally attributed to him by his admirers, but not discernible in any other of his literary disputes. For though the virulence of his antagonist's expressions was such as to prevent the publication of most of his satirical performances, Lope confined himself to a calm investigation of his system of writing; and to a few good-humoured

parodies of his extravagant style. He had also the generosity to celebrate, in his Laurel de Apolo, the unquestionable merits of Gongora, without any allusion to those defects which had been the objects of his animadversion. In the mean while, though Gongora was himself neglected, the contagion of his style spread every day, and perhaps the latter works of Lope himself are not altogether free from the infection.

Among those of his contemporaries who professedly imitated Gongora, the most remarkable both for rank and talents was the Count of Villa Mediana, the extraordinary circumstances of whose death are now better known in Spain than his poetry. Few days had elapsed after the accession of Philip IV. when the confessor of Balthazar de Zuñiga (uncle to the count duke Olivarez) bade Villa Mediana *look to himself, for his life was in danger.* He not only

Count of Villa Mediana.

received this advice with great confidence in his own security, but treated the adviser with the utmost disdain and insolence. However, that very evening, as he was driving with Don Lewis de Haro along one of the principal streets of Madrid, the coach was stopped, and he by name was requested to get out upon some important business. He had scarce reached the carriage step in his haste to descend, when he received a blow near the heart, and in attempting to follow the assassin fell lifeless and bloody on the ground. No inquiry was made, no suit was instituted, and one of the principal men of the country was thus openly murdered in the streets of the capital without any public notice being taken of the crime. Quevedo seems to attribute this murder to the vengeance which a dissolute life, a satirical muse, and a sarcastic tongue, might naturally excite; but the rashness of the

attempt, the impunity of the assassin, and the unusual supineness of the police, joined with other circumstances, have given rise to a suspicion that it was perpetrated at the instigation of the court. Gongora, in whose ambiguous phrases it always seems that

> "More is meant than meets the ear,"

says that *the hand was treacherous, but the impulse sovereign.* A tradition current in Spain, could it be ascertained, would leave little doubt to whose jealousy and revenge the count fell a victim. It is said that Philip IV., having imperceptibly glided behind the queen in a passage of the palace, clapped his hands before her eyes with the intention of surprising or alarming her. She was off her guard, and having often permitted such liberties, and probably yet greater, to Villa Mediana, exclaimed, *Que quieres, Conde?—What would*

you, Count? and thus inadvertently betrayed the familiarities which had passed between her and a person of that title. She thought however that she had quieted the king's suspicions, when upon being questioned on her exclamation, and discovering her husband, she reminded him that he was Count of Barcelona. But the king, who only affected to be satisfied with that subterfuge, was soon convinced of her attachment to Villa Mediana, and in the space of a few days he fell a victim to his ambitious gallantry. Of this Queen, daughter of Henry IV. of France, and sister to our Henrietta Maria, a more idle story is related of a grandee setting fire to the palace for the pleasure of touching her person in rescuing her from the flames. Yet more idly this story is told of Villa Mediana, though he died several years before the fire at the Buen Retiro, which most

probably gave rise to this anecdote. I am more inclined to give credit to the account which supposes, that in order to approach the royal beauty, it was not necessary to have recourse to such desperate expedients.

The origin of the dispute between Cervantes and Lope is unknown, and the existence of any open warfare is in some measure problematical. La Huerta, the editor of a late collection of Spanish plays, and himself no despicable dramatic writer, in a zealous defence of Lope, accuses Cervantes very unjustly of detraction and malignity. Wherever Cervantes has mentioned the poet in his printed works, he has spoken of his genius not only with respect but admiration. It is true that he implies that his better judgment occasionally yielded to the temptation of immediate profit, and that he sometimes sacrificed his permanent fame to fleeting popularity with the come-

Lope's dispute with Cervantes.

dians and the public. But in saying this, he says little more than Lope himself has repeatedly acknowledged; and throughout his works he speaks of him in a manner which, if Lope had possessed discernment enough to have perceived the real superiority of Cervantes, would have afforded him as much pleasure as the slight mixture of censure seems to have given him concern. The admirers or rather worshippers of Lope, who had christened him the Phœnix of Spain, laboured hard to crush the reputation of Cervantes. With this view they at one time undervalued novels and romances as compositions of an inferior order, and at another lavished most extravagant encomiums on his rivals. Every invention of the kind excited their applause but the one which really deserved it. If the sonnet published in the Life prefixed to Don Quixote of Pellicer be

genuine, Cervantes was at length provoked to a more direct attack on their idol. In this sonnet, which contains a sort of play upon words, by the omission of the last syllable of each, that cannot be translated, the works of Lope are somewhat severely handled; a sonnet compiled in four languages from various authors is ridiculed, the expediency of a sponge is suggested, and he is above all advised not to pursue his Jerusalen Conquistada, a work upon which he was then employed. Lope, who parodied the sonnet of Cervantes, rejected his advice, and published that epic poem, in which his failure is generally acknowledged even by his most fervent admirers. Marini the Italian poet must however be excepted; who, as he does not hesitate in his funeral eulogium to prefer the Angelica to the Orlando Furioso, and the novels

Failure of Jerusalen Conquistada.

of Lope to those of Boccace, could not decently exempt Tasso from this act of general homage, and makes his poem bow submission to the Spanish Jerusalen Conquistada. Cervantes, though discouraged by Lope, and decried by his admirers, had moderation or prudence enough to acknowledge his merits in his Viage del Parnasso, and still more strongly in the prologue * to his comedies. In the former he addresses him thus:

> Poeta insigne, a cuyo verso o prosa
> Ninguno le aventaja, ni aun le llega.

> Distinguished bard, whom none of modern time
> Can pass or even reach in prose or rhyme.

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* Nasarre, the editor of the eight comedies of Cervantes, considers them as parodies of Lope de Vega, and maintains that his description of a bad play alludes to a particular composition of our author. But Nasarre's opinions are too paradoxical to have any weight, and those who will give themselves the trouble of examining his assertions will find them still less deserving attention or respect.

The passage in the prologue I shall have occasion to refer to in another place. Whether these expressions of praise were the genuine sentiments of Cervantes, and whether they satisfied Lope and his friends, we cannot now ascertain. Lope had not long to contend with so formidable a rival; for Cervantes died soon after this publication, and left his enemy in full possession of the admiration of the public. How different has been the judgment of posterity on the writings of these two men! Cervantes, who was actually starving in the same street * where Lope was living in splendour and prosperity, has been for two centuries the delight of every nation in Europe; and Lope, notwithstanding the late edition of his works in twenty-two volumes, is to a great degree neglected in his own.

Death of Cervantes.

* Pellicer.

Before the death of Cervantes, which happened about the same time as that of Shakspere*, the admiration of Lope was become a species of worship in Spain. It was hardly prudent in any author to withhold incense from his shrine, much less to interrupt the devotion of his adherents. Such indeed was their intolerance, that they gravely asserted that the author of the Spongia, who had severely censured his works, and accused him of ignorance of the Latin language, deserved nothing short of death for such literary heresy. Nor was Lope himself entirely exempt from the irritability which is supposed to attend poets: he often speaks with peevishness of his detractors, and answers their criticisms, sometimes in a querulous, and

Lope's admirers.

* 23 April 1616. Pellicer says the same day, on the authority of the Biographia Britannica; but he forgets that at the period of Shakspere's death England had not adopted the Gregorian calendar.

sometimes in an insolent tone. The word Vega in Spanish signifies a cultivated vale. In the title-page of his book was engraved a beetle expiring over some flowers, which he was upon the point of attacking. That the emblem might not be misunderstood, this distich was also subjoined:

Audax dum Vegæ irrumpit scarabæus in hortos,
Fragrantis periit victus odore rosæ.

At Vega's garden as the beetle flies,
O'erpower'd with sweets the daring insect dies.

The vanity of the above conceit is at least equal to the wit. Lope's vanity.

But in the prologue to the Pelegrino, and in some posthumous poems *, he most unreasonably complains of the neglect, obscurity, and poverty in which his talents have been left. How are the expectations of genius ever to be fulfilled, if Lope, laden Complaints.

* Huerto deshecho.

with honours and with pensions, courted by the great, and followed by the crowd, imagined that his fortunes were unequal to his deserts?

He seldom passed a year without giving some poem to the press; and scarcely a month or even a week without producing some play upon the stage. His Pastores de Belen, a work in prose and verse on the Nativity, had confirmed his superiority in pastoral poems; and rhymes, hymns and poems without number on sacred subjects evinced his zeal in the profession he embraced. Philip IV., the great patron of the Spanish theatre, to which he afterwards is said to have contributed * compositions of his own, succeeded to the throne of Spain in 1621. He found Lope in full possession of

Numerous publications.

* *Conde de Sex* (Earl of Essex) *o dar la vida por su dama*, and others under the name of the *Ingenio de esta corte* are ascribed to him; but, I suspect, upon very slight authority.

the stage, and in the exercise of unlimited authority over the authors, comedians, and audience. New honours and benefices were immediately heaped on our poet, and in all probability he wrote occasionally plays for the royal palace. He published about the same time Los Triumphos de la Fe; Las Fortunas de Diana; three novels in prose (unsuccessful imitations of Cervantes); Circe, an heroic poem, dedicated to the count duke of Olivares; and Philomena, a singular but tiresome allegory, in the second book of which he vindicates himself in the person of the nightingale from the accusation of his critics, who are there represented by the thrush.

Increasing fame.

Such was his reputation that he began to distrust the sincerity of the public, and seems to have suspected that there was more fashion than real opinion in the extravagance of their applause. This engaged

him in a dangerous experiment, the publication of a poem without his name. But whether the number of his productions had gradually formed the public taste to his own standard of excellence, or that his fertile and irregular genius was singularly adapted to the times, the result of this trial confirmed the former judgment of the public. His Soliloquies to God*, though printed under a feigned name, attracted as much notice and secured as many admirers as any of his former productions. Emboldened probably by this success, he dedicated his Corona Tragica, a poem on the queen of Scots, to pope Urban VIII. †, who had himself composed an epigram on the subject. Upon this occasion he received from that pontiff a letter written in his own hand, and the degree of doctor of theology. Such

Poems published without his name.

Pope Urban VIII. compliments him.

* Parnaso Español. Montalvan.

† Dedication to Corona Tragica.

a flattering tribute of admiration sanctioned the reverence in which his name was held in Spain, and spread his fame through every catholic country. The cardinal Barberini followed him with veneration in the streets; the king would stop to gaze at such a prodigy; the people crowded round him wherever he appeared; the learned and the studious * thronged to Madrid from every part of Spain to see this phœnix of their country, this "monster of literature;" and even Italians, no extravagant admirers in general of poetry that is not their own, made pilgrimages from their country for the sole purpose of conversing with Lope. So associated was the idea of excellence with his name, that it grew in common conversation to signify any thing perfect in its kind; and a Lope diamond, a Lope day, or a Lope woman, became

Prodigious reputation of Lope.

* Montalvan, Parnaso Español, &c.

fashionable and familiar modes of expressing their good qualities. His poetry was as advantageous to his fortune as to his fame: the king enriched him with pensions and chaplaincies; the pope honoured him with dignities and preferments; and every nobleman at court aspired to the character of his Mæcenas, by conferring upon him frequent and valuable presents.

His income, If his annual income was not more than fifteen * hundred ducats, the profit of his plays was enormous, and Cervantes insinuates that he was never inclined to forego any usual payment from the theatre. Montalvan estimates the amount derived from his dramatick works alone at not less than eighty thousand ducats. The presents he received from individuals are computed at ten thousand five hundred more. His application of these sums partook of the

* Parnaso Español, v. iii.—Cervantes.—Montalvan.

spirit of the nation from which he drew them. Improvident and indiscriminate charity ran away with these gains, immense as they were, and rendered his life unprofitable to his friends and uncomfortable to himself. Though his devotion gradually became more fervent, it did not interrupt his poetical career. In 1630 he published the Laurel de Apolo, a poem of inestimable value to the Spanish *philologists*, as they are called in the jargon of our day, for it contains the names of more than three hundred and thirty Spanish poets and their works. They are introduced as claimants for the Laurel, which Apollo is to bestow; and as Lope observes of himself that he was more inclined to panegyric than to satire, there are few or any that have not at least a strophe of six or eight lines devoted to their praise. Thus the multitude of Castilian poets, which at that time was prodigious, and

Laurel de Apolo.

the exuberance of Lope's pen, have lengthened out to a work of ten books, or sylvas, an idea which has often been imitated in other countries, but generally confined within the limits of a song *. At the end of the last sylva he makes the poets give specimens of their art, and assures us that many equalled Tasso, *and even approached Ariosto* himself; a proof that this celebrated Spanish author concurred with all true lovers of poetical genius in giving the preference to the latter. After long disputes for the Laurel, the controversy at length ends, as controversies in Spain are apt to do, in the interference of the government. Apollo agrees to refer the question to Philip IV., whose decision, either from reserve in the judge, or from modesty in the reporter, who was himself a party concerned, is not recorded. Facts

* Session of the Poets; &c. &c.

however prove that our poet could be no loser by this change of tribunal.

He continued to publish plays and poems, and to receive every remuneration that adulation and generosity could bestow, till the year 1635, when religious thoughts had rendered him so hypochondriac that he could hardly be considered as in full possession of his understanding. On the 22d of August, which was Friday, he felt himself more than usually oppressed in spirits and weak with age; but he was so much more anxious about the health of his soul than of his body, that he would not avail himself of the privilege to which his infirmities entitled him, of eating meat; and even resumed the flagellation *, to which he had accustomed himself, with more than usual severity. This discipline is supposed to have hastened his death. He fell ill on that

His devotion.

* Montalvan.

night, and having passed through the necessary ceremonies with excessive devotion, he expired on Monday the 26th of August 1635. I have already mentioned the loss of his wife and son. He was twice married, but a daughter alone survived him.

Death on 26 August 1635.

The sensation produced by his death, was, if possible, more astonishing than the reverence in which he was held while living. The splendour of his funeral, which was conducted at the charge of the most munificent of his patrons, the duke of Sesa, the number and language of the sermons on that occasion, the competition of poets of all countries in celebrating his genius and lamenting his loss, are unparalleled in the annals of poetry, and perhaps scarcely equalled in those of royalty itself. The ceremonies attending his interment continued for nine days. The priests * de-

Funeral honours.

* See Funeral Sermons.—Sancha's edit. of Lope.

scribed him as a saint in his life, and represented his superiority over the classics in poetry as great as that of the religion which he professed was over the heathen. The writings which were selected from the multitude produced on the occasion fill more than two large volumes. Several circumstances indeed concurred to raise his reputation at the period of his death. Had he fallen sooner, the public would not have been disposed to regret a dramatic writer so deeply; had he lived longer, they would have had more certain prospects of supplying the loss. The passion of Philip IV. for the theatre had directed the attention and interests of Spaniards to all that concerned it. Calderon and Moreto, who shortly after enriched the stage with plays at least equal, and in the judgment of many superior to those of Lope, were as yet so young that they might be considered as his

scholars rather than his rivals.—We may add that his posthumous works were calculated not only to maintain but advance his poetical character.

Imperfect accounts of him.

Of the many encomiasts of Lope (among whom are to be found Marini and several Italians), not one gives any account of his life, if we except his intimate friend Montalvan; and even in his eulogium there is little that can throw any light upon his character as a man, or his history as an author. He praises him in general terms as a person of a mild and amiable disposition, of very temperate habits, of great erudition, singular charity, and extreme good breeding. His temper, he adds, was never ruffled but with those who took snuff before company; with the grey who dyed their locks; with men who, born of women, spoke ill of the sex; with priests who believed in gipsies; and with persons who,

without intentions of marriage, asked others their age. These antipathies, which are rather quaint sallies of wit than traits of character, are the only peculiarities which his intimate friend has thought proper to communicate.

As he is mentioned more than once, by himself and his encomiasts, employed in trimming a garden, we may collect that he was fond of that occupation; indeed his frequent description of parterres and fountains, and his continual allusion to flowers, seem to justify his assertion *—that his garden furnished him with ideas as well as vegetables and amusement. But I fear we cannot from the primitive simplicity of this taste conclude, with his partial friend Montalvan, that his fortunes did not alter His foibles.

* "Un huertecillo cuyas flores me divierten cuydados, y dan concetos." Dedication of Verdadero Amante.

the modesty of his deportment, or the unaffected mildness and humility of his temper. His ostentatious display of vanity in assuming arms to which he was not entitled, and his ill-founded pretensions to an illustrious pedigree, circumstances which escaped not the keen observation of Cervantes and of Gongora, seem to imply that he was far from that philosophical equability of temper which meets the buffets and rewards of fortune with great indifference. On the other hand; if he was intoxicated with prosperity, he was not contented: nor could wealth, honours, or reputation, cure him of the habit of complaining of ill usage, neglect, and even poverty. Who can read without surprise mixed with indignation his letter to his son, dissuading him from the study of poetry as unprofitable; and, in confirmation of his precepts, lamenting his own

Vanity.

Propensity to murmur.

calamities, in a strain more suited to the circumstances of Camoens and Cervantes than to the idol of the public and favourite of princes * ?

This unreasonable propensity to murmur at his lot is the greatest blemish in his character. The prodigious success of his compositions, and the general adulation of his contemporaries, were sufficient to palliate some occasional instances of vanity; and though he speaks in some passages of his performances with complacency, in others he criticises his own works with considerable severity. This is however a

* Pellicer, p. 165. el Origen y Progresso de la Comedia. The passage is there transcribed from the dedication to the Verdadero Amante: and if, as Pellicer supposes, it was written in 1620, the querulous tone in which Lope speaks of himself is quite inexcusable. I am however inclined to assign it an earlier period, because his son died before his wife, and she could not be alive when he took orders.

privilege which he was by no means inclined to extend to others; on the other hand he was extremely lavish of his praise where he expected a reasonable portion in return.

Number of his works.

As an author he is most known, as indeed he is most wonderful, for the prodigious number of his writings *. Twenty-one million three hundred thousand of his lines are said to be actually printed; and no less than eighteen hundred plays of his composition to have been acted on the stage. He nevertheless asserts in one of his last poems,

> Que no es minima parte, aunque es exceso,
> De lo que está por imprimir, lo impreso.

> The printed part, though far too large, is less
> Than that which yet unprinted waits the press.

It is true that the Castilian language is

* Parnaso Español.

copious; that the verses are often extremely short, and that the laws of metre and of rhyme * are by no means severe. Yet were we to give credit to such accounts, allowing him to begin his compositions at the age of thirteen, we must believe that upon an average he wrote more than nine hundred lines a day; a fertility of imagination, and a celerity of pen, which, when we consider the occupations of his life as a soldier, a secretary, a master of a family, and a priest; his acquirements in Latin, Italian, and Portuguese; and his reputation for erudition, become not only improbable, but absolutely, and, one may almost say, physically impossible.

Proof of that number examined.

As the credibility however of miracles must depend upon the weight of evidence, it will not be foreign to the purpose to examine the testimonies we possess of this

* Appendix, No. III.

extraordinary facility and exuberance of composition. There does not now exist the fourth part of the works which he and his admirers mention, yet enough remains to render him one of the most voluminous authors that ever put pen to paper. Such was his facility, that he informs us in his Eclogue to Claudio, that more than a hundred times he composed a play and produced it on the stage in twenty-four hours. Montalvan declares that he latterly wrote in metre with as much rapidity as in prose, and in confirmation of it he relates the following story * :

Anecdote from Montalvan.

" His pen was unable to keep pace with his mind, as he invented even more than his hand was capable of transcribing. He wrote a comedy in two days, which it would not be very easy for the most expeditious amanuensis to copy out in the time. At

* Montalvan's Eulogium.

Toledo he wrote fifteen acts in fifteen days, which make five comedies. These he read at a private house, where Maestro Joseph de Valdibieso was present and was witness of the whole; but because this is variously related, I will mention what I myself know from my own knowledge. Roque de Figueroa, the writer for the theatre at Madrid, was at such a loss for comedies that the doors of the theatre de la Cruz were shut; but as it was in the Carnival, he was so anxious upon the subject that Lope and myself agreed to compose a joint comedy as fast as possible. It was the Tercera Orden de San Francisco, and is the very one in which Arias acted the part of the saint more naturally than was ever witnessed on the stage. The first act fell to Lope's lot, and the second to mine; we dispatched these in two days, and the third

was to be divided into eight leaves each. As it was bad weather, I remained in his house that night, and knowing that I could not equal him in the execution, I had a fancy to beat him in the dispatch of the business; for this purpose I got up at two o'clock, and at eleven had completed my share of the work. I immediately went out to look for him, and found him very deeply occupied with an orange-tree that had been frostbitten in the night. Upon my asking him how he had gone on with his task, he answered, 'I set about it at five; but I finished the act an hour ago; took a bit of ham for breakfast; wrote an epistle of fifty triplets; and have watered the whole of the garden: which has not a little fatigued me.' Then taking out the papers, he read me the eight leaves and the triplets; a circumstance that would

have astonished me, had I not known the fertility of his genius, and the dominion he had over the rhymes of our language."

Testimony of Cervantes.

As to the number * of his plays, all contemporary authors concur in representing it as prodigious. "At last appeared," says Cervantes in his prologue, "that prodigy of nature, the great Lope, and established his monarchy on the stage. He conquered and reduced under his jurisdiction every actor and author in the kingdom. He filled the world with plays written with purity, and the plot conducted with skill, in number so many that they exceed eighteen hundred sheets of paper; and what is the most wonderful of all that can be said upon the subject, every one of them have I seen acted, or heard of their being so from those that had seen them; and

* For the list of those now extant see Appendix, No. I.

though there have been many who have attempted the same career, all their works together would not equal in quantity what this single man has composed *." Montalvan asserts that he wrote eighteen hundred plays, and four hundred autos sacramentales †; and asserts, that if the works of his literary idol were placed in one scale, and those of all antient and modern poets in the other, the weight of the former would decide the comparison in point of quantity, and be a fair emblem of the superiority in point of merit of Lope's verses over those of all other poets together. What Lope himself says upon this subject will be most satisfactorily related in his own words, though the passages are far from poetical. Having given a list in his pro-

* This was written near twenty years before Lope's death.

† A species of dramatic composition resembling our old mysteries.

logue to the Pelegrino, written in 1604, of three hundred and forty-three plays, in his Arte de hacer Comedias, published five years afterwards, he says:

Mas ninguno de todos llamar puedo
Mas barbaro que yo, pues contra el arte
Me atrevo á dar preceptos, y me dexo
Llevar de la vulgar corriente, a donde
Me llamen ignorante Italia y Francia.
Pero que puedo hacer? si tengo escritas,
Con una que he acabado esta semana,
Quatrocientas y ochenta y tres comedias,
Por que fuera de seis, las demas todas
Pecaron contra el arte gravemente.

None than myself more barbarous or more wrong,
Who hurried by the vulgar taste along,
Dare give my precepts in despite of rule,
Whence France and Italy pronounce me fool.
But what am I to do? who now of plays,
With one complete within these seven days,
Four hundred eighty-three in all have writ,
And all, save six, against the rules of wit.

In the eclogue to Claudio, one of his last works, are the following curious though prosaic passages:

Pero si ahora el numero infinito
De las fabulas comicas intento,
Diras que es fingimiento
Tanto papel escrito,
Tantas imitaciones, tantas flores
Vestidos de rhetoricos colores.

Mil y quinientas fabulas admira
Que la mayor el numero parece;
Verdad, que desmerece
Por parecer mentira,
Pues mas de ciento en horas vientre quatro
Passaron de las musas al teatro.

Should I the titles now relate
Of plays my endless labour bore,
Well might you doubt, the list so great,
Such reams of paper scribbled o'er;
Plots, imitations, scenes, and all the rest,
To verse reduced, in flowers of rhetoric drest.

The number of my fables told
Would seem the greatest of them all;
For, strange, of dramas you behold
Full fifteen hundred mine I call;
And full a hundred times,—within a day
Passed from my muse upon the stage a play.

And again:

Mas ha llegado, Claudio, la codicia
A imprimir con mi nombre las agenas
De mil errores llenas;
O Ignorancia! O Malicia!
Y aunque esto siento mas, menos condeno
Algunas mias con el nombre ageno.

Cortés perdona, O Claudio, el referirte
De mis escritos barbaros la copia;
Pero puedo sin propia
Alabanza decirte
Que no es mínima parte, aunque es exceso,
De lo que está por imprimir, lo impreso.

The public, Avarice oft deceived,
And fix'd on others' works my name;
Vile works! which Ignorance mine believed,
Or Malice call'd, to wound my fame:
That crime I can't forgive, but much incline
To pardon some who fix'd their names on mine.

Then spare, indulgent Claudio, spare
The list of all my barbarous plays;
For this with truth I can declare,
And though 'tis truth, it is not praise,
The printed part, though far too large, is less
Than that which yet unprinted waits the press.

Though these passages seem to confirm the assertions of his biographers and con-

temporaries; yet the complaint contained in the last, which is yet more strongly urged in his prologue to the Pelegrino, proves the light authority upon which his name was given to dramatic compositions, and consequently may suggest a probable mode of explaining the exaggeration which must have taken place with regard to their number. That there must be some exaggeration all will be disposed to admit. It is but just however to observe, that though Lope is the most wonderful, he is not the only Spanish author the number of whose verses approaches to a miracle. La Cueba mentions one who had written one thousand plays in four acts; some millions of Latin lines were composed by Mariner; and many hundred dramatic compositions are still extant of Calderon, as well as of authors of inferior merit. It was not uncommon even for the nobility of Philip the

Voluminous poets in Spain.

Mariner.

Calderon.

Fourth's time to converse for some minutes in extempore poetry; and in carelessness of metre, as well as in common-place images, the verses of that time often remind us of the improvisatori of Italy.

Whatever may have been the original number of Lope's productions, enough yet remain to render an examination of them all nearly impossible. The merit, independent of those intended for representation, consists chiefly in smoothness of versification and purity of language, and in facility rather than strength of imagination. Lope's facility. He has much to say on every subject, and he expresses what he has to say in an easy style and flowing numbers; but he seldom interests the feelings, and never warms the imagination of the reader, though he often pleases by the facility and beauty of his language, and occasionally surprises by the exuberance and ingenuity of his illustra-

tions. From this character of his writings it will naturally be supposed that his epic poems are among the least brilliant of his compositions. Even the faculty of inventing an interesting story, for which as a dramatic writer he was so deservedly celebrated, seems to have forsaken him when he left the stage. His novels and epic poems are alike tedious and uninteresting. The Hermosura de Angelica, which I have examined above, is perhaps the best of his heroic poems, though during his life the Corona Tragica, his poem on Mary Queen of Scots, attracted more notice and secured him more praise. When however we consider the quarter in which these encomiums originated, we may suspect that they were bestowed on the orthodoxy rather than the poetry of the work. When Lope published it, the passions which religious dissension had excited throughout Europe had not

Epic poems.

Corona Tragica.

subsided. The indiscriminate abuse of one sect was still sufficient to procure any work a favourable reception with the other; and the Corona Tragica, the subject of which was fortunately chosen for such a purpose, was not deficient in that recommendation. Queen Elizabeth is a bloody Jezebel, a second Athaliah, an obdurate sphynx, and the incestuous progeny of a harpy. He tells us also in the preface, that any author who censures his king and natural master is a perfidious traitor, unworthy and incapable of all honours, civil or military. In the second book he proves himself fully exempt from such a reproach by selecting for the topics of his praise the actions of the Spanish monarch, which seem the least to admit of apology or excuse. He finds nothing in the wisdom or activity of Charles V. so praise-worthy as his treachery to the protestants. Philip II., whom

he almost ventures to censure for not murdering Queen Elizabeth during her sister's reign, is most admired for sacrificing the interest of his crown, the peace and prosperity of his dominions, at the shrine of orthodoxy:

Que le costó de Flandes al segundo
No conceder la libertad *injusta!*
Que antes de darla aventurara el mundo,
Catholico valor! grandeza augusta!—
Por el tercero santo, el mar profundo
Al Africa pasó, sentencia *justa*,
Despreciando sus barbaros tesoros,
Las ultimas reliquias de los Moros.

How much the second Philip did it cost
Freedom *unjust* from Flanders to withhold!
Rather than yield the world he would have lost,
His faith so steady, and his heart so bold:
The third, with *just* decree, to Afric's coast
Banish'd the remnants of that pest of old
The Moors; and nobly ventured to contemn
Treasures which flowed from barbarous hordes like them.

The praise of the fourth Philip is founded on an anecdote with which I am unac-

quainted, viz. of his adoration of the sacrament in the presence of English heretics *. There is no supernatural agency in this poem; but it has not sufficient merit in other respects to allow us to draw from its failure any argument in favour of such machinery. The speech of Mary when her sentence is announced is the only passage I found in it rising at all above mediocrity:

Speech of Mary Queen of Scots.

Gracias os debo dar, nobles varones,
Por esta nueva desventura, dixo;
Aunque terrible de sufrir, lastíma
Esta porcion mortal que el alma anima.

Confieso ingenuamente que si fuera
En Francia ó en Escocia con mi esposo,
Aunque en extrema edad la nueva oyera,
Me diera horror el caso lastimoso.
Mas cinco lustros de una carcel fiera,
Donde solo escuchaba el temeroso

* This, I suspect, alluded to some transaction which took place during the celebrated visit of prince Charles and the duke of Buckingham at Madrid.

Ruido de las armas circunstantes
Y el miedo de la muerte por instantes:

¡ Que genero de pena puede darla
Mas pena que las penas en que vive
A quien solo pudiera consolarla
La muerte que la vida le apercibe?
La muerte es menos pena que esperarla;
Una vez quien la sufre la recibe;
Pero por mucho que en valor se extreme
Muchas veces la pasa quien la teme.

¡ Que noche en mi aposento recogida
No vi la muerte en su silencio escuro?
¡ Que aurora amaneció de luz vestida
Que el alma no asaltase el flaco muro?
¡ En que sustento no perdí la vida?
¡ Que lugar para mi dexó seguro
Naturaleza, sin ponerme luego
Veneno al labio, ó á la torre fuego?

Ahora que ya veis á luz tan clara
Llegar mi fin, carissimos amigos,
Donde la vida en solo un golpe para
Y de mi fe tendre tantos testigos,
Mi firme aspecto lo interior declara
Y libra de asechanzas y enemigos;
La muerte esperaré, mejor dixera
Que esperaré la vida quando muera.

Thanks for your news, illustrious lords, she cried;
I greet the doom that must my griefs decide:
Sad though it be, though sense must shrink from pain,
Yet the immortal soul the trial shall sustain.

But had the fatal sentence reach'd my ears
In France, in Scotland, with my husband crown'd,
Not age itself could have allayed my fears,
And my poor heart had shudder'd at the sound.
But now immur'd for twenty tedious years,
Where nought my listening cares can catch around
But fearful noise of danger and alarms,
The frequent threat of death, and constant din of arms,

Ah! what have I in dying to bemoan?
What punishment in death can they devise
For her who living only lives to groan,
And see continual death before her eyes?
Comfort's in death, where 'tis in life unknown;
Who death expects feels more than he who dies:—
Though too much valour may our fortune try,
To live in fear of death is many times to die.

Where have I e'er repos'd in silent night,
But death's stern image stalk'd around my bed?
What morning e'er arose on me with light,
But on my health some sad disaster bred?
Did Fortune ever aid my war or flight,
Or grant a refuge for my hapless head?

Still at my life some fearful phantom aim'd,
My draughts with poison drugg'd, my towers with treachery flamed.

And now with fatal certainty I know
Is come the hour that my sad being ends,
Where life must perish with a single blow;
Then mark her death whom stedfast faith attends:
My cheeks unchang'd, my inward calm shall shew,
While free from foes, serene, my generous friends,
I meet my death—or rather I should say,
Meet my eternal life, my everlasting day.

The last line of the second stanza, quoted above, reminds one of a similar sentiment in Shakspere:

"Cowards die many times before their deaths,
The valiant never taste of death but once."
Julius Cæsar, act 2, *sc.* 2.

Circe, Andromeda, Dragontea.

With regard to Lope's other epic poems, I have never read the Circe or the Andromeda. The Dragontea is full of virulent and unpoetical abuse, and gives a false account of the death of Sir Francis Drake.

Pastorals, Arcadia.

The Arcadia is, I believe, the best of his

pastorals, though some good judges speak of La Dorotea with great praise. They are not in general very accurate representations of the manners of shepherds, nor do they even afford many specimens of simple or natural poetry; but they all, especially the Pastores de Belen, contain translations, elegies, songs, and hymns, of considerable merit. In them are also to be found some of his most celebrated odes. Indeed Spanish critics, and more especially Andres, who is far from being partial to his countrymen, seem to consider him as a great lyric poet. I do not venture to express any opinion upon compositions of that nature, because, after humorous and burlesque works, they are those of which a foreigner is least capable of forming a judgment. If indeed the admiration of strangers be an object, Lope must be considered as unlucky. His light and burlesque poems, most of which he

Pastores de Belen.

Lyric poetry.

Burlesque poems.

published under the feigned name of Thome de Burguillos, are those most generally admired by his countrymen. Of these the Gatomachia, a mock heroic poem, is esteemed the best, and often cited as a model of versification. They are all sprightly, and written with ease; but their length makes one occasionally lament a facility which rendered the termination of any work of Lope an act of grace to his readers, and not a matter of necessity to him.

Gatomachia.

Epistles and didactic works.

His epistles and didactic works are not much admired in Spain; but though not exempt from the same defect, they seem to me replete with observation, and good sense conveyed in very pleasant language and flowing versification.

Arte de hacer Comedias.

In the time of Lope there were several poetical academies at Madrid, in imitation of similar institutions in Italy. The Arte de hacer Comedias, undertaken at the instance of that to which it is inscribed, ex-

clusive of its intrinsic merit, derives an additional portion of interest from being connected with the history of the Spanish stage, and written by a man whose productions decided its character, and to whose genius, therefore, are in some measure to be ascribed the peculiarities which distinguish the modern drama from the antient. Whatever may be their comparative merit, it is surely both absurd and pedantic to judge of the one by rules laid down for the other,—a practice which had begun in the time of Lope, and is not altogether abandoned to this day. There are many excellencies to which all dramatic authors of every age must aspire, and their success in these form the just points of comparison: but to censure a modern author for not following the plan of Sophocles, is as absurd as to object to a fresco that is not painted in oil colours; or, as

Defence of Spanish stage.

Tiraboschi, in his parallel of Ariosto and Tasso, happily observes, to blame Livy for not writing a poem instead of a history.

Comparison of antient and modern drama.

The Greek tragedians are probably superior to all moderns, if we except Racine, in the correctness of their taste, and their equals at least in the sublimity of their poetry, and in the just and spirited delineation of those events and passions which they represent. These, however, are the merits of the execution rather than of the design; the talents of the disciple, not the excellence of the school. They prove the skill of the workman, not the perfection of the system. Without dwelling on the expulsion of the chorus (a most unnatural and inconvenient machine), the moderns, by admitting a complication of plot, have introduced a greater variety of incidents and characters. The province of invention is enlarged; new passions, or

at least new forms of the same passions, are brought within the scope of dramatic poetry. Fresh sources of interest are opened, and additional powers of imagination called into activity. Can we then deny what extends its jurisdiction and enhances its interest to be an improvement, in an art whose professed object is to stir the passions by the imitation of human actions? In saying this I do not mean to justify the breach of decorum, the neglect of probability, the anachronisms and other extravagancies of the founders of the modern theatre. Because the first disciples of the school were not models of perfection, it does not follow that the fundamental maxims were defective. The rudeness of their workmanship is no proof of the inferiority of the material; nor does the want of skill deprive them of the merit of having discovered the mine. The faults objected to

them form no necessary part of the system they introduced. Their followers in every country have either completely corrected or gradually reformed such abuses. Those who bow not implicitly to the authority of Aristotle, yet avoid such violent outrages as are common in our early plays. And those who pique themselves on the strict observance of his laws, betray in the conduct, the sentiments, the characters, and the dialogue of their pieces (especially of their comedies), more resemblance to the modern than the antient theatre: their code may be Grecian, but their manners in spite of themselves are Spanish, English, or French:—they may renounce their pedigree, and even change their dress, but they cannot divest their features of a certain family likeness to their poetical progenitors. The beginning of this race of poets, like the origin of nations, is some-

what obscure. It would be idle to examine where the first play upon such a model was written; because many of the earliest dramas in every modern language are lost. But to whatever nation the invention is due, the prevalence of the modern system is in a great measure to be attributed to Spain; and perhaps more to Lope de Vega than to any other individual of that country. The number and merit of his plays, at a period when the Castilian language was generally studied throughout Europe, directed the attention of foreigners to the Spanish theatre; and probably induced them more than the works of any one writer to form their compositions upon the model which Corneille and others afterwards refined. Yet Lope in all probability confirmed rather than invented the style of drama then usual in Spain; for it is clear that plays were not only common but nu-

Lope de Vega's influence on modern theatre.

merous before his time: indeed his own assertions, the criticisms of Cervantes, and the testimonies of contemporary authors, all concur in establishing this fact; and in the very poem that we are now examining, he assigns as an excuse for his departure from antient models the state in which he found the comedies of his native country.

Mandanme, ingenios nobles, flor de España,
Que en esta junta y academia insigne
En breve tiempo excedereis no solo
A las de Italia, que, envidiando á Grecia,
Illustró Ciceron del mismo nombre
Junto al averno lago, sino á Athenas
A donde en su Platonico lyceo
Se vió tan alta junta de philosophos,—
Que un arte de comedias os escriba
Que al estilo del vulgo se reciba.
Facil parece este sujeto,—y facil
Fuera para qualquiera de vosotros
Que ha escrito menos dellas, y mas sabe
Del arte de escribirlas, y de todo,
Que lo que á mi me daña en esta parte
Es haberlas escrito sin el arte;
No porque yo ignorasse los preceptos,
Gracias á Dios, que, ya tyrón gramático,

Passé los libros que trataban desto
Antes que huviesse visto al sol diez veces
Discurrir desde el aries á los peces;
Mas porque en fin hallé que las comedias
Estaban en España en aquel tiempo
No como sus primeros inventores
Pensáron que en el mundo se escribieran,
Mas como las tratáron muchos barbaros
Que enseñaron el vulgo á sus rudezas,
Y assi se introduxéron de tal modo
Que quien con arte ahora las escriba
Muere sin fama y galardon; que puede
Entre los que carecen de su lumbre
Mas que razon y fuerza la costumbre.
Verdad es que yo he escrito algunas veces
Siguiendo el arte que conocen pocos;
Mas luego que salir por otra parte
Veo los monstruos de apariencias llenos;
A donde acude el vulgo y las mugeres,
Que este triste exercicio canonizan,
A aquel hábito barbaro me vuelvo;
Y quando he de escribir una comedia,
Encierro los preceptos con seis llaves;
Saco á Terencio y Plauto de mi estudio
Para que no den voces, porque suele
Dar gritos la verdad en libros mudos;
Y escribo por el arte que inventaron,
Los que el vulgar aplauso pretendieron,
Porque como los paga el vulgo, es justo
Hablarle en necio para darle gusto.

Bright flow'rs of Spain, whose young academy
Ere long shall that by Tully nam'd outvie,
And match th' Athenian porch where Plato taught,
Whose sacred shades such throngs of sages sought,—
You bid me tell the art of writing plays
Such as the crowd would please, and you might praise.
The work seems easy—easy it might be
To you who write not much, but not to me.
For how should I the rules of art explain,
I, whom nor art nor rule could e'er restrain?
Not but I studied all the antient rules:
Yes, God be praised! long since, in grammar-schools,
Scarce ten years old, with all the patience due,
The books that subject treat I waded through:
My case was simple.—In these latter days,
The truant authors of our Spanish plays
So wide had wander'd from the narrow road
Which the strict fathers of the drama trod,
I found the stage with barbarous pieces stor'd:—
The critics censur'd; but the crowd ador'd.
Nay more; these sad corrupters of the stage
So blinded taste, and so debauch'd the age,
Who writes by rule must please himself alone,
Be damn'd without remorse, and die unknown.
Such force has habit—for the untaught fools,
Trusting their own, despise the antient rules,
Yet, true it is, I too have written plays,
The wiser few, who judge with skill, might praise:
But when I see how shew, and nonsense, draws
The crowd's, and, more than all, the fair's applause,

Who still are forward with indulgent rage
To sanction every monster of the stage,
I, doom'd to write, the public taste to hit,
Resume the barbarous dress 'twas vain to quit:
I lock up every rule before I write,
Plautus and Terence drive from out my sight,
Lest rage should teach these injur'd wits to join,
And their dumb books cry shame on works like mine.
To vulgar standards then I square my play,
Writing at ease; for, since the public pay,
'Tis just, methinks, we by their compass steer,
And write the nonsense that they love to hear.

Some critics have disputed the truth of the apology contained in this poem. They alledge, that previous to Lope, the Spaniards had many regular dramas, and that he in fact created the taste for those extravagancies which he pretends to have adopted from his predecessors and contemporaries. It is indeed well ascertained, that upon the first revival of the stage, several translations and imitations of the Greek and Roman dramatic writers appeared in Spain as well as in Italy. A

greater attention also to the unities than is common in Lope or his contemporaries, may perhaps be discernible in some few productions of that period, which are not absolutely wrought according to the Grecian pattern. But that such was not the general character of their representations is evident from plays still extant. It might be inferred even from those of Cervantes himself. For Cervantes, though the champion of the antient rules in theory, is in practice one of the least successful followers of the modern. Any minute proof of this would be tedious; and a reference to the third book of Luzan's *Poetica*, as well as to an excellent poem of Juan de la Cueba, published in 1582, and reprinted in the Parnaso Español, renders it unnecessary. From that poem it is clear that the unities had been abandoned before the time of Virues; it is but reasonable to suppose, that the

moment their representations ceased to be lifeless copies of the antients, they would be animated by the spirit of the times. Accordingly La Cueba, who had himself contributed to these innovations, vindicates them upon that ground, and appeals with confidence to the interests they excite.

> Mas la invencion, la gracia, y traza es propia
> A la ingeniosa fabula de España.
> No qual dicen sus emulos impropia:
> Scenas y actos suple la maraña
> Tan intrincada y la soltura de ella,
> Inimitable de ninguna estraña.
>
> *Parnaso Español, vol. viii. p.* 62.

> Invention, interest, sprightly turns in plays,
> Say what they will, are Spain's peculiar praise;
> Hers are the plots which strict attention seize,
> Full of intrigue, and yet disclos'd with ease:
> Hence scenes and acts her fertile stage affords,
> Unknown, unrivall'd, on the foreign boards.

This eulogium, though written by a predecessor of Lope, is applicable to him and his followers; and amounts to a proof that the plays of Virues and La Cueba, as

well as the greater part of those represented at that period, were formed upon a similar model. There had been rude exhibitions of farces and autos before the time of Ferdinand and Isabella; but most authors agree that the first mention of a regular representation is that of a play at the celebration of their memorable marriage. Thus the Inquisition * and the Stage were nearly coeval. But the gloomy reign of Philip, in which the former thrived so vigorously, proved nearly fatal to the latter. It had to struggle against the prejudices of the clergy †. The maxims of the church

* According to Pulgar, the Inquisition was established in 1489. An institution, however, of a similar nature had certainly been introduced in the South of France, and perhaps in Arragon, against the Albigeois, by the famous St. Dominic, more than two centuries before.

† Vide Informe sobre Juegos, Espectaculos, y Diversiones publicas, por Don Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos. Appendix, No. II.

of Rome in Spain have been at various periods as austere as that of the Scotch reformers themselves. It is remarkable enough that the Jesuit Mariana, one of the most intolerant, as well as successful, supporters of the church of Rome, was a republican in his principles of government, and a very puritan in his zeal for the suppression of innocent amusements. His work De Rege et Regis Institutione, in which the origin of government is unequivocally traced to *the will of the people;* and in which their political rights, deducible from that principle, are boldly asserted and eloquently maintained, is nevertheless disfigured by a fanatical apology for assassination, and an acrimonious invective against public diversions and national gaiety. The political maxims of his book, long since abandoned and condemned by the Church, seemed till lately to have been forgotten

Mariana de Rege et Regis Institutione.

by his countrymen: and are now persecuted with that unrelenting severity which a bad cause never fails to excite in narrow and selfish minds. The fanatical zeal against public exhibitions has never entirely subsided, and it frequently threatened the total extinction of the only rational amusement which the perverse and meddling spirit * of their laws had left the inhabitants of Spain. Even the patronage of Philip the Fourth was not sufficient to deter some austere monks from condemning amusements which their ascetic habits prevented them from partaking; nor could the orthodoxy of Lope's works, or the sanctity of his profession, screen him from that personal virulence which such controversies invariably inspire. In arraigning his writings and railing at his character, they lost sight of truth as well as candour; they styled him

* Vide Appendix, No. II.

the disgrace of the age and of the nation; the shame of his profession; and the author, as a reverend writer expresses it, of more mischiefs to the world than thousands of devils. By such invectives they endeavoured to ruin his fortunes and harass his conscience. The temporary prohibition of his plays, which these censures extorted from the court, shews that they made considerable impression on the public, and the severity of the discipline which Lope afterwards inflicted upon himself, might gratify his uncharitable enemies with the reflection, that if they had failed in suppressing his works, they had embittered his satisfaction at their success with strong feelings of remorse.

Attempt to suppress plays.

Since this war between the pulpit and the stage first commenced, no permanent reconciliation has ever taken place; and though dramatic representations have generally kept

their ground, their adversaries have obtained many temporary and local advantages over them, which have often impeded their progress, and sometimes have seemed to threaten their existence. Even during the reign of Charles the Third all the theatres were suppressed for several years. Some bishops during the succeeding reign forbade plays in their diocese; and the inhabitants of Seville, in the epidemical disorder of 1800, solemnly renounced, in a fit of devotion, the amusement of the theatre, as the surest method of appeasing divine vengeance. After that act of self-denial they confined the gratification of their taste for public exhibitions to the butchery of bulls, horses, and men, in the arena. These feasts are encouraged by the munificence, and often honoured by the presence, of the kings. But no monarch since Philip the Fourth has ventured to sanction a public play by his

Modern prohibitions of plays.

presence. Some indeed have indulged their taste for operas within the walls of the palace, but Charles IV. was convinced of their evil tendency; and, if he did not exert himself to the utmost of his power to deter others, uniformly and scrupulously preserved himself from the contamination of a theatre. If such scruples can exist, even in our times, it may readily be supposed that Philip the Second was not proof against arguments so congenial to his gloomy habits and saturnine temper. He was accordingly staggered by the censures of Mariana and the clergy; but luckily for the interests of poetry and the gaiety of Europe, he referred the question to the university of Salamanca, where, after much discussion, it was decided in favour of the stage. It appears however that Philip, though induced by this decision to tolerate, and even for a time to attend the theatres, was

Philip 2d.

Decision of university of Salamanca.

soon disgusted with the practices introduced upon them.

> . . . . . El prudente
> Philipo * rey de España, y señor nuestro,
> En viendo un Rey en ellos, se enfadaba;
> O fuesse el ver que al arte contradice;
> O que la autoridad Real no debe
> Andar fingida entre la humilde plebe.
>
> *Arte de hacer Comedias.*

> Once to behold a monarch on the stage,
> Enflam'd, 'tis said, our prudent Philip's rage;
> Or that he deem'd such characters unfit
> For lively sallies and for comic wit;
> Or crowns debas'd, if actors were allow'd
> To bring the state of kings before a low-born crowd.

Nevertheless this practice, and many others which were considered as innovations, are excused, if not justified, by Lope in this poem.

After acknowledging his deviations from the antient, he proceeds to give a code of laws for the modern drama, or rather an account of what is requisite in "the comic

* It is thus printed in Lope de Vega.

monsters of the stage." In doing this he contrives with great shrewdness, but apparent simplicity, to urge nearly all that can be said in their defence, at the same time that he ridicules the occasional extravagance of himself and his contemporaries. As an apology for the mixture of comic with tragic scenes, he says:

Lo tragico y lo comico mezclado,
Y Terencio con Seneca, aunque sea
Como otro minotauro de Pasíphaë,
Harán grave una parte otra ridicula.
Que aquesta variedad deleyta mucho,
Buen exemplo nos dá naturaleza,
Que por tal variedad tiene belleza.

The tragic with the comic muse combin'd,
Grave Seneca with sprightly Terence join'd,
May seem, I grant, Pasiphaë's monstrous birth,
Where one half moves our sorrow, one our mirth.
But sweet variety must still delight;
And, spite of rules, dame Nature says we're right,
Thro' all her works she this example gives,
And from variety her charms derives.

With regard to the unities of time, he

asserts that an observance of them would disgust a Spanish audience:

Que la cólera
De un Español sentado no se templa,
Sino le representan en dos horas
Hasta el final juicio desde el Genesis.

Who seated once, disdain to go away,
Unless in two short hours they see the play
Brought down from Genesis to judgment day.

But though he justifies, or at least palliates, such irregularities, he considers the unity of action, and the preservation of character, as two essential requisites in a good play. In practice he had frequently neglected them, but he offers no apology for such a license in this poem. On the contrary, he enforces the observance of them by injunctions as positive as those of Boileau, or of Aristotle himself.

After some common-place maxims on the choice of the subject and the conduct of the fable, he recommends adapting the

metre to the nature of the sentiments and situations, and makes some observations on the different species of Castilian verse, which are not reckoned very distinct by Spaniards, and are utterly incomprehensible to foreigners.

He is yet more particular in his rules for the length of a comedy and its component parts, and assigns some plausible arguments for dividing dramatic works into three rather than five acts. The propriety of never leaving the stage vacant, so earnestly insisted upon by later writers in France, is not omitted in Lope's art of making comedies. Nor is that the solitary instance in which his judgment has been sanctioned by subsequent critics and general practice. He enforces the necessity of adapting the scenery and the dresses to the country, times, and character of the persons represented, and ridicules with some pleasantry

the ruffs of Turks and the hose of Romans, which the theatre of his day was in the habit of exhibiting. His remarks on the subject appear to us obvious, but they had then the merit of novelty as well as truth. Many years elapsed before the practice, he so judiciously recommended, was generally adopted. It prevailed indeed in Spain, though to a limited extent, at an earlier period than either in England or France. Many Castilian plays were founded on facts in their national history or fictions immediately connected with the manners of some particular age in their country. In all such pieces the respective costumes of their ancestors and countrymen were rigidly observed. Where the scene was laid in antient times or in distant countries, the task of appropriating the dresses to the characters was not so easy, nor was the deficiency so palpable to an ignorant audience.

Accordingly it was on such occasions neglected from indolence, from frugality, or from despair. Indeed, no inconsiderable stock of diligence and knowledge is requisite to carry such a practice to any perfection, as may well be inferred from the tardy progress it made for many years on the more refined and expensive theatres of Paris and London. We can all remember Macbeth in an uniform, and Alexander with powder and a ribband in his hair. The Cato of Addison originally stabbed himself in a dressing-gown and a full-bottomed wig. The general observance of the costume, which adds a fresh charm to dramatic representation, is almost an invention of our own time; and our national stage in particular is chiefly indebted for the improvement to a contemporary in whom singular accuracy of research is united to great professional success and authority.

On the whole, Lope in this poem is ready to avow his conviction that the great object of a play is to divert and interest the audience; and he seems to have despaired of accomplishing it without a quick succession of incidents, and a large mixture of the marvellous. I have read somewhere, that before the establishment of a regular system of jurisprudence in Europe, every individual was at liberty to choose the code by which he was to be tried; and it surely would be unreasonable to refuse a similar privilege to poets who lived before the standard of taste was fixed, or any uniform principles of criticism acknowledged. According to his own canons, therefore, the greater part of his plays must be judged. In this poem, however, he submits six to the cognizance of a severer tribunal, by declaring that they were written according to the rules of art—

Lope's six regular tragedies.

Porque fuera de seis las demas todas
Pecaron contra el arte gravemente—

And all save six against the rules of wit.

The Spanish critics have sought for these faultless models in vain. La Huerta would fain console his countrymen for their loss, by inferring their dulness from their regularity, and accounting from the same circumstance for the oblivion into which they are fallen. It is probable, however, that the difficulty of the discovery does not proceed from their insipid regularity, but from the inaccuracy of the description. The pieces alluded to by Lope may be extant to this day, though no modern critic would recognise in them the regularity he describes. Don Augustin Montiano y Luyano cites indeed six plays of Lope, which he seems to consider as distinguished from the rest of his productions by the name of tragedies. The merits and defects of these he examines at some length; but even

Description probably incorrect.

from his criticisms, as well as from a perusal of three, it is clear to me that they differ from the rest in nothing but in name.

Duque de Viseo.

The Duque de Viseo, which is the first in the list, is among the most wild and irregular of his productions; not only all the unities of time, place, and action are neglected, but the incidents themselves are often as undignified, and even ridiculous, as they are unnatural. Of this the following instance will be sufficient proof: One of the heroes of the piece dissuades doña Inés from marrying the man she loves, by informing her that his grandmother was a Moor; and his brother the Duke of Guimarans afterwards boxes her ears, because, in following this advice, she had disclosed its author and motive to her lover.

DUQUE DE GUIMARANS, DOÑA INES.

Gui. Mirad que soy yo el primero
Y mi hermano el agraviado.
Inés. Dexadme, que soys cansado
Y enfadoso caballero.

Gui. Palabra me habeis de dar
De casaros aunque esteis
Tan brava.
Inés. Vos no sabeis
Que no se dexan forzar
Las mugeres como yo.
No me asgais que sois un necio—
Gui. Ya para tanto despreccio
La paciencia me faltó;
(*dale un bofeton.*
Aprended con esto a hablar
Y a guardar secreto.—
Inés. Ah Dios!
A mi bofeton!

Sale el Rey, *&c. &c.*

Rey. ¿Que es esto?
Gui. Perdido soy.
Inés. ¿Ya no lo veis en mi cara
Que de la mano del duque
Está pidiendo venganza?—
(*los tres hermanos del duque se arriman a el.*
A esto llegan los sobervios
Los tiranos de tu casa,
Los que murmuran de ti,
Los que en corrillos te infaman,
Los que tu muerte desean,
Los que dan en tus espaldas
Por no poder en el pecho
Mil heridas de palabra;

Tu tienes señor la culpa
Que yo soy muger, y basta
Decirte que soy muger.
Don Egas. Tente.
(*Vase Inés.*
Rey. Ay maldad tan estraña
Dexadla ya Don Egas, &c. &c.

DUKE OF GUIMARANS *and* DOÑA INES.

Gui. My brother felt; you, lady, gave th' offence.
Inis. Unhand me, graceless knight.
Gui. You stir not hence,
Proud dame, to Egas till you pledge your hand.
Inis. My noble spirit ill you understand,
Who hope to force my will; but highly born,
I treat thy threats, poor angry man, with scorn.
Gui. Patience I lose.
(*Gives her a box on the ear.*
Let this thy spirit teach
To keep thy secrets and to curb thy speech.
Inis. Great heaven, a blow! a blow to me!

Enter the KING *and Courtiers.*

King. What's here?
What is this broil?
Gui. (*aside.*) My ruin then is clear.
Inis. You in my face may see this bold man's deed;
My face, where blushes for my vengeance plead.
To such a height the insolence is grown
Of these proud lords, the tyrants of thy throne,

Who 'gainst thy fame to factious bands resort;
Who plot thy death, embroil thy peaceful court;
Who with mean malice urge each base report;
Who dare not face to face their king attack,
But aim their sland'rous shafts behind his back.
Thine then the fault; a king the weak protects:
A woman I, and of the weaker sex.
Need I say more? Farewell!

Don Egas. Awhile remain.

King. Outrage most strange! but why her steps detain? &c. &c.

The play indeed is as tragic in its conclusion as atrocious and almost unprovoked murders can make it. The king's favourite, who had instigated him to some crimes, and been instrumental to the commission of others, is himself stabbed in the street by a squire of the Duke of Viseo, who in his turn is killed on the spot by the guards: on this catastrophe the king with great composure observes:

Valiente escudero y noble!
Haganle un honroso entierro:
Valame Dios si don Egas

En estas cosas me ha puesto,
Pues Dios le castiga ansi.

A valiant squire—let fame his deeds attend;
An honourable tomb shall mark his end.
Don Egas set me on these bloody deeds,
And thus, no doubt, through heavenly justice bleeds.

The above moral seems to be very generally received among Lope's kings, who think the death or banishment of a favourite an ample atonement for their own crimes. Indeed they may plead strong poetical precedents for shifting their guilt from their own shoulders; and Don Egas, or Don Arias, are to the dramatic monarchs of Castile, what Jupiter, Fate, and Erinnys, were to Agamemnon in Homer. In poetry as in politics the king can do no wrong. In this play, however, he kills or banishes all his best subjects, and ends by stabbing with his own hand his nearest relation, after all his courtiers had refused to be accessary to the murder. Yet with all

these defects some good lines, and some spirited sentiments, may be found even in the Duke de Viseo, though more thinly scattered than in most of Lope's compositions. The following verses, extravagant in any other language, in Spanish are magnificent:

Ten secreto á las cosas que me cuentas
Que yo, sin alterarme, estos hermanos
Castigaré de suerte que no sientan
Por donde a la venganza van las manos.
Altérese la mar con sus tórmentas,
Levanté a las estrellas montes canos,
Que ha de ser rio un principe discreto
Que va donde mas hondo, muy mas quieto.

Be silent then, while I the mode devise,
Secret, but sure, these brothers to chastise;
Untroubled in my looks, they shall not know
What breeds the vengeance, or whence came the blow.
When the storm howls, the sea may troubled rise,
And lift its foamy mountains to the skies;
But the wise prince is like the river stream,
And where most deep should there most tranquil seem.

Roma Abrasada is the history of Rome, Roma Abrasada.

in dialogue, from the accession of Claudius to the death of Nero. There is certainly nothing comic in it, and there are some brilliant passages; but it is by no means exempt from the extravagancies and irregularities so common on the Spanish stage. El Marido mas firme is founded on the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, and is yet more unlike a tragedy than the other two. The truth is, that the plays of that period do not admit of the distinction of tragedies and comedies, according to the common, or at least the French, acceptation of those terms. They are not comedies; for not only distressing situations and personages of high rank, but assassinations and murders are admitted into their plots: on the other hand, the sprightliness of the dialogue, the lowness of some of the characters, the familiarity of the language, and the conclusion of the piece,

El Marido mas firme.

which is generally fortunate, deprive them of all claims to the title of tragedies. Yet even in Lope's works there is an evident difference in his conception as well as execution of two distinct species of dramatic compositions. In one, the characters and incidents are intended to excite surprise and admiration; in the other, merriment mixed occasionally with interest. Love indeed is the subject of both: but in one it is the love which distinguished the ages of chivalry; in the other, the gallantry which succeeded to it, and which the poets had only to copy from the times in which they lived. The plays of the latter description, when the distinction became more marked, acquired the name of Comedias de Capa y Espada, Comedies of the Cloak and Sword, from the dresses in which they were represented; and the former that of Heroic Comedies, from the cha-

Plays of Lope heroic and familiar.

racter of the personages and incidents which compose them. It is true, that in several of Lope de Vega, which would come under the description of heroic comedies, there is an underplot, of which the characters are purely comic; an invention which, if it be not his own, seems to have been of Spanish origin, and, as is well known, was adopted almost universally on our stage from the time of Fletcher to that of Addison and Rowe. Lope was contemporary with both Shakspere and Fletcher. In the choice of their subjects, and in the conduct of their fables, a resemblance may often be found, which is no doubt to be attributed to the taste and opinions of the times, rather than to any knowledge of each other's writings. It is indeed in this point of view that the Spanish poet can be compared with the greatest advantage to himself, to the great founder

Underplot, a Spanish invention.

Lope resembles Shakspere in his plots.

of our theatre. It is true that his imagery may occasionally remind the English reader of Shakspere; but his sentiments, especially in tragedy, are more like Dryden and his contemporaries than their predecessors. The feelings of Shakspere's characters are the result of passions common to all men; the extravagant sentiments of Lope's, as of Dryden's heroes, are derived from an artificial state of society, from notions suggested by chivalry and exaggerated by romance. In his delineation of character he is yet more unlike, and it is scarce necessary to add, greatly inferior; but in the choice and conduct of his subjects, if he equals him in extravagance and improbability, he does not fall short of him in interest and variety. A rapid succession of events, and sudden changes in the situation of the personages, are the charms by which he interests us so forcibly in his

Inferior to him in all other respects.

plots. These are the only features of the Spanish stage which Corneille left unimproved; and to these some slight resemblance may be traced in the operas of Metastasio, whom the Spaniards represent as the admirer and imitator of their theatre. In his heroic plays there is a greater variety of plot than in his comedies; though it is not to be expected that in the many hundreds he composed he should not often repeat the same situation and events. On the whole, however, the fertility of his genius, in the contrivance of interesting plots, is as surprising as in the composition of verse. Among the many I have read, I have not fallen on one which does not strongly fix the attention; and though many of his plots have been transferred to the French and English stage, and rendered more correct and more probable, they have seldom or never been improved

Lope's plots interesting.

in the great article of exciting curiosity and interest. This was the spell by which he enchanted the populace, to whose taste for wonders he is accused of having sacrificed so much solid reputation. True it is that his extraordinary and embarrassing situations are often as unprepared by previous events as they are unforeseen by the audience; they come upon us by surprise, and when we know them, we are as much at a loss to account for such strange occurrences as before; they are produced, not for the purpose of exhibiting the peculiarities of character, or the workings of nature, but with a view of astonishing the audience with strange, unexpected, unnatural, and often inconsistent conduct in some of the principal characters. Nor is this the only defect in his plots. The personages, like the author, are full of intrigue and invention; and while they lay schemes

The interest often excited by improbable events.

and devise plots, with as much ingenuity as Lope himself, they seem to be actuated by the same motives also; for it is difficult to discover any other than that of diverting and surprising the audience. Their efforts were generally attended with success. All contemporary authors bear testimony to the popularity of Lope's pieces; and for many years he continued the favourite of the public. Stories are related of the audience taking so lively an interest in his plays, as totally to give way to illusion, and to interrupt the representation. A spectator on one occasion is said to have interfered with great anxiety for the protection of an unfortuate princess—"dando voces," says my author, "contra el cruel homicida que degollaba al parecer una dama inocente"—crying out against the cruel murderer, who to all appearance was slaying an innocent lady.

Lope long the favourite of the country.

A mere relation of the stories on which his plays are founded, would give a very insufficient idea of the attraction which they possess. Nor can they be collected from a perusal of detached passages only. The chief merit of his plays is a certain spirit and animation which pervades the whole, but which is not to be preserved in disjointed limbs of the composition. From these considerations I determined to give the following sketch of one of his most interesting plays. It is called the Estrella de Sevilla, but it has lately been altered and revived at Madrid, under the name of Sancho Ortiz de las Roelas. The original is become extremely scarce, and such an abstract may be an object of curiosity to those who are acquainted with the late revival of it.

Abstract of the Estrella de Sevilla, with extracts from it.

LA ESTRELLA DE SEVILLA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SANCHO, king of Castile.
DON ARIAS, his favourite.
DON PEDRO DE GUZMAN, alcalde mayor.
FARFAN DE RIBERA, the same.
DON GONZALO DE ULLOA.
FERNAN PEREZ DE MEDINA, an old captain.
DON SANCHO ORTIZ DE LAS ROELAS, surnamed the Cid of Andalusia, and in love with ESTRELLA.
BUSTOS TABERA, brother to ESTRELLA.
CLARINDO, GRACIOSO, and servant to SANCHO ORTIZ.

ESTRELLA, sister to BUSTOS, and in love with ORTIZ.
THEODORA, her confidante.
MATILDA, slave to Bustos.

SCENE, SEVILLE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

KING, ARIAS, *alcaldes.*

Compliments are exchanged between the King and the alcaldes. The King is profuse in his praises of Seville, where he

declares his intention of residing for some time. When the alcaldes withdraw, he and Don Arias pursue the same subject; and mentioning the beautiful women they had seen since their arrival, the King learns from Don Arias that the person with whom he was most struck is called Estrella, and is sister to Bustos Tabera. On this Arias is dispatched for Bustos.

Enter to the KING, GONZALO *in mourning.*

He informs the King that his father is dead, and solicits his staff.

Enter FERNAN PEREZ DE MEDINA.

He comes to solicit the same vacant staff; but both are dismissed by the King with equivocal answers; when Arias arrives with Bustos Tabera. He throws himself at the King's feet, and refuses to rise, by observing:

Que si el rey se ha de tratar
Como á Santo en el altar
Digno lugar escogí.

If sacred kings, like saints upon a shrine,
Ador'd should be, this place is surely mine.

The King, affecting to be struck with his loyalty, informs him of the two competitors for the vacant staff, but adds that he prefers him to both, and offers to promote him to it immediately. At this Bustos expresses some surprise, and then generously observes that the claims of the two candidates are better founded than any he can advance. The King leaving it entirely to his judgment, he displays his disinterested love of justice by conferring the staff on Fernan Perez, an old and distinguished commander, and promoting Gonzalo, the son of the deceased, to the post which Fernan Perez formerly held. The King, loud in his praises of him, art-

fully introduces questions concerning the state of his family; affects a singular interest in all his affairs, and voluntarily undertakes to procure a marriage for his sister. He at length dismisses him by granting him the privilege of access at all hours to the royal chamber.

The whole of this dialogue is natural, spirited, and well contrived. The dignified and stern character of Bustos is throughout preserved. He acknowledges his obligations for the honours conferred, but in a manner that evinces that he is neither duped by the King's artifices, nor overset by this sudden gust of court favour. As he retires from the presence, he observes aside:

> Sospechoso voy—Quererme
> Y sin conocerme honrarme
> Mas parece sobornarme,
> Honor, que favorecerme.

These sudden favours with mistrust I view—
Why should he love a man he never knew?
Such honours savour more of bribes than meeds;
To gain my virtue, not reward my deeds.

[*Exit Bustos.*

Manent KING *and* ARIAS.

Arias, perceiving that the King is touched with the generosity and startled at the high spirit of Tabera, takes great pains to depreciate these qualities. He betrays a very courtier-like detestation of independence, and inculcates with great earnestness the maxim so agreeable to princes, that all men are corrupt, and all unable to withstand the temptations which a king has it in his power to offer.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

DON SANCHO ORTIZ *and* DONNA ESTRELLA.

The first part of this scene is taken up with protestations of love. Bustos then

arrives, and, having desired his sister to withdraw, informs his friend of his late honours, and of the King's offer to procure a husband for Estrella; but he adds, that he will urge Sancho's suit, and does not doubt of his success. Ortiz after some complaints of the King's injustice, not very suitable to his character or to his subsequent conduct, retires.

SCENE III.

Tabera meets the King at the door of his house, and by many artful pretences and overstrained professions of humility and loyalty, prevents him from entering it. The King, having given private instructions to Arias, carries off Tabera in his coach.

SCENE IV.

ESTRELLA, MATILDA, *and* ARIAS.

Arias delivers a message from the King, to which Estrella gives no answer, but leaves

the room in disdain. Arias, left with Matilda, gains her to his master's interests, and she engages to introduce the King at night into Estrella's chamber.

SCENE V.

The KING'S *cabinet.*

The chamberlains, and Tabera as one of them, are dismissed, and the King with great joy hears of the success of Arias's negotiation.

ACT II. SCENE I.

The street. KING, MATILDA, *and* ARIAS.

The King is admitted into Tabera's house by Matilda. Exit Arias; and enter Tabera and his friends, of whom he takes leave at the door of his house.

SCENE II.

TABERA'S *house.*

Tabera enters, surprised at the absence of Matilda and the darkness of the apartments. He overhears Matilda and the

King; and alarmed at a man's voice, jealous of his sister's honour, and perplexed by the equivocal answers of the stranger, he draws upon him. The King, to extricate himself from the danger, is compelled to declare his name; which Tabera, galled and alarmed at the discovery, affects to disbelieve. In urging the impossibility of the King engaging in such an attempt, he contrives to upbraid him most bitterly for his base and dishonourable conduct *. He allows him how-

* A story somewhat similar to this is related of Philip the Fourth.—He and the Count Duke of Olivarez, after having engaged the Duke Albuquerque at play, suddenly left the room; but Albuquerque, suspecting the king's design upon his wife, feigned violent sickness, and, rising hastily from his seat, made the best of his way to his own palace. There he perceived two men muffled in cloaks lurking near the gate. He instantly fell upon the one whose height shewed him to be the king, and, employing his stick in a most unmerciful manner, obliged the Count Duke Olivarez to interfere; who, to rescue his sovereign from so severe a drubbing, stepped forward and in-

ever to escape, but puts to death the female slave who procured him admittance.

SCENE III.

The palace.

The King relates his adventure with great indignation to Arias, who stimulates him to revenge. While talking on the subject they recognise the corpse of Matilda, which Tabera has contrived to convey to the palace. This exasperates the King; but the original cause of his animosity is so dishonourable, and the character of Tabera so popular, that he is at a loss for a pretext for his execution; and at last adopts an expedient suggested by Arias of

formed the duke that the man whom he was striking was the king. Albuquerque affected great indignation at such an imputation on his majesty; and repeating that such designs were as incongenial with the character as incompatible with the honour of the monarch, under the pretence of vindicating royalty from such an aspersion, made the minister, who had shared his master's guilt, partake also of his chastisement.

instigating Sancho Ortiz de las Roelas, a loyal and intrepid soldier, surnamed the Cid of Andalusia, to murder him.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

SCENE IV.

Tabera relates the story to his sister, and to her great joy expresses his earnestness to complete her marriage with Sancho.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

SCENE V.

The palace.

Arias having announced Sancho to the King is ordered to withdraw.

SANCHO ORTIZ *enters.*

San. Vuestra alteza á mis dos labios
Les conceda los dos pies.
Rey. Alçad que os hiziera agravíos
Alçad—
San. ¿Señor?
Rey. Galan es.
San. No es mucho que yo señor
Me turbe, no siendo aqui
Retorico, ni orador.
Rey. Pues—¿decid que veis en mi?

San. La magestad, y el valor,
Y al fin una imagen veo
De dios, pues le imita el rey;
Y despues del, en vos creo.
A vuestra Cesarea ley
Gran señor aqui me empleo.
Rey. ¿Como estais?
San. Nunca me he visto
Tan honrado como estoy.
Rey. Pues aficionado os soy
Por prudente, y por bien quisto
Porque estareis con cuydado
Codicioso de saber
Para que os he llamado
Deciros lo quiero, y ver
Que en vos tengo un gran soldado.—
A mi me importa matar
En secreto a un hombre, y quiero
Este caso confiar
Solo de vos, que os prefiero
A todos los del lugar.
San. ¿Está culpado?
Rey. Si, está.
San. Pues como muerte en secreto,
A un culpado se le da—
Poner su muerte en efecto
Publicamente podrá
Vuestra justicia, sin dalle
Muerte en secreto, que assi
Vos os culpais en culpalle;

Pues dais a entender que aqui
Sin culpa mandais matalle.
Si esse humilde os ha ofendido
En leve culpa, señor,
Que le perdoneis os pido.

Rey. Para su procurador,
Sancho Ortiz, no habeis venido;
Sino para dalle muerte,
Y pues se la mando dar
Escondiendo el brazo fuerte,
Debe á mi honor importar
Matalle de aquesta suerte.
¿Merece el que ha cometido
Crimen lese muerte?

San. En fuego.

Rey. ¿Y si crimen lese ha sido
El deste?

San. Que muera luego
A vozes, señor os pido;
Y si es asi, la daré
Señor á mi mismo hermano
Y en nada repararé.

Rey. Dadme essa palabra y mano.

San. Y en ella el alma y la fé.

Rey. Hallandole descuidado
Puedes matarle.

San. Señor,
¿Siendo Roelas y soldado,
Me quieres hacer traidor?
¿Yo muerte en caso pensado?—

Cuerpo á cuerpo he de matalle,
Donde Sevilla lo vea
En la plaza, ó en la calle,
Que, el que mata y no pelea
Nadie puede disculpalle;
Y gana mas el que muere
A traicion, que el que le mata;
Y el vivo con quantos trata
Su alevosia refiere—

Rey. Matalde, como querais;
Que este papel para abono
De mi firmado llevais
En que conste que os perdono
Qualquier delito que hagais.
Referirlo. [*Dale un papel.*

San. Dice asi
" Al ue esse papel advierte
" Sancho Ortiz luego por mi,
" Y en mi nombre dadle muerte,
" Que yo por vos salgo aqui
" Y si os hallais en aprieto
" Por este papel firmado
" Sacaros de el os prometo
" Yo el Rey."
Estoy admirado
De que tan poco concepto
Tenga de mi Vuestra Alteza.
¿Yo cedula?—Yo papel!—
Que mas en vos que no en el
Confia aqui mi nobleza;

Si vuestras palabras cobran
Valor que los montes labra
Y ellas quanto dizen obran
Dandome aqui la palabra
Señor los papeles sobran.
Rompedlo, porque sin el
La muerte le solicita
Mejor señor que con el;
Que en parte desacredita
Vuestra palabra el papel. [*Rompelo.*
Sin papel, señor, aqui
Nos obligamos los dos,
Y prometemos assi,
Yo de vengaros á vos,
Y vos de librarme á mi.
Si es assi no hay que hacer
Cedulas, que estorbo han sido;
Yo os voy luego á obedecer;
Y solo por premio os pido
Para esposa la muger
Que yo eligiéra.

Rey. Aunque sea
Rica fembra de Castilla,
Os la concedo.

San. Possea
Vuestro pié la alarbe silla
* El mar de Castilla vea.

---

* This passage is evidently corrupt; a line has probably been omitted.

Gloriosos y dilatados
Y por sus climas elados.
Rey. Vuestros hechos excelentes,
Sancho, quedarán premiados:
En este papel va el nombre
Del hombre que ha de morir
(*dale un papel.*
Quando lo abrais, no os assombre;
Mirad, que he oido decir
En Sevilla que es muy hombre.
San. Presto, señor, lo sabremos.
Rey. Los dos, Sancho, solamente
Este secreto sabemos;
No hay advertiros: prudente
Sois vos—obrad y callemos.

The KING *and* SANCHO ORTIZ.

San. I kiss thy feet.
King. Rise, Sancho! rise, and know
I wrong thee much to let thee stoop so low.
San. My liege, confounded with thy grace I stand;
Unskill'd in speech, no words can I command
To tell the thanks I feel.
King. Why, what in me
To daunt thy noble spirit can'st thou see?
San. Courage and majesty that strikes with awe;
My sovereign lord; the fountain of the law;
In fine, God's image, which I come t'obey,
Never so honour'd as I feel to-day.

King. Much I applaud thy wisdom, much thy zeal,
And now, to try thy courage, will reveal
That which you covet so to learn, the cause
That thus my soldier to the presence draws.
Much it imports the safety of my reign
A man should die—in secret should be slain;—
This must some friend perform; search Seville through,
None can I find to trust so fit as you.

San. Guilty he needs must be—

King. He is.

San. Then why,
My sovereign liege, in secret should he die?
If public law demands the culprit's head,
In public let the culprit's blood be shed.
Shall Justice' sword, which strikes in face of day,
Stoop to dark deeds?—a man in secret slay?
The world will think, who kills by means unknown,
No guilt avenges, but implies his own.
If slight his fault, I dare for mercy pray.

King. Sancho, attend;—you came not here to-day
An advocate to plead a traitor's cause,
But to perform my will, to execute my laws,
To slay a man;—and why the culprit bleed
Matters not thee, it is thy monarch's deed.
If base, thy monarch the dishonour bears;
But say, to draw against my life who dares,
Deserves he death?

San. O yes, a thousand times.

King. Then strike without remorse, these are the wretch's crimes.

San. So let him die, for sentence Ortiz pleads;
Were he my brother, by this arm he bleeds.

King. Give me thy hand.

San. With that my heart I pledge.

King. So, while he heeds not, shall thy rapier's edge
Reach his proud heart.

San. My liege! my sovereign lord!
Sancho's my name, I wear a soldier's sword.
Would you with treacherous acts, and deeds of shame,
Taint such a calling, tarnish such a name?
Shall I—Shall I, to shrink from open strife,
Like some base coward, point th' assassin's knife?
No—face to face his foe must Ortiz meet,
Or in the crowded mart, or public street,
Defy and combat him in open light.
Curse the mean wretch who slays but does not fight!
Nought can excuse the vile assassin's blow;
Happy, compar'd with him, his murder'd foe!
With him who, living, lives but to proclaim,
To all he meets, his cowardice and shame.

King. E'en as thou wilt, but in this paper read,
Signed by the king, the warrant of the deed.

(Sancho reads the paper aloud, which promises the king's protection, if he is brought

into any jeopardy in consequence of killing the person alluded to, and is signed, Yo el Rey, I the king.)

King. Act as you may, my name shall set you free.

San. Does then my liege so meanly deem of me?
I know his power, which can the earth control,
Know his unshaken faith, and stedfast soul.
Shall seals, shall parchments then to me afford
A surer warrant than my sovereign's word?
To guard my actions, as to guide my hand,
I ask no surety but my king's command.
Perish such deeds— (*Tears the paper.*
they serve but to record
Some doubt, some question, of a monarch's word.
What need of bonds? By honour bound are we,
I to avenge thy wrongs, and thou to rescue me.
One price I ask, the maid I name for bride.—

King. Were she the richest and the best allied
In Spain, I grant her.—

San. So throughout the world,
May oceans view thy conquering flag unfurl'd.

King. Nor shall thy actions pass without a meed.—
This note informs thee, Ortiz, who must bleed.
But reading, be not startled at a name;
Great is his prowess; Seville speaks his fame.

San. I'll put that prowess to the proof ere long.

King. None know but I that you avenge my wrong;
So force must guide your arm, but prudence check your tongue. (*Exit.*

Manet SANCHO, *to whom enter* CLARINDO.

He brings the joyful tidings of his approaching nuptials, and delivers a letter from Estrella, in which she tells him that Bustos Tabera is in search of him, and conjures him with great tenderness to avail himself without delay of her brother's earnestness to bring the agreement to a conclusion. Sancho Ortiz, delighted at the letter, gives instant orders for festivities and rejoicings in his house, and after rewarding Clarindo for his news with a gem, dispatches him to make the necessary preparations. Impatient to meet Tabera, he is upon the point of setting out to overtake him, when he recollects the commands of the king, and resolves to ascertain first, what man he is destined to dispatch. He opens the note and reads:

"The man, Sancho, whom you must kill, is Bustos Tabera."

His excessive anguish at this discovery makes him half doubt the truth of it; and he reads the fatal words repeatedly, in hopes of finding some mistake. In his soliloquy, which is very long, there is a great mixture of natural passion, misplaced wit, and trivial conceit. I should have inserted it, but he begins by comparing, in a metaphor of considerable length, the vicissitudes of life, to a particular game of cards; with which I, and probably my readers are unacquainted. A part of the speech is in the style of Ovid. Sancho is alternately a good lover and a loyal subject; and with great impartiality devotes nearly an equal number of verses to each sentiment. He is at last, however, swayed by the consideration, that a king is responsible to God alone for his actions, and that the only duty of a subject is to obey him. He infers also from these premises

that the merit of his obedience is enhanced, if, by executing the king's mandates, he sacrifices his own affections, and incurs the enmity of the person he loves best on earth. He has scarce made up his mind to the discharge of this dreadful and mistaken duty, when Bustos enters.

BUSTOS TABERA *y* SANCHO ORTIZ.

Bus. Cuñado, suerte dichosa
He tenido en encontraros.
San. Y yo desdicha en hallaros; (*aparte*)
Porque me buscais aqui
Para darme vida á mi,
Pero yo para mataros.
Bus. Ya, hermano, el plazo llegó
De vuestras dichosas bodas.
San. Mas de mis desdichas todas (*aparte*)
Decirte pudiera yo.
Valgame Dios! quien se vió
Jamas en tanto pesar!
Que aqui tengo de matar
Al que mas bien he querido!
Que á su hermana haya perdido
Que con todo he de acabar!
Bus. Ya por escritura estais
Casado con doña Estrella.

San. Casarme quisé con ella,
Mas ya no, aunque me la dais.
Bus. Conoceis me? assi me hablais?
San. Por conoceros aqui
Os hablo, Tabera, assi.
Bus. ¿Si me conoceis Tabera
Como hablais de essa manera?
San. Hablé porque os conocí.
Bus. Habreis en mi conocido
Sangre nobleza y valor
Y virtud, que es el honor;
Que sin ella honor no ha habido.
Y estoy, Sancho Ortiz, corrido—
San. Mas lo estoy yo.
Bus. Vos, de que—
San. De hablaros.
Bus. Pues si en mi honor, y mi fé
Algun defecto advertis
Como villano mentis,
Y aqui lo sustentaré. (*metemano*)
San. Que has de sustentar villano?
Perdone amor este exceso,
Que el Rey me ha quitado el seso
Y es el resistirme en vano.
Bus. Muerto soy; deten la mano.
San. Ay, que estoy fuera de mi
Y sin sentido te herí!
Mas aqui hermano te pido
Que ya que cobré sentido,
Que tu me mates á mi.

Quede tu espada embaynada
En mi pecho; dé con ella
Puerta al alma.
Bus. A dios: Estrella
Os dexo, hermano, encargada—
A dios. (*muere.*
San. Rigurosa espada!
Sangrienta y fiera homicida!
Si me has quitado la vida
Acábame de matar;
Porque le pueda pagar
El alma por otra herida.

Salen los Alcaldes mayores.

P. Que es esto? Deten la mano.
San. Como? Si á mi vida he muerto.
Far. Ay tan grande desconcierto!
P. Que es esto?
San. He muerto á mi hermano;
Soy un Cain Sevillano
Que vengativo y cruel
Maté un inocente Abel.
Veisle aqui, matadme aqui,
Que pues el muere por mi
Yo quiero morir por el.

Sale ARIAS.

Arias. Que es esto?
San. Un fiero rigor
Que tanto en los hombres labra,

Una cumplida palabra,
Y un acrisolado honor.
Dezidle al Rey mi señor
Que tienen los Sevillanos
Las palabras en las manos
Como lo veis, pues por ellas
Atropellan las Estrellas,
Y no hazen caso de hermanos.

Ped. Dió muerte á Bustos Tabera.

Ar. Ay tan temerario exceso.

San. Prendedme, llevadme preso,
Que es bien que el que mata, muera.
Mirad que hazaña tan fiera
Me hizó el amor intentar,
Pues me ha obligado á matar;
Y me ha obligado á morir;
Pues por el vengo á pedir
La muerte que el me ha de dar.

Ped. Llevadle á Triana preso,
Porque la ciudad se altera.

San. Amigo Bustos Tabera.

Far. Este hombre ha perdido el seso.

San. Dexadme llevar en peso
Señores, el cuerpo elado
En noble sangre bañado,
Que assi su Atlante seré
Y entre tanto le daré
La vida que le he quitado.

Ar. Loco está—

San. Y si atropello

Mi gusto, guardo la ley.
Esto, señor, es ser Rey
Y esto, señor, es no sello—
Entendello y no entendello
Importa—pues yo lo callo
Yo lo maté, no hay negallo,
Mas el porque no diré;
Otro confiesse el porque;
Pues yo confiesso el matallo.

(*llevanle y van.*

Salen ESTRELLA *y* TEODORA.

Est. No sé si me vestí bien
Como me vestí de prisa:
Dame Teodora esse espejo.
Teo. Verte señora en ti misma
Puedes, porque no hay cristal
Que tantas verdades diga,
Ni de hermosura tan grande
Haga verdadera cifra.
Est. Alterado tengo el rostro
Y la color encendida.
Teo. Es señora que la sangre
Se ha asomado á las mexillas
Entre temor y verguenza
Solo a celebrar tus dichas.
Est. Ya me parece que llega
Bañado el rostro de risa
Mi esposo á darme la mano
Entre mil tiernas caricias;

Ya me parece que dice
Mil ternezas, y que oidas
Sale el alma por los ojos
Disimulando sus niñas.
Ay venturoso dia
Esta ha sido, Teodora, Estrella mia.

Teo. Parece que gente suena;
Todo el espejo de embidia
El cristal dentro la oja
De una luna hizo infinitas.

Est. Quebróse?

Teo. Señora si.

Est. Bien hizo porque imagina
Que aguardo el cristal Teodora
En que mis ojos se miran,
Y pues tal espejo aguardo
Quiebrese el espejo, amiga,
Que no quiero que con el
Este de espejo me sirva.

Sale CLARINDO *muy galan.*

Clar. Ya aquesto suena señora
A gusto y volateria
Que las plumas del sombrero
Los casamientos publican
A mi dueño dí el papel
Y dióme aquesta sortija
En albricias.

Est. Pues yo quiero
Feriarte aquessas albricias

Damela y toma por ella
Este diamante.
Clar. Partida
Está por medio la piedra,
Será de melancolia
Que los jacintos padecen
De esse mal, aunque le quitan:
Partida por medio está.
Est. No importa que esté partida
Que es bien que las piedras sientan
Mis contentos y alegrias.
Ay venturoso dia!
Esta, amigos, ha sido Estrella mia.
Teo. Gran tropel suena en los patios.
Clar. Y ya la escalera arriba
Parece que sube gente.
Est. Que valor ay que resista
Al placer... ¡pero que es esto!
(*Salen los dos alcaldes mayores con muerto.*
Ped. Los desastres y desdichas
Se hicieron para los hombres,
Que es mar de llanto esta vida
El señor Bustos Tabera
Es muerto.
Est. Suerte enemiga!
Ped. El consuelo que aqui os queda
Es que está el fiero homicida
Sancho Ortiz de las Roelas
Preso; y del se hará justicia

Mañana sin falta.

Est. Dexadme gente enemiga!
Que en vuestras lenguas traeis
De los infernos las iras!
Mi hermano es muerto, y le ha muerto
Sancho Ortiz! ¡Hay quien lo diga.
Hay quien lo escuche y no muera!
Piedra soy, pues estoy viva,
Ay riguroso dia!
Esta, amigos, ha sido Estrella mia?
Pero si hay piedad humana
Matadme.

Ped. El dolor la priva;
Y con razon.

Est. Desdichada
Ha sido la Estrella mia
Mi hermano es muerto, y le ha muerto
Sancho Ortiz, de quien divida
Tres almas de un corazon.
Dexadme, que estoy perdida.

Ped. Ella está desesperada.

Far. Infeliz beldad. (*vase Estrella.*

Ped. Seguidla.

Clar. Señora.

Est. Dexame ingrato
Sangre de aquel fratricida,
Y pues acabo con todo
Quiero acabar con la vida:
Ay riguroso dia!
Esta ha sido, Teodora, Estrella mia.

BUSTOS TABERA *and* SANCHO ORTIZ.

Bus. In meeting thus my fortune do I greet.
San. Alas! I curse the chance that makes us meet.
(*aside.*
You come to make a friend, a brother blest,
And I to plunge a dagger in thy breast.
Bus. Brother, the hour of long sought bliss is come.
San. My hour of grief, of all my woes the doom!
(*aside.*
O God! did man e'er bear such weight of ill?
Him whom I love next heaven my sword must kill:
And with the very blow that stabs my friend,
My love is lost, and all my visions end.
Bus. The deeds are drawn; to tell the news I came;
They only wait for Sancho Ortiz' name.
San. Once it is true, by fickle fancy led, (*aloud.*
Tabera's sister Ortiz fain would wed;
But now, though drawn the strict agreements stand,
I scorn the offer, and reject her hand.
Bus. Know'st thou to whom, or what thou speak'st?
San. I know
To whom I speak, and therefore speak I so.
Bus. How, knowing me, can words of insult dwell
On Ortiz' tongue?
San. Because he knows thee well.
Bus. And knows he aught but generous pride of blood,
And honour such as prompts the brave and good?

Virtue and genuine honour are the same;
Pride uninspired by her, usurps the name.
But yet, though slow of anger to a friend,
Thy words my virtue as my pride offend.

San. Not more offended can thy virtue be,
Than I so long to talk with one like thee.

Bus. Is't come to this? and dost thou brand my fame
With aught that bears not honour's sacred name?
Prove then this sword which dares thy rage defy,
My foe a villain, and his charge a lie.

(*Draw and fight.*

San. What can the swords of traitorous villains prove?
Pardon me, sacred friendship! pardon, love!
My king impels—I madden as I fight,
And phrensy lends my arm resistless might.

Bus. Enough, nor further press thy blow—I bleed—
My hour is come— (*Bustos falls.*

San. Then am I mad indeed!
Yes, when I struck thy death, my sense was gone;
Restor'd, I from thy arm implore my own.—
Sheath in this breast, for pity sheath thy sword,
And to my troubled soul an instant flight afford.

Bus. My motives fate denies the time to tell,
Wed thou my sister, Ortiz, and—farewell!

(*dies.*

San. Come then, destructive unrelenting blade,
Dispatch the life thy work has wretched made:
Come, while Tabera's gore is reeking yet,
With a fresh wound to close the bloody debt.

Enter FARFAN *and* PEDRO, *Alcaldes mayores.*

Ped. Wretch! stay that weapon, rais'd thyself to kill.
San. 'Twas rais'd against a life yet dearer still.

Enter ARIAS.

Ar. What's this disorder?
San. The disorder's plain;
I've kill'd a brother, like another Cain,
Ruthless and fierce, a guiltless Abel slain.
Here, here he lies, survey each mangled limb;
And as he died for me, so let me die for him.
Ar. Why, what is this?
San. What is it, do you ask?
'Tis a kept promise, an accomplish'd task;
'Tis honour in a fiery trial prov'd;
Honour that slew the man he dearly lov'd.
Yes, tell the King, that for our plighted words,
We sons of Seville bear them on our swords;
Tell him for them we do our stars * defy;
For them our laws expire, our brothers die.
Ped. He's kill'd Tabera.
Ar. Rash, flagitious deed!
San. Then seize me,—bind me,—let his murderer bleed!
Where are we? Do not law and reason say,
Ruffians shall die, and blood shall blood repay?

---

* This in the original is a quibble on the name *Estrella*, which in the Spanish signifies a star.

But mark'd you how the mighty crime was done?
No hate was here; 'twas love, and love alone;
And love that did the crime shall for the crime atone.
Bustos I slew, I now for Bustos plead,
And beg of justice—that his murderer bleed.
Thy friend that tribute to thy memory pays.

Ar. The man is mad, and knows not what he says.

Ped. Then to Triana's tower the culprit lead,
Lest at the noise of such a lawless deed
Seville should rise, and some new tumult breed.

San. Yet I would raise my brother from the ground,
Clasp his cold limbs, and kiss the sacred wound,
And wash the noble blood that streams his corpse around.
So I'll his Atlas be; nor would repine,
The life I've taken to redeem with mine.

Ped. 'Tis madness this—

San. When I from friendship swerv'd,
Against my pleasure I the laws observ'd;
That's a king's part—in that I'm king alone;
But in this act, alas! I am not one—
The riddle's easy when the clue is found,
But 'tis not mine the riddle to expound.
'Tis true I slew him—I not that deny;
I own I slew him—but I say not why:
That why—let others, if they like it, plead,
Enough for me that I confess the deed.

[*Exit guarded.*

Scene changes to ESTRELLA'S *chamber.*

ESTRELLA *and* THEODORA.

Est. So quick my toilet was, I scarce can guess
How set my garments and how looks my dress.
Give me the glass.
Theo. All glass is needless here;
Look on thyself—no mirror is so clear;
Nor can in mimic forms reflected shine
Such matchless charms, and beauty bright as thine. (*holds the looking-glass.*
Est. Whence can such crimson colours fire my cheek?
Theo. Thy joy, and yet thy modesty, they speak.
Yes, to thy face contending passions rush,
Thy bliss betraying with a maiden blush.
Est. 'Tis true he comes; the youth my heart approves
Comes fraught with joy, and led by smiling loves.
He claims my hand; I hear his soft caress,
See his soul's bliss come beaming from his eye.
O partial stars! unlook'd for happiness!
Can it be true?—Is this my destiny *?

---

* Here again the word *Estrella* is used for the sake of a pun. I have been obliged to render it by the word destiny; and it is probably the only advantage which my translation has over the original, that the English language does not admit of a quibble, which in the Spanish runs through and disfigures the whole scene

Theo. Hark! some one rings—but, lo! with envy smit,
One mirror into thousand mirrors split.
Est. Is't broken?—
Theo. Yes.
Est. And sure with reason too,
Since soon, without its aid, I hope to view
Another self: with him before my eyes,
I need no glass, and can its use despise.

Enter CLARINDO.

Clar. All, lady, all is merriment and cheer,
And the plum'd hats announce the wedding near.
I gave the letter, and received a ring.
Est. Take too this diamond for the news you bring.
Clar. Alas! the precious gem is split in two;
Is it for grief?
Est. Oh no, Clarindo, no;
It burst for joy—the very gems have caught
My heart's content, my gaiety of thought.
Thrice happy day, and kind indulgent sky!
Can it be true?—Is this my destiny*?
Theo. Hark! steps below?
Clar. And now the noise draws near.
Est. My joy o'ercomes me!—

Enter Alcaldes with the dead body of BUSTOS.

Gracious God! what's here?

---

* Vide note, p. 188.

Ped. Grief, nought but grief was made for man below.
Life is itself one troubled sea of woe:—
Lady, Tabera's slain.—
Est. O sad, O cruel blow!

Ped. One comfort still—in chains his murderer lies;
To-morrow judged by law, the guilty Ortiz dies.

Est. Hence, fiends! I'll hear no more—your tidings bear
The blasts of hell, the warrant of despair.
My brother's slain!—by Sancho's arm he fell!
What! are there tongues the dismal tale to tell?
Can I too know it, and the blow survive?
Oh! I am stone, to hear that sound and live.
If ever pity dwelt in human breast—
Kill—murder—stab me—
Ped. With such grief opprest,
Well may she rave.
Est. O sentence fraught with pain!
My brother dead—by Sancho Ortiz slain!
(*going.*
That cruel stroke has rent three hearts in one;—
Then leave a wretch, who's hopeless and undone.

Ped. Ah! who can wonder at her wild despair?—
Follow her steps.
Far. Alas! ill-fated fair!

Clar. Lady, one instant—
Est. Would you have me stay
For him, the wretch, that did my brother slay?
My love, my hopes, my all for ever gone,
Perish life too, for life is hateful grown!

Inhuman stars! unheard-of misery!
Can it be so?—Is this my destiny *?

ACT III. SCENE I.

The third act opens with the King receiving an account of Sancho Ortiz' behaviour; his avowal of the murder, but refusal to alledge the motives of it. The King is struck with his magnanimity, but at the same time embarrassed by it.

"Tell him," at length he says, "to declare who instigated him to this crime, though it be the king himself: tell him I am his friend; but that, unless he immediately explains his conduct, he must tomorrow perish on a public scaffold."

Arias is intrusted with this message; Estrella enters; she throws herself at the King's feet; and after a contrast of her late prospects in life, and attachment to her brother, with her present forlorn and

* Vide note, page 188.

dismal condition, which, though poetically conceived, is neither well placed nor happily executed, she ends her petition by claiming a privilege, sanctioned, I believe, by the antient usages of Spain, of deciding, as nearest relation of the deceased, the fate of her brother's murderer. The King, moved by her beauty and tears, has not firmness enough to resist her entreaties; and, in a speech full of hyperbolical compliments on her charms, presents her with a royal key, which will admit her to the prison of Triana, and deliver the prisoner into her power. She leaves the royal presence with some ambiguous expressions, which the King construes into vows of revenge. From the moment that he ceases to contemplate her features he condemns his own weakness, and feels the deepest remorse at the perfidy and cruelty of his conduct. In the dialogue between Estrella

and him, there are some very pretty verses; but both the sentiments and expressions seem better suited to a sonnet than to a tragedy.

SCENE II. *A prison.*

Clarindo gives Sancho Ortiz his reasons for not composing a poem on his misfortunes; and a short dialogue between Sancho and the Alcaldes takes place; in which the former inculcates a very favourite thought of Lope, that a life of misery is a protracted death, and that to the unhappy, death is life:

No hay vida como la muerte
Para el que muriendo vive.

Arias enters, and delivers the King's message, which Sancho answers in ambiguous terms:

"Let those," he says, "whose duty it is to speak, speak; my duty was to act, and I have acted."

On Arias retiring, Clarindo and his master discuss the subject of honour; and Sancho's passion, mixed with his romantic notions, very naturally persuades his servant that he is mad. On such occasions the poet very often criticises himself, and puts into the mouth of the Gracioso the censures which he is conscious that the improbability of his hero's sentiments deserves to incur. At length enters a lady veiled, to whom, in virtue of the King's order, the prisoner is delivered over. She offers him his liberty, which he refuses to accept, unless she unveils herself. After some importunity, his entreaties prevail, and she discovers herself to be Estrella. Sancho, struck with her love, thinks some flight of generosity equally extravagant is required of him, and obstinately refuses to leave his prison. After several witticisms on his conduct, they separate; both resolving to die—one literally

on a scaffold, the other figuratively of love.

This scene, where the situation seems to suggest some fine sentiments, is, in my judgment, the coldest and worst in the play.

SCENE III.

The KING *and* ARIAS.

The King, stung with remorse for his conduct, is nevertheless overruled by the sophistry of Arias, and consents to avail himself of Sancho's generosity. He will not acknowledge himself the criminal; but at the same time he resolves to exert his influence with the judges to procure an acquittal of Sancho Ortiz, or at least a mitigation of the sentence, which would enable him, under pretence of banishment, to reward Sancho Ortiz for his fidelity.

The Alcalde of Triana enters, and reports what had passed between the pri-

soner and Estrella; which excites the King's admiration, and he directs Sancho Ortiz to be secretly conveyed to him. In the meanwhile he speaks with the judges, who profess great attachment and obedience to their sovereign; which he misinterprets into a compliance with his wishes. In this scene there is an observation,

> Montes la lisonja allana—
>
> Flattery can level mountains—

which, in the modern play, has, with great propriety, been transferred to the King's soliloquy, when he thinks he has won over the judges, and is there enlarged upon with great success. The judges, to the King's great dismay, return with the sentence of death, and exculpate themselves from the charge of breaking their promise to the King, by appealing to the nature of their office, or rather to that of their wands,

which are the insignia of it. If there is much quaintness in this appeal, it is at least in the character of the times which they represent. Many of these sayings and maxims, conveyed in quaint language, which are so common in the plays on early Spanish history, and which are hastily condemned by foreigners as instances of bad taste, form part of the traditions on which the stories are founded. The omission of them would destroy that air of truth and originality, from which they derive much of their merit in the eyes of a Spanish audience. Shakspeare has preserved some colloquial phrases of Henry the VIIIth and Richard the IIId, which had been handed down to him by traditional report; and I believe most English critics will acknowledge, that though they would be grotesque were they of his invention, yet, as historical traits, they give

an appearance of reality to the speeches, which enhances the interest of the representation.

To return to Lope: The King, unable to shake the integrity of the judges, promises to marry Estrella to a grandee of Castile, on condition that she shall withdraw the prosecution against her brother's murderer. To this she consents. The King pronounces the pardon of Ortiz; but the judges loudly remonstrate against such a proceeding, and at length extort from the King the confession of the murder having been committed at his instigation. Estrella, pressed by the King to marry Sancho Ortiz, while she acknowledges her love for him, is unable to overcome her repugnance at seeing the man who murdered her brother at her bed and board, *en mesa y en cama*, and obstinately persists in her refusal. This conduct produces an ex-

clamation of wonder at the heroic qualities of the Sevilians from all present, except the Gracioso, who observes, that to him they all appear mad.

Estrella de Sevilla criticised.

Whether we agree with him in this judgment, or with the King, who, after promising to procure a great match for Estrella, compliments the author on the poem, and thinks the subject worthy to be written on tablets of brass, we cannot but acknowledge that there are many situations in the play truly tragic, that it excites great interest in the perusal, and is calculated to produce yet greater effect upon the stage.

In the revived, as in the original play, the vigour of the composition is exhausted in the second act; and after the death of Bustos, and the disappointment of Estrella, the interest flags, for the events, though

ingeniously conducted, seem comparatively insipid. This fault, however great, Lope has in common with many of the most admired authors. It is, in this instance, a natural consequence of the great beauty of the second act. A more spirited or more interesting dialogue than that between the King and Sancho can scarcely be found on any theatre; Estrella's eager expectation of the bridegroom, as well as her sanguine prospects of happiness, which form so strong a contrast with her subsequent calamities, are likewise admirably conceived. The sentiments, as well as the frequent recurrence of the same verse at the end of the period, may be somewhat too lyrical for representation, but there is much natural expression, as well as poetical language and invention, in the course of that scene.

On the whole the play may be considered as a favourable specimen of Lope's art of conducting a plot, and the more so, as it derives no assistance from the operation of jealousy; a passion, which he, and after him all Spanish dramatic writers, seem to think essential in a composition for the stage, as well as sufficient to explain any absurdity, and warrant any outrage. It is indeed a received maxim in their country, as well as on their theatre, that love cannot exist without jealousy. But Lope does not conclude, from such premises, that the passions are inseparable. Jealousy, in his plays, often exists where there is no affection, and, what seems yet more singular, often precedes and produces love. To excite love in one woman, the most efficacious philtre, according to these doctors, is to become enamoured of another. By a natural consequence, that passion has more

Jealousy in Spanish plays.

particles of pride than of tenderness in its composition, and the lover's chief gratification consists in ascertaining the power they possess over each other. These preposterous principles pervade all his plays; but are more prevalent in his mixed comedies than in those which may be supposed to aspire to the character of tragedies. In the latter there is generally plot enough to form at least four plays on any other theatre; of which the *Fuerza lastimosa* is a striking instance; as well as of the great veneration in which Lope's plays were held by his contemporaries. Many were represented with great success in Italy, but this had the singular honour of being exhibited within the walls of the seraglio at Constantinople *. Some scenes founded on a story similar to that of The Orphan, may be compared to the correspondent parts of

Fuerza lastimosa.

* Pellicer's Notes to Don Quixote.

that tragedy without disparagement to either poet. Pathetic tenderness is not, however, the general character of Lope's productions; and I may have a future opportunity of shewing, that in that respect, as well as others, Guillen de Castro bears a much stronger resemblance to Otway.

Duels and disguises frequent in Spanish plays.

In Lope's comedies, the frequency of duels, and the constant recurrence of disguises, have drawn upon him the censure of the critics, who argue from thence a defect in his talents both of observation and invention. There not only appears a want of variety in such artifices, but the artifices themselves are alledged to be of a nature too extravagant to warrant such frequent repetitions. The answer to such objections is to be found in the memoirs and histories of the times. It is not my purpose to enter into a discussion which would more properly be reserved for an

account of Calderon's writings; but it is certain, that if the Spanish poets admitted more violent incidents into their comedies than the writers of the present age, the common state of society was also more open to the intrusion of surprising adventures. We have learnt from the stage to consider many contrivances as theatrical, which the theatre itself borrowed from the actual occurrences of life. At any rate, neither Lope nor Calderon himself will be found to have abused the advantages which the cloak and sword, the basquiña and mantilla *, supplied, so much as our writers of Charles the Second's time exaggerated the facility afforded to the accomplishment of improbable designs by the prevalent fashion of masks. It is true, that from the frequent exhibition of such adventures, the theatre was accused of instructing the

Reason.

* The veil and walking-dress of a Spanish woman.

Spanish public in those arts of intrigue which it professed to copy from their practice. Calderon almost pleads guilty to the charge, since one of his characters, on being the dupe of a disguise, exclaims:

> .....Mal hubiesen
> Las comedias que enseñaron
> Engaños tan aparentes *.

Plague on our comedies, which shewed the ease
With which the world might practise tricks like these!

To prevent such evil consequences, or with some view equally absurd, the government is said for a time to have prohibited all Lope's plays, and to have confined the exercise of his talents by a royal injunction to the composition of sacred dramas †. This circumstance renders the government, as well as the taste of the times, accounta-

Prohibition of Lope's plays.

* Calderon. *Bien vengas mal, si vienes solo.*
† Pellicer.

Sacred dramas.

ble for the choice of subjects, so unsuitable to representation as the lives of saints, and performance of miracles. They are indeed truly ridiculous. In the *Animal profeta*, St. Julian, after having plotted the murder of his wife, and actually accomplishing that of his father and mother, enters into a controversy with the Devil, as to the possibility of being saved; and when Jesus Christ descends from heaven to effect a miracle for that purpose in his favour, the Devil, with much logical precision, alledges such mercy to be a breach of the original contract between himself and the Almighty. He insinuates, indeed, that if he cannot reckon upon a parricide, he may as well give over his business in souls, as there is no appearance of fair dealing in the trade. The mysteries of religion are sometimes discussed by his characters, and much polemical divinity is to be found in his dia-

Animal profeta.

logues. The birth, the passion, the crucifixion of Christ are

—oculis subjecta fidelibus.—

The Virgin, and even the Almighty, are among his dramatis personæ; the resurrection of a dead man is no unusual incident, and the forgiveness of sins furnishes a fortunate conclusion for more than one of his tragedies. In addition to these sacrifices of taste and judgment to public piety, he wrote several *Autos Sacramentales*, allegorical dramas on the mysteries of religion. This species of representation continued popular in Spain till the middle of the last century. There is hardly a poet of any note in their language, who has not employed his pen on these subjects; and for the disgusting absurdities in which they abound, Lope could plead as many precedents as he furnished. It was difficult

Autos Sacramentales.

for him to divest any of his writings of all poetical merit; and in his Autos, the patience which could wade through such nonsense would no doubt be occasionally rewarded with some striking passages. They are not, however, so celebrated as those of many other authors, and I believe that the greater number of them, for he composed some hundreds, are lost.

There are still extant, in addition to the autos and plays ascribed to him, innumerable *Entremeses*, or interludes, and in the few I have read there is no deficiency of humour or merriment. Indeed, there is always some sprightliness, and often much invention, in his comedy. To him the French and English writers are indebted for some of their most successful productions; and the outline of an excellent comedy is often faintly delineated in an episode or a scene of Lope. To him Corneille ascribes

Entremeses.

the *Sospechosa verdad*, which he acknowledges to be the original of the Menteur. But Voltaire, who is more diligent in his literary researches than those, who, because they possess not his wit, think they have a right to mistrust his learning, implies a doubt of the fact*. Such authority is not lightly to be disputed, especially as it seems to be confirmed by no such name occurring in any list of Lope's productions. The *Melindrosa*, the *Azero de Madrid*, the *Esclava de su galan*, *la Bella mal maridada*, as well as many others, have in part been imitated, and are among the best of his comedies. Those, however, of a more anomalous description, where there is more elevation in the main characters, and nearly as much distress as merriment in the action, excite a more lively interest in the perusal. Humour is, at best, formed of very pe-

Sospechosa verdad.

Other plays of Lope.

* Notes on Corneille's Menteur.

rishable materials. Some author remarks, that mankind laugh in various ways, but always cry in the same. The truth of that observation is strongly illustrated in the history of the theatre. Scarcely a season passes without producing several successful pieces of humour; yet, after some years are gone by, how few bear a revival! There is less variety, but there is more permanence, in works of which an interesting plot forms the basis. Accordingly, many of this description (for Lope abounds in them) have been lately revived with considerable success at Madrid. Such are the *Hermosa fea*, *lo Cierto por lo dudoso*, &c.

Violation of the unities.

It is almost unnecessary to repeat, that in none of these are the unities of time preserved. This violation of rules incurred the censure of the French critics at a very early period; and has been condemned with yet greater rigour by the Spanish

writers during the last century. Boileau no doubt alludes to the Phœnix of Spain when he says:

> Un rimeur sans péril delà des Pyrénées
> Sur la scène en un jour renferme des années.
> Là souvent le héros d'un spectacle grossier,
> Enfant au premier acte, est barbon au dernier.
>
> *Art Poëtique.*

> The Spanish bard, who no nice censure fears,
> In one short day includes a lapse of years.
> In those rude acts the hero lives so fast,
> Child in the first, he's greybeard in the last.

That such should be the judgment of Boileau is not extraordinary; but a Spaniard of considerable eloquence *, editor of Cervantes' plays, lays all these extravagancies to the charge of Lope, terms him the corrupter of the theatre, and endeavours to prove that the yet more extravagant tragedies, to which the dissertation is prefixed, were designed as burlesque

* Nasarre.

satires upon his compositions. In this whimsical theory he is indeed as unsupported by authority as by reason; but though no critics follow his opinion in this respect, they all concur with him in anathematizing the irregularity of Lope's theatre. "We must not look in his comedies," says Velasquez, "for the unities of action, time, or place; his heroes come into the world, walk about it, thrive in it, grow old, and die. They wander like vagabonds from East to West, and North to South; he flies with them through the air to fight battles in one place, and make love in another; sometimes they turn monks, sometimes they die, and even after death they occasionally perform miracles on the stage. One scene is in Flanders, another in Italy, Spain, Mexico, or Africa. His lacqueys talk like courtiers, and his kings like pimps; his principal ladies are women without edu-

cation, breeding, or decorum. His actors enter like levies, in battalions, or in squadrons. It is not unusual to see twenty-four or thirty dramatis personæ, or even seventy, as in the *Bautismo del principe de Fez*, where, because these did not seem enough for him, he throws in a procession by way of *bonne bouche.*" Luzan, the most temperate and judicious of their critics, dwells on the same topics; but, like Andres, asserts that the total disregard of decorum, the little difference preserved in the character and language of the prince and the peasant, the noble and the plebeian, is a yet heavier charge, and one which no harmony of verse nor eloquence of language can possibly counterbalance. The futility of such censures every reader of Shakspeare has felt, and Johnson in his preface most admirably exposed. Were the characters of Lope's dramas as strongly conceived,

as well preserved, he might set the shafts of such critics at defiance; but though he is not utterly ignorant of that great object of his art, the delineation of human character, nor by any means destitute of the faculties necessary to attain it, he neither possessed the genius of our inimitable poet, nor was he so attentive to the cultivation of that particular talent. Nevertheless, traits of nature are often to be found in his plays, and he seems to have aimed at great variety of characters; but they are faintly traced, and never uniformly preserved throughout the piece. His plan admitted of greater perfection in this respect, than that of most of his immediate followers. His lovers are not always a class apart, nor his women constantly and exclusively actuated by the same passions operating in the same forms. He is, however, answerable for the introduction of a character,

Merits of Lope's plan.

which in all Spanish plays is the same person under different names, viz. the Gracioso. This innovation, if it is indeed to be ascribed to him, must be acknowledged to be an abuse, and not an improvement. The *Francesilla* * is said to be the first play in which he is introduced. Lope not only wrote but performed the part of such a buffoon at Valencia in 1599, on the celebration of Philip the Third's nuptials †. This circumstance may have contributed to mislead Voltaire, who has met with most unmerciful and disproportionate ridicule from the Spanish editors, for having alledged Lope to have been an actor. They ought to have known that such an assertion was not entirely void of foundation. He who writes of foreign literature is liable to trivial mistakes; and whether the above

Defence of Voltaire.

* Pellicer's Notes to Cervantes.

† Continuation of Mariana's History.

quoted fact, or a confusion of Lope de Rueda the founder of the Spanish theatre, who was really an actor, with Lope de Vega, misled the French critic, the fact is in either case to his purpose, as far as it proves that authors who are accustomed to act are likely to encourage by their example irregularity and extravagance in theatrical compositions. Till Voltaire appeared, there was no nation more ignorant of its neighbours' literature than the French. He first exposed, and then corrected, this neglect in his countrymen. There is no writer to whom the authors of other nations, especially of England, are so indebted for the extension of their fame in France, and, through France, in Europe. There is no critic who has employed more time, wit, ingenuity, and diligence in promoting the literary intercourse between country and country, and in celebrating in one language

the triumphs of another. Yet, by a strange fatality, he is constantly represented as the enemy of all literature but his own; and Spaniards, Englishmen, and Italians, vie with each other in inveighing against his occasional exaggeration of faulty passages; the authors of which, till he pointed out their beauties, were hardly known beyond the country in which their language was spoken. Those who feel such indignation at his misrepresentations and oversights, would find it difficult to produce a critic in any modern language, who in speaking of foreign literature is better informed or more candid than Voltaire; and they certainly never would be able to discover one, who to those qualities unites so much sagacity and liveliness. His enemies would fain persuade us that such exuberance of wit implies a want of information; but they only succeed in shewing that a want of wit

by no means implies an exuberance of information. If he indulges his propensity to ridicule in exposing the absurdities of the Spanish stage, he makes ample amends by acknowledging that it is full of sublime passages, and not deficient in interesting scenes. He allows the Spanish poets full credit for their originality, and acknowledges them to have been Corneille's masters, though much excelled by their disciple. He objects, indeed, to the buffoonery of many of their scenes; and the Gracioso might surely offend a critic who had less right to be fastidious than the author of Mahomet and of Zara. That preposterous personage not only interlards the most interesting scenes with the grossest buffooneries, but, assuming the amphibious character of spectator and actor, at one time interrupts with his remarks the performance, of which he forms an essential but

The Gracioso.

very defective part in another. He seems, indeed, invented to save the conscience of the author, who after any extravagant hyperbole puts a censure or ridicule of it in the mouth of his buffoon, and thereby hopes to disarm the critic, or at least to record his own consciousness and disapprobation of the passage. This critical acumen is the only estimable quality in this character. His strictures on the conduct of the piece, the sentiments, expressions, and even the metre, are generally just, though they would better become the pit than the stage. In other respects he is uniformly a designing, cowardly, interested knave: but Lope found his account in the preservation of the Gracioso, and was happy to reconcile the public to an invention so convenient to the poet. As any topic could be introduced in this part, he was thus enabled to

Gracioso convenient to the author.

fill up whole scenes with any verses he might have by him ready composed: nor was this all; at the conclusion of a complicated plot, when the author is unable to extricate himself from the embarrassments he has created, in any probable manner, the buffoon steps forward, cuts the Gordian knot, explains away the difficulty, discloses the secret, and decides upon the fate and marriages of all who are present. His oracles, like those of fools in some courts, are looked upon as inspired; and rivals who had been contending during the whole play, acquiesce without a murmur in his decisions. In addition to this merit he gives Lope a frequent opportunity of displaying his talents for sprightly and burlesque poetry; in which, as I have remarked before, he was most uniformly successful. As a specimen of the general

style of his part in the dialogue, I subjoin Julio's defence of his master, who, in the Hermosa fea, had affected to be insensible to the charms of the Duchess of Lorrain:

JULIO *y* CELIA.

Jul. Un mal gusto es fundamento:
De que le parézca asi
Fuera de ser cosa llana,
Que no hay disputa en los gustos.
Cel. Si, pero gustos injustos
Hacen la razon villana.
Jul. Hombres hay, que un dia escuro
Para salir apetecen,
Y el sol hermoso aborrecen
Quando sale claro y puro.
Hombres, que no pueden ver
Cosa dulce, y comerán
Una cebolla sin pan,
Que no hay mas que encarecer;
Hombres en Indias casados
Con blanquisimas mugeres
De estremados pareceres
Y á sus negras inclinados.
Unos que mueren por dar
Quanto en su vida tuvieron;
Y otros que en su vida dieron
Sino es enojo, y pesar;

Muchos duermen todo el dia
Y toda la noche velan;
Y muchos que se desvelan
En una eterna porfia
De amar sola una muger;
Y otro que como a Aya tocas
Dos mil les parecen pocas
Para empezar á querer.
Segun esto la duquesa
No dexa de ser hermosa
Por un mal gusto,—&c. &c.

JULIO *and* CELIA.

Jul. Bad taste—but 'twas allowed long since,
That tastes of no dispute admit.
Cel. But, when so bad as in your prince,
The want of taste shews want of wit.

Jul. Why men there are in cloudy days,
Who, spite of rain, abroad will roam;
Who hate the sun's all-cheering rays,
And when 'tis fine will mope at home;

Men too there are who loath what's sweet,
What we like most they relish least,
They without bread their onions eat,
And deem the sorry meal a feast;

Spaniards in India there have been,
Who to their wives extremely slack

Have loath'd a fair and snowy skin,
And sigh'd in secret for a black;

Some without cause their substance give,
Squander away their time and pence:
Others give nothing while they live,
But trouble, umbrage, and offence;

Some sleep by day, and watch by night;
Some to one nymph their life devote;
Others their faith and duty plight,
To all who wear the petticoat.

Then, that one man her charms decries,
Should give the beauteous dame no care;
Because my master wants his eyes,
Your mistress sure is not less fair.

Epigrammatic turns and short metre of Spanish plays.

Such thoughts and language are no doubt more suited to an epigrammatic song than to a dialogue in a play. It has often appeared to me, that the frequent recurrence of antithesis on the Spanish stage was a natural consequence of the short verses, in which most of their old scenes are composed. As the public are extremely partial

to that metre, which is nearly the same as that of the old ballads or romances, and as they think it peculiarly adapted to recitation, a stranger should speak with great diffidence in his own judgment, when it is at variance with the Spaniards on such a subject; but it is certain that such dialogues as contain most points, are those which are best received on their stage; and few couplets in that metre are quoted with approbation by their critics, but such as abound in antithesis, or such as are confessedly of a nature too lyrical for representation. The love of epigram may have rendered a metre peculiarly favourable to it, popular; but, from the history of their poetry, I am inclined to believe that the epigram rather owes its popularity to the cultivation of a metre, which, when the language is somewhat refined, becomes insipid without it. Such short pauses are evidently more cal-

culated for the expression of wit than of passion. Hence it is not unusual for the characters of Lope, when placed in embarrassing situations, and wavering between the most violent and opposite affections, to express their wishes, describe their feelings, and justify their conduct in a long string of reasoning epigrams; of which the logic is not very convincing, and the wit evidently misplaced. The most preposterous metaphors are, in such cases, taken in their literal sense; and the poetical jargon, more offensively hyperbolical in Spanish than in any other European language, employed in scholastic forms of dispute, as if it were composed of terms logically precise. Lope indeed seems not to have been ignorant of the dangers, to which these short numbers exposed him. He accordingly assumed the privilege of varying them as he pleased; but he wanted either leisure or judgment to bring his plan

Lope's rules for varying the measure.

to perfection. He has laid down some rules on this subject in the *Arte de hacer Comedias;* but as he has neither abided by them himself, nor alledged any reason for his opinions; and since they are as much at variance with common criticism, as with his own practice; one may be admitted to call in question the soundness of his precepts. He says:

Las decimas son buenas para quejas;
El soneto está bien en los que aguardan;
Las relaciones piden los romances;
Aunque en octavas lucen por extremo;
Son los tercetos para cosas graves;
Y para las de amor las redondillas.

In ten-line staves should wailing grief be shewn;
The sonnet suits a man who speaks alone;
Let plain narration flow in ballad lines;
Though much a tale in copious octaves shines;
Grand weighty thoughts the triplet should contain;
But *redondillas* * suit the lover's strain.

In these, the heroic verse (which in

* A stanza of four short verses—for which, vide Appendix.

Spanish, as in Italian, is of five feet, and generally composed of eleven syllables) is not mentioned: yet he often employed it for declamation as well as for description in the first scenes of his plays; and being a rhythm, better adapted to tragedy, it seldom fails to inspire sentiments more natural, and diction at once more majestic and more simple. The dialogue in Carlos el Perseguido, which is chiefly conducted in long metre, preserves all the dignity of tragedy, and, as it has the advantage of a very interesting plot, is among the most valuable of his plays. He does not, however, confine himself to one or two variations of verse; but though he is allowed to be a great master of harmony in all, he generally prefers those numbers which seem invented for lyric rather than dramatic composition. In these his style is always flowery and poetical, and his thoughts

too often forced, unnatural, and extravagant. The most singular circumstance attending his verse is the frequency and difficulty of the tasks which he imposes on himself. At every step we meet with *acrostics*, *echoes*, and compositions of that perverted but laborious kind, from attempting which another author would be deterred by the trouble of the undertaking, if not by the little real merit of the atchievement. They require no genius, but they exact much time; which one should think that such a voluminous poet could little afford to waste. But Lope made a parade of his power over the vocabulary; he was not contented with displaying the various order in which he could dispose the syllables and marshal the rhymes of his language, but he also prided himself upon the celerity with which he carried them through the most whimsical but the most

difficult evolutions. He seems to have been partial to difficulties, for the gratification of surmounting them.

Sonnets in plays.

The sonnet, which, of a short composition, is that which requires the greatest command of rhyme, harmony, and language, seems to have been his favourite employment. There are few of his plays which do not contain three or four of these little poems; many of them have great merit as sonnets, though they are surely misplaced in the mouth of an actor. In the Niña de Plata, the celebrated sonnet to Violante is very happily introduced; but it is there recited by the Gracioso as a poetical effusion.

Un soneto me manda hacer Violante;
Que en mi vida me he visto en tanto aprieto;
Catorce versos dicen que es soneto;
Burla burlando, van los tres delante;
Yo pensé que no hallara consonante,
Y estoy á la mitad de otro quarteto;
Mas si me veo en el primer terceto;
No hay cosa en los quartetos que me espante.

En el primer terceto voy entrando
Y aun parece que entré con pié derecho,
Pues fin con este verso le voy dando;
Ya estoy en el segundo, y aun sospecho
Que voy los trece versos acabando;
Contad si son catorce—Ya está hecho.

This has been imitated or translated in all languages. In Italian, I believe, by Marino; in French, by Voiture and Desmarais; and in English by Edwards, author of Canons of Criticism *.

Capricious Wray a sonnet needs must have;
I ne'er was so put to't before—a sonnet?
Why, fourteen verses must be spent upon it.
'Tis good, however, I've conquer'd the first stave.
Yet I shall ne'er find rhymes enough by half,
Said I, and found myself in the midst of the second:
If twice four verses were but fairly reckon'd
I should turn back on the hardest part, and laugh.
Thus far with good success I think I've scribbled,
And of twice seven lines have clear got o'er ten.
Courage! Another'll finish the first triplet;
Thanks to the muse, my work begins to shorten,
There's thirteen lines got through, driblet by driblet,
'Tis done! count how you will, I warrant there's fourteen.

* Vide Appendix.

To many of his plays he also prefixed *Loas*, a species of prologue, in short verse; on which some maxim connected with the play is generally enforced, or some apposite story related. Loas.

The merit of the most laboured parts of his tragedies consists chiefly in exuberance of images; and, as most Spanish critics affirm, in the purity of language; but they are often too lyrical for the expression of natural passion, and more calculated to raise our admiration for the poet, than to excite compassion for the character. This remark admits of exceptions; and from the passages already quoted in the course of this work, the reader might infer the criticism to be too general: there is, however, seldom much originality in those tragic sentiments which he expresses simply. Whatever was noble he thought should be gorgeously arrayed; and it was Lope's language.

only from carelessness, or from ignorance of its merit, that he left any pathetic thought to strike by its genuine beauty. The following lines, taken from one of his most interesting plays, contain just thoughts; but such as would occur to most authors, in painting the feelings of a tyrant:

Maur. ¿Que rigor, que castigo de los cielos
Me causa tal pesar, tales desvelos?
¿Quien mi vida condena
A tan rabiosa y dilatada pena?
No hallo parte segura,
Sosiego en vano el alma ya procura
En el gusto, en la mesa, hasta en el sueño,
De un desconsuelo en otro me despeño,
La desdicha mayor carga en mis hombros
Donde quiera que voy encuentro asombros.
Esto es reynar? Para esto, Mauregato,
El reyno adquieres con aleve trato?
Pero que importa el cetro, la grandeza,
Donde ya predomina esta tristeza.
O que descanso el alma le apercibe
Si la conciencia mal segura vive!

What wrath of Heaven, what unrelenting powers
Conjure fresh griefs, invade my peaceful hours
With cares and fears, and doom my life to flow
In one long current of unceasing woe?
In vain from thought my troubled soul would fly:
No rest, no refuge in this world have I;
In vain the sport I ply, the feast prepare,
Grief treads on grief, and care succeeds to care;
Nor joy my sports, nor mirth attends my board;
Nor sleep itself a respite can afford.
Still at each turn, at some new fiend I start,
And grief, fixt grief, sits heavy at my heart.
Is this to be a king, is this to reign?
Did I for this, by fraud, by treason, gain
The sceptred pomp? Alas! the prize how small,
If tyrant sadness lords it over all!
Care chases sleep, and thought all rest dispels,
From souls where ever-wakeful conscience dwells.

It is, however, in the more animated part of the dialogue, which is conducted in short speeches, that the natural sentiments most frequently occur; though they are often preceded or followed by some quibble so puerile, or some metaphor so extravagant, as entirely to destroy their effect. A simple expression of grief, ten-

derness, or indignation, drops unnoticed from the mouth of an actor who has been turning points on carnations and roses, proving, in punning syllogisms, the blessings of death, or refining with scholastic learning on the duties of revenge. Æschylus modestly asserted that his most finished pieces were composed of the crumbs that had fallen from the table of Homer; but those (and they are not a few) who have fed on the leavings of Spanish writers, have run away with the most valuable part of the feast. The remainder was so far from being worth carrying away, that none have been at the trouble of seeking it, and thus they have escaped even detection, and profited as much from the bad taste as from the profusion of their masters.

Lope's dialogue.

In Lope's dialogue there is a circumstance worthy of observation; because, though either unknown or exploded on

the French and English stages, it seems to have been as general on the Spanish as the Greek theatre, and has been sanctioned in modern times by the example of Metastasio. This is a combat of sentiments or opinions, carried on by two characters, in which an equal number of verses is allotted to each disputant; the speeches are short, and each is a species of parody on the preceding, re-echoing noun for noun, and verb for verb, with the most minute precision. The origin of this invention may probably be learnt from the commentaries on the antient eclogues, where it is so frequently employed, and called, if I mistake not, Amæbean. Among the Spaniards, the general prevalence of scholastic education rendered its adoption easy to the poets, and agreeable to the audience; and it accordingly is frequently carried on in the forms of logic, and consists

Amæbean dialogues accounted for.

in the conversion and inversion of a proposition, with the aid of some play upon a word taken in various senses. Metastasio found it convenient for preserving a structure of verse, which might easily be set to music, and throughout his works such dialogues are more lyrical than epigrammatic. Their effect on the Spanish plays is not so fortunate; they abound, indeed, in point, but are often deficient in poetry. They may produce strong, but seldom just sentiments. In the same spirit, but with better success, Lope, in some of his plays, introduces, towards the conclusion, two long speeches; in which, his principal characters urge their pretensions, justify their motives, and combat each other's arguments before their mistress, their monarch, or some one entitled to decide their contest.

Such scenes are not well adapted to representation, though they are often replete

with wit, and full of animation. Corneille, who surpassed Lope in all the talents necessary to give effect to such passages, whose bursts of eloquence are perhaps unequalled in modern poetry, is often unable to excite our interest in these contentions, more suited to the forum than the stage, and abounding rather in philosophical reflections and exalted sentiments, than in the traits of character and natural expression of passion. But Corneille, in these speeches, which he too modestly terms pleadings, has only exchanged the character of a great tragic poet for that of an argumentative and philosophical orator. He reasons, indeed, in verse; but the confinement of metre seems only to concentrate the force of his arguments, and to heighten the beauty of his illustrations. It is not so with Lope de Vega. He was neither formed by nature nor prepared by study

Corneille and Lope.

for such discussions. The speeches of his disputants preserve very scrupulously the forms of logic, often sparkle with wit, and may sometimes produce remarks applicable to the common events of life; but we look in vain through these scenes, and indeed through all his works, for those deep reflections on morals and government, which evince a philosophical view of the nature of mankind and of the construction of society.

Extravagancies of Lope.

In the wilder plays, which, in compliance with popular taste, he composed on the romantic tales of early Spanish history, there are rants so extravagant, as well as images so hyperbolical, that they tempt one to suspect him, like Ariosto, of playing with his readers and laughing at his subject. Such a license is, for obvious reasons, inadmissible in dramatic composition. A poet may smile at his own inventions, but

a fictitious personage cannot laugh at what is necessarily connected with his own existence. Dryden's Almanzor, from which character that writer's acquaintance with Castilian poetry is very manifest, is meek and humble in comparison of the *Bernardos* and *Mudarras* of the Spanish author; and if, as Johnson says, the English poet hovers on the confines of nonsense, Lope must be acknowledged to have frequently invaded the territory. *Bernardo*, for instance, is not contented with being a noble savage, as free as nature first made man, and with having neither lord nor parent, but he goes so far as to declare himself his own:

De gran sangre muestras doy,
  Y pues que padre ni madre
No puedo conocer hoy,
  Yo he de ser my propio padre.

Since my high birth is by my valour shown,
And yet my parents are till now unknown,
Methinks Bernardo needs must be his own.

Lope's comedy.

In comedy his thoughts are generally sprightly, and his language always easy. The sentiments, however, are frequently neither called for by the situation, necessary to the plot, nor consistent with the character. His continual antithesis and play upon words cannot escape the censure of rigorous criticism. His apologists plead in his behalf the taste of his age and country, and his admirers generally alledge his uncommon felicity in these inferior efforts of wit. True it is, that a very slight knowledge of a language enables a foreigner to detect this practice in an author, though none but a native can be a competent judge of his success.

Play upon words.

Dialogue in comedy.

As to the general style of his dialogue in comedy, it is difficult to select any short passages which will convey an idea of it to the reader, and yet more difficult to translate them so as to preserve the character

of the original. Of the two which I subjoin, the first is taken at random from a play of little celebrity; the second affords a specimen of easy satire, more uncommon in his dramas, but not less adapted to his genius:

No digan que es menester
Mucho tiempo para amar;
Que el amor que ha de matar
De un solo golpe ha de ser.
Amor que comienza ingrato
Y el trato le da valor,
No se ha de llamar amor
Sino costumbre de trato.
El que vió, quiso, y mató
Esse es amor verdadero,
Y mas quando es el primero
Como el que te tengo yo.
Mirar, escribir, y hablar
Años un galan y dama,
Es hacer amor con ama
Que se lo han dado á criar.
Hombre ha de nacer Amor,
Luego andar, y ser galan:
Que el Amor que no es Adan
Nunca ha de tener valor.

Marques de las Navas.

Let no one say that there is need
Of time for love to grow;
Ah no! the love that kills indeed
Dispatches at a blow.

The spark which but by slow degrees
Is nursed into a flame,
Is habit, friendship, what you please;
But Love is not its name.

For love to be completely true,
It death at sight should deal,
Should be the first one ever knew,
In short, be that I feel.

To write, to sigh, and to converse,
For years to play the fool;
'Tis to put passion out to nurse,
And send one's heart to school.

Love, all at once, should from the earth
Start up full grown and tall;
If not an Adam at his birth,
He is no Love at all.

POLIBIO *y* CLARINDO.

Pol. En su patria ninguno fué profeta,
Palabras son de Dios, y como el ciertas;
Fuera de que es antiguo entre señores
Y aun entre los demas del mismo vulgo

No hacer estimacion de cosas proprias
Y venerar las estrangeras mucho—
Si un hombre viene hablando en otra lengua,
Aquel ha de ser medico famoso,
Aquel pintor, aquel divino artifice;
El libro en lengua propia no se estima;
Ni lo que cria aquesta misma tierra;
Porque en no conocer los dueños dellas
Estriba de las cosas todo el credito.

Cl. Bien dizes, y assi vemos que la fama
No se despega de la propia embidia,
Si no es que muera el dueño que la tiene.
Dixo un discreto que era matrimonio,
Polibio, el de la embidia y de la fama,
Que se apartava solo con la muerte;
De suerte que al que nace en alguna arte
Insigne, le esta bien morirse presto:
Y si la vida ha de costar la fama
Famoso en todo á mi enemigo llama.

La Necedad del Discreto.

POLIBIO *and* CLARINDO.

Pol. No man's a prophet in his native land;
God said it once, and what he said shall stand.
The great long since all home-made wares despise;
What's near, they loath, but what's abroad they prize.
The vulgar too, for they must ape the great,
Applaud what's strange, but what's at hand they hate.

Comes there a man who speaks a foreign tongue,
His drugs shall cure, his learning charm the throng—
He shall their artist, he their leech become;
Such skill, such genius, is not bred at home.
Our native language is but vulgar style;
Raised from the dirt we tread, the fruit is vile;
Know we the book who pen, the field who reap,
We hold the learning and the produce cheap.
Cl. 'Tis true—thus envy living worth attends;
The hero dies, and then all envy ends.
Envy was Honour's wife, a wise man said,
Ne'er to be parted till the man was dead.
Yes; who excels may gain the glorious prize
Of endless fame, provided first he dies.
If such indeed must be the price of fame,
Let others seek it, I resign my claim.
On these conditions I will gladly grant,
E'en to my foes, what portion they may want.

The thought and turn of the above lines are evidently borrowed from Martial.

Esse quid hoc dicam quod vivis fama negatur
Et sua quod rarus tempora lector amat
Hi sunt invidiæ nimirum, Regule, mores
Præferat antiquos semper ut illa novis

Sic veterem ingrati Pompeii quærimus umbram
  Sic laudant Catuli vilia templa senes
Ennius est lectus salvo tibi Roma Marone
  Et sua riserunt sæcula Mæonidem
Rara coronato plausere theatra Menandro
  Norat Nasonem sola Corinna suum
Vos tamen, o nostri ne festinate libelli
  Si post fata venit Gloria, non propero *.

Why must the living have no fame? and why
Must every reader his own age decry?—
So Envy wills, who, to her maxims true,
Extols all old things, and condemns all new.
To Pompey's shades ungrateful throngs repair,
Vile fanes of Catulus engross our care.
Ennius no doubt, while Virgil lived, was read,
And Homer scorned till Homer's self was dead:
Few in his hearing clapped Menander's plays,
Corinna only spoke in Ovid's praise;
Be slow then, muse, to please the public taste,
If fame comes after death, I'm not in *haste*.

I have, perhaps, been led into a more minute examination of Lope de Vega's merits, as a dramatic author, than the subject required, or than my imperfect know-

* Ep. 10, l. 5.

ledge of his works can justify. Of more than five hundred of his plays yet extant, I have read about fifty. This was sufficient to satisfy my curiosity; and the ardour of discovery once abated, disgust at the difficulties, and weariness at the length of the way, succeeded to it. The Spanish editors have taken little or no pains to smooth the paths of their literature to foreigners. The slovenly negligence of their press not only discourages the reader, but has often disfigured the beauty and even obliterated the meaning of their poets. Of late years their types have not only been improved, but the beauty of their letter-press equals, and perhaps exceeds, that of any other nation. The labours of the editor, however, have by no means kept pace with the skill of the printer. Cervantes has, indeed, been elaborately commented upon, and in some few instances

Carelessness of Spanish editors.

the text has been elucidated by modern compilers. The old poems of authors previous to Juan de Mena, as well as a selection of the early ballads or romances, have been neatly and carefully edited: but the late publication of Lope de Vega's poems, though costly and voluminous, is not correct; and his plays can only be read in the old and imperfect editions * of Madrid and Antwerp, or in the miserable sheets which are sold at the door of the theatre. It seems as if the Spaniards, in estimating the merits of this extraordinary man, had been scrupulously exact in striking the balance, and deducted every item of preposterous praise advanced to him while living, from his claims on the admiration of posterity. So remarkable a fluctuation in public taste is not to be attributed entirely to the languor which succeeds any

Spaniards' estimation of Lope.

Fluctuation of opinion explained.

* Vide Appendix.

extravagant transports of admiration, nor even to that envy, which is gratified in sinking the reputation of an author as much below, as favour or accident may have carried it above, its just level. External circumstances conspired with these natural causes. The age of Calderon, the brilliancy of whose comedies, aided by the novelty and magnificence of expensive scenery, had somewhat outshone the lustre of Lope's exhibitions, was succeeded by a period of darkness and disgrace, as fatal to the literary as to the political influence of Spain. By the time that the public had sufficiently recovered from the amazement which Calderon's works had produced, to compare him calmly with his predecessors, they had become too indifferent about all that concerned the stage, to be at the pains of estimating the beauties of any dramatic author. The splendour of Philip

the Fourth's court survived the defeat of his arms, and the loss of his provinces; but it died with that improvident and ostentatious monarch. Under the feeble sovereign who succeeded him, not only were the theatres shut, and the plays prohibited, but all ardour in literary pursuits, all genius for poetry, all taste for the arts and ornaments of life, seemed to waste away as rapidly as the resources and glory of the kingdom he misgoverned. In the mean while France rose upon the ruins of her rival. The successors of Corneille refined and improved a language, which the increasing power of the state had made it convenient to surrounding nations to study, and to which the extensive intrigues and wars of Louis the XIVth had given, as it were, an unusual currency in Europe. Fashion, which is often as peremptory in literature as in dress, enjoined the adop-

tion of French rules of criticism; and an arbitrary standard of excellence was erected, without any regard to the different genius of languages, and the various usages and modes of thinking which distinguish one people from another. Hence, when towards the middle of last century the love of letters seemed to revive in Spain, there arose a sect of critics, men of considerable information and eloquence, who, in their anxiety to inculcate correct principles of composition into their countrymen, endeavoured to wean their affections from those national poets by whom the public taste had, according to them, been originally vitiated. The names of Vega, Calderon, Moreto, and others, which, in the general decline of literature, had in a great measure fallen into neglect and oblivion, were now only quoted to expose their faults, and to point out their inferiority to foreign

models of excellence. The disapprobation of all dramatic performances, the occasional preference of Italian operas, and, above all, French modes of thinking on matters of taste, naturally prevalent at a Bourbon court, threw the old Spanish stage into disrepute; an admiration of such authors passed with the wits for a perversion of judgment, and with the fashionable for a remnant of national prejudice and vulgarity. Many enlightened individuals also, who were anxious to reform more important abuses than the mere extravagancies of a theatre, encouraged this growing predilection for French literature. They might feel a very natural partiality for a language from which they had themselves derived so much instruction and delight, or they might studiously direct the attention of their countrymen to French poetry, from a conviction that a familiarity with the works of Racine

Motives of literary men in decrying Lope, &c.

and Boileau would ultimately lead them to an acquaintance with those of Pascal and Montesquieu, and perhaps of Bayle and Voltaire.

All Spaniards, however, did not conform to this ignominious sacrifice of national genius at the shrine of foreign criticism. Unfortunately the two champions of the old theatre adopted two opposite modes of warfare, each more calculated to confirm than to check the triumph of their enemies.

Nasarre.

Nasarre, in fact, betrayed the cause he professed, and no doubt intended, to support While he abandoned Lope and Calderon to all the fury of the critics, and even brought fresh charges of his own to swell the catalogue of their poetical delinquencies, he absurdly pronounced authors whose names were forgotten, whose works he avowedly had never seen, and whose existence even may be questioned,

to be the masters and rivals of Corneille and Moliere.

Such assertions hardly merited the pains taken to refute them. Some plays of Lope de Rueda, as well as of others of his time, are still extant in MS. They are not destitute of invention, and the style is often more simple, but far less poetical and forcible than that of their successors. But, whatever may be their merits, they by no means warrant so strange an imputation on the Spaniards as that of having possessed writers of the first genius and judgment, without having the taste to relish their beauties, the discernment to recognise their excellence, or the sense to preserve their writings.

La Huerta.

La Huerta was a man of more knowledge, and greater talents for literary controversy; he spoke too with some authority on matters relating to the Spanish theatre,

as he had supplied it with *La Raquel*, a tragedy which, to many stronger recommendations, adds that of being exempt from the anachronisms and irregularities so often objected to its productions.

Teatro Hespañol, an unsuccessful publication.

Whatever advantages as a disputant he might possess, he had occasion for them all to maintain the paradoxes he chose to publish. His answer to French critics and their admirers is contained in prefaces prefixed to several volumes of the *Teatro Hespañol*, a selection of plays executed under his superintendance for the express purpose of vindicating the honour of Spanish literature from the strictures of its adversaries. In these he exposes with some humour a few oversights of Voltaire and others, in their remarks on Lope de Vega and Calderon; and he proves very satisfactorily the imperfection of several translations from them. But, like many injudicious defenders of

Shakspeare, he was not contented with exhibiting the beauties of his author, and with correcting the mistakes and exposing the ignorance of his opponents. Instead of combating the injustice of that criticism which would submit all dramatic works to one standard of excellence, he most unwarrantably arraigned the models themselves as destitute of all poetical merit whatever. Thus was the cause of his countrymen more injured by his intemperance as a critic, than benefited by his labours as an editor. Few were disposed to judge favourably of performances whose panegyrist thought it necessary to maintain that the *Athalie* should have been confined to the walls of a convent, and that the *Tartuffe* was a miserable farce, without humour, character, or invention.

His foreign readers may also reasonably regret the omission of a commentary, and,

without much presumption, might dispute the judgment of the selection. Lope de Vega at least might have been permitted to speak for himself; for, among the hundreds of his comedies yet extant, La Huerta could have found a better answer to his detractors than a pompous exposition of their numbers, a vague and indiscriminate encomium on his talents, and a lamentation over the sarcastic temper of Cervantes. Nothing concerning the most voluminous Spanish poet is to be learned from the *Teatro Hespañol*, but the editor's opinion of him. On the whole, La Huerta, far from retrieving the lost honours of the Spanish theatre, only exposed it to the insults and ridicule of its antagonists.

Revival of taste for old plays.

Insipid imitations of French dramas, and bald translations of modern pieces, in which the theatres of Madrid for some years abounded, have at length done more to

restore the writers of Philip the Fourth's age to their due estimation with the public, than the hazardous assertions of Nasarre, or the intemperate retorts of La Huerta.

The plays of Calderon, Moreto, and Roxas, are now frequently acted. Several of Lope de Vega have been successfully revived, with very slight, though not always judicious alterations. Authors of reputation are no longer ashamed of studying his style; and it is evident that those most celebrated for the severity of their judgment, have not disdained to profit by the perusal of his comedies. The most temperate critics, while they acknowledge his defects, pay a just tribute of admiration to the fertility of his invention, the happiness of his expressions, and the purity of his diction. All agree that his genius reflects honour on his country, though

Revival of Lope's plays.

Influence of his works on Spanish literature.

some may be disposed to question the beneficial influence of his works on the taste and literature of their nation. Indeed, his careless and easy mode of writing made as many poets as poems. He so familiarised his countrymen with the mechanism of verse, he supplied them with such a store of common-place images and epithets, he coined such a variety of convenient expressions, that the very facility of versification seems to have prevented the effusions of genius, and the redundancy of poetical phrases to have superseded all originality of language.

Number of Spanish poets.

The number of poets, or rather versifiers, of his time is almost as wonderful as that of his compositions. Some hundreds of his imitators are to be found in the list of Castilian poets. A contemporary author, Don Estevan Manuel Villegas, in ridiculing the bad comedies of his time, bears

testimony to the facility with which such compositions were produced, and humorously advises his mule-driver to set up for a poet:

> Que si bien consideras en Toledo
> Hubo sastre que pudo hacer comedias,
> Y parar de las musas el denuedo.
> Mozo de mulas eres,—haz tragedias.

> A tailor once could comedies produce,
> And break the restive muses to his goose:
> Then be your flights, as is your office, higher;
> And, as you drive a mule, to tragedy aspire.

It is a common remark in Italy, that in the same proportion as the effusions of *Improvisatori* have acquired correctness and harmony, the excellence of written poems has declined; and that the writings of these voluminous Spaniards, which partook so much of the nature of extemporaneous productions, should resemble them also in enervating the language, seems a very probable conjecture. Perhaps it was in the

efforts which genius made to deviate from so beaten a track, that it wandered into obscurity, and the easy but feeble volubility of Lope's school might induce Gongora and his disciples to hope that inspiration might be obtained by contortion.

Influence of Lope on Spanish and foreign theatres.

But the effect of Lope's labours must not be considered by a reference to language alone. For the general interest of dramatic productions, for the variety and spirit of the dialogue, as well as for some particular plays, all modern theatres are indebted to him. Perfection in any art is only to be attained by successive improvement; and though the last polish often effaces the marks of the preceding workmen, his skill was not less necessary to the accomplishment of the work, than the hand of his more celebrated successor. This consideration will, I hope, excuse the length of this treatise. Had Lope never

written, the master-pieces of Corneille and Moliere might never have been produced; and were not those celebrated compositions known, he might still be regarded as one of the best dramatic authors in Europe.

It seems but an act of justice to pay some honour to the memory of men whose labours have promoted literature, and enabled others to eclipse their reputation. Such was Lope de Vega; once the pride and glory of Spaniards, who in their literary, as in their political achievements, have, by a singular fatality, discovered regions, and opened mines, to benefit their neighbours and their rivals, and to enrich every nation of Europe, but their own. Conclusion.

END OF VOL. I.

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