

II

THE DRAMA OF SPAIN

IN this, my second lecture, on Modern Spain and its Literature, I shall deal with the Spanish theatre; and as I told you yesterday in my introductory lecture, in all of the manifestations of the Spanish spirit we must look to old Spain because modern Spain is a prolongation of the past, recalling former types. This is especially true of the drama. Therefore, at the beginning I propose to consider what we mean by the Spanish drama, and trace its special characteristics.

At the outset I want you to take a more practical view of the drama than the one generally given in books; this is a point about which I feel very keenly since I have been a director of a theatre, myself, and have had some practical experience in staging these plays. I want you to take a larger view of what a real modern Spanish drama should be. We remember what Wagner said about the drama in his book entitled *Opera and Drama*. He says: "Drama has sisters who contribute to its glory: the art of the dance, the art of architecture, the art of painting, and also the art of music, all combine to create this great human pageant."

I think it is very important that this point should be stressed because nowadays more than ever do we need to take a broad view when the theatre has such keen competition from the cinema, the radio, and other things. Today we need an immense amount of enthusiasm to raise up the drama again to its former high place. We remember what drama was in the time of the ancient Greeks. All of us have

read those Greek tragedies, but when we read them with great difficulty at school it was not possible to construe more than twenty lines an hour. Such dull work used to bore us to death and yet those plays were full of passion and blood and the traditions of an old race. Take the story of Agamemnon, his return from Troy and his treacherous murder. Such a drama is a combination of many forces; it is passionate, majestic, and resounds with primitive traditions. Then again it was a religious festival and it had in it the fullness of life, the wealth of color in its music, and all those elements combined to make it into a great scenic pageant. It is for this reason that I say you must get a vision of the drama which will include all these parts, and I feel particularly pleased to speak of the drama in Spain because it needs like the Greek drama to be considered not in a unilateral sense but combined with all the various arts which make it the great manifestation of the spirit of Spain.

Another point I should like to stress now is that Spanish drama like English drama is intensely national in its origin. Spanish drama too rises from the religious art of the Middle Ages. I shall not attempt to go into its remotest origin, but in that most ancient document, that fragment of the play, *The Mystery of the Magi*, we discover a distinct mystery play connected with the cathedral and drawing its force therefrom. For in those days during the sacred festivals it was the custom to give dramatic performances. This was the origin of that essentially Spanish religious short play, the *auto sacramental*, which celebrated the Feast of the Holy Eucharist.

When we consider the *autos sacramentales* let us remember that Shelley in allusion to their poetry refers to the "starry *autos* of Calderón." They were ceremonies in honor of the sacrament, and were originally performed under the

direction of the pastors of the churches, who would raise the funds necessary for their production. I once found a document listing some items of expense which had been incurred in these productions. One particularly interesting one had listed: "wound for St. Francis; wine for the Angels; keys for St. Peter, and a pair of kid gloves for Mary." Such entries as these with the prices paid for each are very instructive. This type of drama shows the primitive life of the people, and reflects the religious spirit of the age. If we go to Seville during Holy Week, or to any of the little cities of Southern Spain, we shall find these processions, with the stages all set with figures of the Passion, from the Gospels or the Bible, and we shall recognize in them a survival of this old idea of the drama in Spain.

Originally drama in Spain was staged in a very primitive way. All the properties were carried about on a cart, and on these carts or structures the people used to act. Two carts would be placed together to form a platform, and they would be driven around from city to city, and in various parts of the cities, and the people would revel in this drama—the religious drama of Spain. Spanish drama is a combination of all those various elements, and it is important to us to realize its religious origin.

The next point of interest which we should consider is the influence of the troubadours and wandering *jongleurs*. The troubadours were wandering poets and they were assisted by the *jongleurs* who resemble gypsies. Their work sometimes took on a sort of semi-dramatic form, or dialogue, and the vagabond musicians played instruments, recited verses; some carried monkeys on a string; others were organ-grinders; and so you find them wandering about in the Middle Ages as they do in our day. When the kings would go on their pilgrimages to Saint James of Compostela they

would be followed by those troubadours and musicians who would sing and recite or work out their rude farces for the delectation of the public.

The third element which appeared later, about the time of the Italian Renaissance, was the *pastoral eclogue*, which was dramatic in form; this was really just a dialogue between two persons, describing the beauty of the landscape, the trees, the air, and various things, and was lyric in character. We find these particularly in the works of Encina, which were produced during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic King and Queen. This man, Encina—a court musician, who was steeped in Italian Renaissance literature, although he also had a dash of Spanish nationalism,—produced at the court these eclogues, beautiful in style, semi-musical in character. And this is where the musical element enters the drama, imparting to it plastic rhythm.

In the sixteenth century in Spain we also see the influence of Italy in the form of what we call the *Commedia de l'arte*, or improvised comedy. It was improvised, unwritten comedy; and it was performed by actors who wore masks and represented fixed characters. One man would represent a particular character all his life. The author would just write the synopsis of the play, and the actors would improvise the rest. The characters in these plays were the silly, doddering, lovesick old man, called Pantalone; then there would be the pedantic doctor, who was a university professor, and you have as the most important of all, the two servants, one stupid and who was generally called Arlecchin, and the other a clever, Neapolitan rogue, called Pulcinella—Pulcinella cheated on every side, stole when he could and lied without conscience, and it is from him that we get the origin of our Punch. The plot of the play worked around the character of the silly old man, and, of course,

it was the clever servant who got him out of his scrapes. This play was a reaction against another sort of play, the literary drama, which appealed to the "high brows." But the interest of the people centred mainly in the servants, thieves, simple-minded rustics, and different social types of that age. Such a play became very popular in Spain in the sixteenth century, having been introduced there by Lope de Rueda, a Sevillian who occupied himself both as a writer and an actor. He was the true type of the wandering player and played all over Spain. Owing to the influence of the *Commedia de l'arte* Lope de Rueda wrote what were called *pasos*, little one-act sketches of everyday life, that showed the life not of the great dukes and duchesses but of the poor. Afterwards it became the custom to act one of them between the acts of a big three-act play so as to keep the public in a good humor. Some of them are simple dialogues between a man and wife about a crop of olives which they are going to plant. The man says: "With the money we shall make I shall do this and that;" and the wife says she will buy a new suit, and a new frock, and it all follows the moral of "counting your chickens before they are hatched," as the barber's sixth brother did in the *Arabian Nights*.

This then was the drama of Spain in the sixteenth century, when the building up of the Spanish Empire was being accomplished during the years from 1492 to 1578. At this time Spain was making her great gesture, and battling heroically for her ideals, and this heroism was reflected in the creation of her national theatre. It was one man who really created the Spanish national theatre, and that man was Lope de Vega. He was one of the most wonderful Spaniards who ever lived. I should like to take him as the symbol of this lecture on the drama—the symbol of the gallant Don Juan, one of Spain's national heroes. There

has never been a more facile dramatist: it is said that he wrote two thousand plays, several hundred *autos sacramentales*, as well as many poems and other literary productions. I remember that once a Spanish scholar, who had been rambling among the documents at the King's palace, discovered a parcel of fifty new plays of Lope de Vega.

Lope de Vega, who was a contemporary of Shakespeare, was born in Madrid in 1562. At the age of seventeen he fell in love with a young lady with whom he eloped; and as a result of his escapade he was brought to justice. His whole life was a story of Don Juan, of one love affair after another. He was a gallant, and the theme of this lecture is the gallantry of the Spaniard. Not only was he the gallant but also the hero, for he fought in the Spanish Armada; and during the lulls in the battle he would sit down and write the most beautiful poems on any scrap of paper he could find, poems connected with the war as well as poems which were very typical of the Renaissance writers. Later on when he had won fame as a dramatist he became the great rage in Madrid. People rushed to see his plays and he exercised the functions of a dictator over the Spanish stage. I have referred to his enormous facility: it has been said that he could write a play in twenty-four hours. Perhaps the reason for this was that he had trained himself in the power of being able to write out a synopsis of a plot, and then very quickly figure in the characters and clothe them in beautiful verse. His plays, though often written rapidly, are full of beautiful poems of various meters, and in any case it is to him that we owe the creation of the great drama of Spain.

And before I leave Lope de Vega allow me to say a few words about what we call historic drama, for there he was a peerless master. It was he who dramatized the whole epic of Spain and brought on the stage the wonderful gesture of

Spain and its empire. His dramatizations deal with historic legends, the ballads and pride of Spain from the earliest time; and at times these enormous pageants have something of the pageantry of Shakespeare. Shakespeare believed in crowding the stage in a way that was the antithesis of the French method. You know of the many characters in Hamlet; yet a French dramatist, as the late Mr. Archer said, would write Hamlet in six characters and make it perfect. Lope de Vega would go to the opposite extreme: he would write it with thirty-six, for then he could crowd his stage with marvelous pageantry.

As a contrast to his historical plays we find a type known as "the cloak and sword play," which deals with life in Madrid; the gallant in his cloak and his mask, carrying his sword. You remember, of course, conditions of life in Madrid in that age. Life was not a sinecure—I must say that I much prefer to live in our own more prosaic modern days, because in those days it was not unlikely that when you happened to be walking along the street at night somebody would meet you, and would engage in conversation with you, and would pick a quarrel. Then swords would be drawn, and one of you was sure to die of wounds. It would make an interesting study to investigate the statistics of dueling in Spain in the sixteenth as well as in the seventeenth century. Many young nobles fell in battle in those days, but still more fell at home at the hand of the duelist. There was hardly a night passed without a terrible duel, in which a man was killed, and all this we can ascertain from the plays of the period. The drama during that time was full of night intrigues, wandering in the Prado, and the inevitable duels—the clashing of swords resounds all through the drama of the Golden Age.

Again I want to remind you that the literature of Spain

is essentially a military literature. In *Don Quixote* one of the most interesting chapters develops the argument whether the professor or the soldier was the better man, and Cervantes in his calm way gives the pros and the cons, and at last settles the point in favor of the soldier, whose life is the nobler one.

Another thing you find in this drama of Lope de Vega and Tirso de Molina and their followers is the attitude of the man towards woman. We see a woman being carried off and locked up in a convent by her brother because he wants to prevent her from marrying a man he does not like—it becomes all a matter of family honor and, if necessary, the family honor must be saved even at the cost of bloodshed. There were some extenuating circumstances, of course, for if you were in the midst of a duel and the King should appear, you should drop your sword. You see there was a certain law of chivalry that had to be followed. And yet, when we visualize those days we imagine the Spanish woman as a kind of person who was kept locked up and had no will of her own. As a matter of fact, if we read Lope de Vega we find she is quite the opposite. She is very masculine; at times we meet her dressed up as a man, and if her lover happens to leave her, she always manages to run him to earth. In Lope de Vega we meet this amazing masculine woman. It is good to read his plays to see how wrong an idea we have had of Spain and the Spanish woman. Tirso de Molina's heroine also is passionate, fine looking, matronly, and very cold-blooded; if she has been dishonored she does not hesitate to dress up as a man, take her sword, go to this man and run him through the body.

I referred before to the one-act plays of Lope de Rueda. In the period after Lope de Vega these one-act plays became very popular. Ordinary plays were originally quite long, in

five or more acts, and reduced, in the time of de Vega and Tirso de Molina, to three. Moreover, in earlier times people had more time, and they liked a play which took a long time. Later on, however, there were such long waits between the acts that they got the idea of having these little one-act plays inserted between the acts; these were called *entremeses* or *sainetes*, that is to say, tit-bits, like the dainties we are accustomed to eat between the courses of our meals.

In the seventeenth century we find an important author, Quiñones de Benavente, writing these little plays which he called the "crutches" of the big play because, as he said, they hold up the sometimes tottering body of the big play. For often it was the case that the big play was practically sure to fail on account of dullness, and so the intelligent producers would buy up two of these special little plays and insert them between the acts of the play, and the public was so delighted with them that they were willing to endure long hours of dullness. A Spanish author friend of mine once described these short plays to me: "They remind me of our food; first of all there is the *loa* or *apéritif*, then after the first course we have the big courses, which can be likened to the acts of the play, but between them we have the *entremeses* and finally the *sainete* as sweet." He remarked: "The Spanish are moderate people in most matters but when they start eating they never stop until repletion is reached." Thus you get an idea of de Vega and his work.

The next figure in the Spanish theatre whom I want to consider is Calderón who is acknowledged to be one of the greatest philosophical dramatists who ever lived. Pedro Calderón de la Barca was born in Madrid in 1600. He is the last of the great seventeenth century or "Golden Age" writers. He wrote many philosophical and religious plays but also a great many cloak and sword plays of contempo-

rary life. His *Life is a Dream*, which is considered his masterpiece, inspired the poetry of many writers, including Shelley. In his cloak and sword plays the main scheme is the point of honor—when a man believes his wife to be unfaithful, and he goes home and first kills her and her lover, and then burns the house over them. That is one type of play that Calderón wrote, and such a type has prejudiced people, and has given them a wrong impression of Spain, especially if you read these plays after Cervantes, who is so balanced in judgment and so unprejudiced. In *Don Quixote*, and in his other books, when he speaks of woman, he always speaks of her in a charmingly ironic way; he says you have to humor her; his idea is that you should not kill your wife if she has been unfaithful for probably you are to blame. Let her live on: being a woman she is a mass of frailties and cannot resist temptations. This is more or less the attitude of Cervantes—a charitable and rather modern attitude. But in his novels you get a more realistic view than in Calderón, who says that at the slightest infringement you should take her and lock her up, marry her to someone she hates, or kill her. These two ideas in the novel and in the drama are at variance, and would be interesting to develop fully.

Now I wish to come to one of the main themes of drama, that is to say, the theme of Don Juan, and the character of Spanish gallantry. What do we mean by Don Juan? Who is this man who goes about breaking the hearts of the women who love him, and whom he casts aside? Around this man there hovers the aroma of the flowers he has crushed and thrown away. Not for him the tenderness of Burns who spared the wee crimson-tipped daisy. What is the history of Don Juan?

Spain, as I said yesterday, is a country of clashing points

of view and it is this that gives strength to the literature of the country. In Western Europe we have always believed that woman must be set upon a pedestal; she must be looked upon as a wonderful vision; the woman to whom the troubadours sing songs and write poems. When the warriors started out on the Crusades they would always have in their minds this vision of a wonderful maiden waiting for their return. In the north, the vision would be of a dark-haired girl; in the south, a light-haired one. Men dreamt of this ideal, intangible maiden as they toiled. Dante, in one of his sonnets, invoked "Ladies that have intelligence of Love"—*Donne che avete intelletto d'amore*—and his invocation was to spiritual love which the people symbolized in the Blessed Virgin Mary. He said:

I of my lady wish with you to speak;
Not that I can believe to end her praise,
But to discourse that I may ease my mind.

That is the idea of woman that predominated in all Western Europe, spread afar by these troubadours, into Galicia and into Sicily, where the white rose was taken as a symbol of the maiden. In Spain, on the contrary, there is also the idea that man, not woman, was the centre of the universe; that idea is essentially Moorish and Arabic. He is the centre of the universe and woman is his plaything; when he crosses into Paradise he will meet wonderful maidens who will be his houris, but woman herself is not admitted to enjoy that paradise of men. When Tirso de Molina wrote his play, *El Burlador de Sevilla*, he created in Don Juan the hero the prototype of the sinister libertine and we find his descendants in literature ever since—this idea of the strutting gallant who insults the dead was not entirely original for we find it even in the folk-lore in the Middle Ages. The credit, however, is Tirso de Molina's who was able to weave

out of it one of the great plays of literature. It is interesting to note that Don Juan has been declining ever since those palmy days of the seventeenth century, for Molière's Don Juan is more of an abstraction—a rehearsal of the theories that were later on to dominate the eighteenth century.

In the eighteenth century we have the Don Juan of Goldoni, who is an unreal buffoon; then when we come to Byron, whose Don Juan is a beautiful youth, we find that the women always run after him; he is the victim, and instead of being the type of dominating man, he is not the gallant but the victim of women in love with his fatal beauty. And as we advance in the nineteenth century he is still declining, though there is one exception, for in Zorrilla you get a fine, Spanish Don Juan. But, in the end, what happens? Instead of being condemned to hell forever, he is saved at the point of death by the pure girl who resembles Marguerite in the opera *Faust*. This sentimental idea is characteristic of 1844. Then later on in the nineteenth century we find José Echegaray writing a play called the *Son of Don Juan*, which describes the life of the son of a rake who lived in his youth a dissolute life, and the son pays for his father's sins. Here you have another Don Juan but one who is weak and gouty and who sees the decline of his weak anaemic son. It is the same idea as we find in Ibsen's *Ghosts*—the son paying for the father's sins. The fathers have eaten of sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. After that play Don Juan descends still further; he loses all his strutting gallantry, until we come to Bernard Shaw, where the central idea is that woman pursues man. A woman treats her husband as a soldier treats his rifle. She looks at the husband only as a potential father, the mere *pater familias*. In a feminist world what has happened to Don Juan? Where is the wonderful hero of the past? What has become of him?

We do meet him at times, always trying to search for some obscure joy—sometimes so profound that nobody can understand his meaning except the scholars who have written his life in the past. Finally then there are the Brothers Quinteros, who have written a play called *Don Juan, a Good Person*. Here, in my opinion, is the final death of Don Juan, for when Don Juan has become good, he has lost his whole reason for existence. I remark in passing that Strindberg, who wrote his plays filled with hatred and jealousy of women, would, I am sure, have shed tears of blood if he had watched the decline of Don Juan in Spanish drama.

Now, to return to the development of the Spanish theatre. I have told you about the seventeenth century, and have described Don Juan because he appears all the way through the literature of the period. In the eighteenth century we witness the decline of Spain; and its drama, national as it was, was destined to share the fate of its people. As the empire crumbles, the writers lose the power of expressing themselves nationally and bow their heads to foreign culture. At this time when French influence was invading all Europe, and when the great singer Farinelli founded a theatre in Madrid, Italian singers were brought there to entertain the people, and the nationalism of Spain was driven underground. We see all these influences in the one-act plays of Ramón de la Cruz, where in twenty-five minutes he paints for us a vivid picture of the lives of the eighteenth century people of Spain with whom he lived. He attacks Spain vigorously for importing everything from Italy, and elsewhere; he says it is terrible to watch Spaniards using razors from Paris and soap from Montpellier, and trilling and quavering like Italians; he satirizes the craze of Spaniards for everything foreign. In one play he founds a hospital for

people who are found following foreign customs, for he, himself, was an ardent nationalist. Thus beneath all the mass of lifeless foreign imitation we can discern the traditional spirit of Spain. In the nineteenth century there is the romantic movement, which was not altogether original, but was only a continuance of that romanticism which has always existed in Spain. Superficially it degenerated often into being a copy of the French romantic movement. Of more interest is the gradual awakening of a new spirit in the drama, that tended to become more and more of a social movement. You take artists like Moratín or Bretón de los Herreros who brought into the Spanish drama the idea of portraying the soul of the people: instead of Don Quixote and Don Juan, we hear of the soul of the people, which comes to obsess the dramatist more and more. At the end of the century the modern movement in the theatre starts and of all the writers I think the man most responsible for introducing modern drama, as we understand it in Europe, was Jacinto Benavente.

Archer in his book, *The Old and New Drama*, makes a noble defence for the modern drama as against the old as an art-form. If we take the drama of the Elizabethan Age and the Spanish Golden Age, we find in it an exaggerated amount of rhetoric and lyric poetry, whereas modern drama has thrown off all that extraneous rhetoric and poetry and become a mirror of modern life. In the theatre of today with its perfect lighting all that lyric poetry and all those tremendously long rhetorical tirades hold up the action of the play. Take for example Shakespeare's *Othello*, where in the last act you find the stage piled with dead; Iago has been unmasked; Emilia lies dying, beside the corpse of Desdemona. What can the author do to finish the play? How can he relieve this tension? But then Shakespeare as the

supreme artist raises the whole play on to a higher plane by one speech, where Othello says :

Soft you; a word or two before you go.
I have done the state some service and they know't.
No more of that.—I pray you, in your letters
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate—
Nor set down aught in malice: Then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely, but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought,
Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,
Like the base Indian, "threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe."

And this is one of the only cases where only the greatest touch suffices and Shakespeare was the only human being who could wield the wand. How many plays have fallen flat because of rhetoric! We have seen the entire action of the play stop while, as the men stand there holding their guns, the primadonna advances to the footlights, and utters philosophical speech which has nothing to do with the play. This necessity for avoiding rhetoric is especially true in the case of the modern stage, with its workers back stage, such as the scene decorator, the electrical artist with his switchboard. With so many people to stress the meaning of the play we do not need all this rhetoric. It is useless to listen to a long poetic description of the "woods through which we are advancing, the birds we hear singing on high," for with the assistance of such great producers as Gordon Craig and Max Reinhardt, and with good men at the switchboard, we are able to visualize the whole scene. A futurist stage director said to me lately in Italy: "We have been able to do away with a good deal of the old paraphernalia; I hope we can in time do away with the actor—even with the author—perhaps we can do away with everyone except the stage director and his electric apparatus." And so we

find that the drama has sloughed off its rhetoric, so that everything may fit compactly into the scheme. In Spain an attempt was made to introduce such a play by Gaspar but it was Benavente who made the stage an expression of the modern life in Spain.

Following in the tradition of Moratín and Bretón we always discover in Benavente's plays the social idea. His earlier works are satires on the aristocracy and the bourgeois of Spain; and his method was to develop the whole play by means of very subtle dialogue between different people without any need of the explanatory prologue which delays the action for twenty years to show that the man had a daughter who was kidnapped at six and kept by gypsies until she was sixteen. He makes all the action develop from the dialogue of the play. In the construction of his plays he follows the method of Ibsen or still more the French method of Henri Becque, but he goes still farther and modernizes it. Besides this, Benavente has performed another function in Spain today. He was a kind of Oscar Wilde; his epigrams and plays were so well-known and so popular that he would often sacrifice a whole situation for an epigram. I used to see him in Madrid, in the Green Room of the Teatro Español, which is the classic theatre of Spain: he would come in and sit down at one side of the room and fire off rockets of little epigrams; then he would move rapidly across the room to the other side and fire off another set, and those epigrams were always told all over Madrid and people would say: "Have you heard Benavente's latest?"

Many of his plays are based on psychological studies: for instance he describes the case of two sisters in love with the same man, or else the case of a man who is unfaithful to his wife, while she, a true Spanish woman, looks on him

as a wayward child, who will come back to the fold in the end, when she will say: "I have been waiting for I knew you would come back, and the joy of your return will be to me roses in autumn." In all these plays there is a certain mouthpiece character who is nearly always the voice or wit of the author. Benavente has written about one hundred and fifty plays, and in all of them you will find this character who is always a man of the world, a smart bachelor who takes an intelligent interest in his married friends' affairs: he is a reporter of gossip in boudoirs, clubs, and theatres, and he is exceedingly useful to the author as a pivot for the play. All Benavente's plays are written in a sharp, pungent style which is most effective when spoken by good modern actors and the clear style is characteristic of his ordered mind. I should like to tell you a little anecdote about Benavente that gives an idea of his wit. He once said: "When you are writing a play, you must always tell the real point of your play, say, three times in the play, and the first time you will find that only the intelligent members of the audience will understand it; the second time the rest of the people will understand it, but you must always say it a third time, for only then can you be sure that everybody in the audience has understood, except of course, deaf people and some critics!" His reference to deaf people reminds me that when I was in Madrid some years ago I went to many of the first nights of the plays there, and once while at Gregorio Martínez Sierra's theatre I noticed how many people were there with ear trumpets, and I inquired about that. He said: "The first night all the deaf people come to see the play because they enjoy seeing demonstrations against a play, and they are the loudest and most prominent in stamping or whistling the play off the boards." There is no doubt that this custom prevents the first night of a play in Madrid from being dull,

as it is with us many times. It is always interesting, because there is that eagerness of the public either to whistle off a play that is dull, or to acclaim it when good.

Now to return to Benavente and his plays—his earlier works were decidedly satirical in style, and then later on he imagined that he was a kind of preacher. He said: "I know people have criticized me for preaching from the stage, but as you know, it is a wonderful pulpit." He sometimes sacrifices the play in order to introduce a moral. In some of his romantic plays there is an interesting contrast between the traditional ideas of Spain and the ideas of the modern world. In his *Saturday Night*, for example, the scene is laid on the Riviera and pictures the international society gathered there, and their adventures. Princes, dukes, and millionaires meet in a land that does not seem to belong to any country: the scenery is beautiful in contrast to the ugly lives of these men who talk every language, and possess every vice. We see a vivid picture of the lives of these people in an enormous hotel, where the real ruler is the manager, for, you see, he knows the private life and the intrigue of everyone. No author surpasses Benavente in that kind of drama. He can say the most malicious things in such a subtle way that you hardly notice the sting until it has passed awhile; then you suddenly realize that he has uttered a piece of malicious wickedness. Another of his beautiful plays is called *Bonds of Interest*. Here you have the author transporting the characters from the old drama into the modern. The whole drama is a mixture of the archaic and the poetic, and the author makes it effective by choosing as characters our old friends Arlecchino and Pulcinella.

Before I end my lecture I must say a word or two about another personality who is doing valiant work for the

modern drama, and that is Gregorio Martínez Sierra. His plays have been great successes not only in Spain but in Europe and America. I saw Miss Ethel Barrymore act in one of them in New York, and they were played in London to full houses. I have often been asked what it is that the public likes in these plays. How do they reach the audience? Take for example the *Cradle Song*. That is a play dealing with convent life, where a foundling baby who has been left on the steps of a convent, is brought in and adopted by Dominican nuns. The child awakens in the nuns the instinct of maternity which they had renounced when they took the veil. When the child is eighteen she goes off to be married, and as she leaves the convent we feel the sadness and gloom that will descend on the nuns; no more will they hear the laughter of this child who brought a ray of light into their lives. The author, though he develops his thesis of freedom, shows the beauty that exists in the lives of the nuns and creates his best dramatic effects by simplicity of treatment. Sierra has been very successful in Spain with many other of his productions, such as the *Kingdom of God*, *The Two Shepherds*, *The Romantic Young Lady*—in all of which there is a beautiful touch that brings to mind another point, the intense feminism of the author. In his works you see a woman utterly unlike the stage Spanish woman who usually appears in foreign books on Spain, with her comb in her hair and picturesquely gowned. Sierra makes her maternal and yet gives her a poignant beauty. In his own theatre in Madrid, the Teatro Eslava, he has started a movement which I think is worthy of notice. When he finds a play to be a failure economically he puts on the next week a special revue written by himself and brings in dancers and gets a good modern composer to add music. Thus we find in his theatre an attempt to bring

together the various elements that should not be separated in the drama.

The brothers Alvarez Quinteros also have had some of their plays done in New York. These two brothers have spent their lives collaborating and their plays develop along the same way as Sierra's, except that they set them in the surroundings of Seville. I have heard that their whole family aids them in writing these plays which centre in the patio, or courtyard of the Sevillian house, where the women work and sing and the fountain bubbles and the flies buzz in the heat of the southern day.

I should like to say a few words about the most characteristic art of Spain, that is, the dance. In Spain the dance is not a mere frivolous entertainment; it is a part of the ritual of life. You find it appearing all the way through the art and history of the country. In Spanish drama the dance has always played a most prominent part. In the time of Lope de Vega every act of a play finished with a dance. It was a dramatic dance, and portrayed some of the events of the play. Today if we watch a dance of two gypsies, where a man and a woman perform, it is a whole drama, a contest between the two sexes; he tries to see her face; she flees; finally they dance together in an outburst of frenzied passion. It is intensely dramatic, and it is a part of the drama of Spain. Spain shows the way to a bigger and broader idea of drama by her plastic rhythms.

We must not listen too closely to Archer when he says that the modern drama must be a mirror of modern life; that was a correct view at first, when drama had to slough off its exaggerated rhetoric, but we have developed beyond that idea in the theatre of today, and we now realize that we must bring back those great elements of the past, the dance, music, plastic rhythm—the rhythm of the ancient

drama. We must make it intensify our lives and become a full expression, not a mirror of our modern life.

It is interesting to notice how many dramatists have gone back to the old idea of the "aside," which was anathema to the dramatists of the last generation.

And so we must in these modern days learn what to throw away and what to conserve. We must discriminate, and we must, so to speak, take out our toys that have been hidden away for years and polish them up and make them new, because that is the only way in which we can really accomplish anything for the modern theatre.