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THE SPANISH AND ITALIAN COLLECTIONS

By Dr. J. P. Wickersham Crawford

As the first purchase from the fund generously established by the late Mrs. Sabin W. Colton, Jr., our Library came into possession of the Spanish collection of the late Hugo A. Rennert, who was professor of romanic languages from 1885 until his death on December 31, 1927. This library was generally regarded as the most valuable private collection of old Spanish books in the world. Dr. Rennert was known chiefly as the biographer of Lope de Vega, the founder of the Spanish national drama, and, as might be expected, his collection is especially rich in old editions of this famous playwright and poet who was born in 1565.

While preparing his "Life of Lope de Vega," Dr. Rennert made a collection of the non-dramatic works of his favorite author, which consists almost wholly of first editions and is unparalleled in this country. Here are found the more important of his youthful works: "The Beauty of Angelica" (1602), written by Lope in 1588 while soldiering in the Invincible Armada; a rare edition of "The Arcadia" (1605), in which he describes the unhappy love affairs of his young patron, Don Antonio, Duke of Alba; and copies of the three editions of "The Pilgrim in His Own Country" (1604, 1608, 1618), which include the most authentic lists of Lope's plays that we possess. No other library in the United States contains these three editions.

Mention should also be made of the very rare editions of Lope's "Verses" (1605 and 1611), the latter containing the famous treatise on "The New Art of Writing Plays," addressed to the Academy of Madrid, in which in a bantering tone Lope defends the so-called irregularities in his plays and his violation of the sacrosanct classical unities; and the first edition of "Jerusalem
Conquered” (1609), an epic poem in which he attempted, without success, to rival Tasso’s “Jerusalem Delivered.”

Other notable volumes, most of them first editions, that represent the later years of Lope’s literary activity, are “Filomena” (1622), noteworthy for its defense against the Euphuistic poets of the day; “Circe” (1624); “The Tragic Crown” (1627), a religious epic that mirrors Spanish resentment at the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots; “Apollo’s Laurel” (1630), in which he extols the poets of his time; the “Dorotea” (1632), a semi-autobiographical novel in which Lope describes unblushingly some of his youthful escapades; and the diverting volume entitled “Rimes of Tomé de Burguillos” (1634), in which Lope’s wit appears at its best.

Lope de Vega died in the year 1635, and contemporary accounts tell us that all Madrid mourned his passing. And his fame had spread to Italy, as is attested by the little book published the following year at Venice with the title “Poetical Obsequies, or the Lament of the Italian Muses on the Death of Lope de Vega, Distinguished and Incomparable Spanish Poet.”

As a poet, Lope holds a position of high rank, but as the founder of the national drama in Spain his position is supreme, and it is in its priceless collection of his plays that the Rennert collection surpasses all others with the exception of the National Library at Madrid and the British Museum. The world has never seen dramatic inventiveness equal to his, even when due allowance is made for probable exaggeration in his own statements and those of his friends regarding the number of plays he wrote. The epithet “Nature’s prodigy,” applied to him by Cervantes, has been accepted by posterity. Lope did not ascribe much importance to the composition of his dramatic works, and a hundred more or less in his estimates of his production seem to have meant little to him. In 1632 he wrote that he had composed no less than fifteen hundred, while his friend Perez de Montalban in 1636 set the mark at eighteen hundred. Dr. Rennert and other scholars have spent much time in trying to identify the genuine plays of Lope; no easy task, for in the heyday of his popularity, unscrupulous printers frequently placed his name on mediocre works in order to sell them. Careful study reveals that four hundred and thirty-one comedies of Lope are extant, and of this number Professor Rennert’s collection contains about three hundred in original editions. Some idea of the total may be gathered by a critic’s statement that if a person should set to work to read the extant plays, at the rate of eight hours of reading each day, he would require a little over six months to complete his task.
The chief repository of the plays of Lope de Vega consists in the twenty-five volumes or parts published between 1604 and 1647, with an average of twelve plays to each volume. Complete sets are found only in two foreign libraries, and even separate volumes have become so rare that they practically never appear on the book market. Dr. Rennert's set is complete with the exception of the sixteenth volume and portions of the third and eighteenth. No collection on this side of the Atlantic can be compared with it. In addition to those already mentioned, it contains extra editions of a number of these volumes, as, for example, four copies of the first part, all of which are important for the preparation of critical texts.

The library is also notably rich in editions of the Valencian playwrights, and Calderon de la Barca and Moreto. Practically every one of the minor dramatists of the Golden Age is found here in original editions.

Early editions of Spanish lyric poets also form an exceedingly important section. Juan de Mena, the most distinguished poet of the fifteenth century, is represented in the rare black-letter edition of "Las Trecientas" (1520), and also by an edition of the complete works printed by Martin Nucio at Antwerp in 1552. Auzias March, who sang so passionately of his love for Teresa Bou, appears in the Catalan original of Barcelona, 1545. Boscan and Garcilaso de la Vega, devoted friends during their lifetime, who by their metrical innovations changed the whole course of Spanish poetry, appear together in an edition published at Salamanca in 1547, while Garcilaso stands alone in an edition, almost unknown to bibliographers, printed at Coimbra in 1600.

Fernando de Herrera appears as an inspired patriotic poet in the rare edition of Seville, 1619, and as a rather pedantic commentator in his famous edition of Garcilaso (1580), which has never been reprinted. Lopez Maldonado's "Cancionero" (1586) contains graceful verse that has only recently been reprinted, and includes one of the first published compositions of Cervantes. The "Discourses, Epistles and Epigrams" (1605) of the Aragonese Rey de Artieda is chiefly interesting for its criticism of Lope de Vega and other popular dramatists who, in the poet's opinion, catered overmuch to the tastes of the groundlings. Pedro de Espinosa, in the first part of his "Flowers of Illustrious Poets of Spain" (1605), gives us the most important anthology of the poetry of his time. This copy was formerly in the library of the noted bibliographer, Gallardo, and bears important marginal notes dating back to the early seventeenth century. Another rarity is the volume of "Tragical and Lyrical Works" (1609) of Cristobal de Virues which contains the lyrical verse of this soldier-poet, as well as five
tragedies which are among the rarest in Spanish literature, and no less rare is the first edition of the poetical works of the distinguished diplomat and humanist, Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, published at Madrid in 1610, thirty-five years after his death.

Not all the poets accepted the sonnet and other verse forms that Boscan and Garcilaso imported from Italy, and the chief champion of old-fashioned verse and traditional measures was Cristobal de Castillejo, of whose works there is an edition of Antwerp, 1598. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ballad literature, for which Spain is famous, flourished alongside of the Italianate forms, and of these we find notable examples in the “Cancionero de Romances” (1555), “Romancero General” (Medina del Campo, 1602), and “Romancero General” (Madrid, 1604).

Charming translations of Anacreon and other classical poets are found in the “Erotic or Amatory Rimes” (1617) of Esteban Manuel de Villegas with the title page containing a cut that represents the rising sun, with the caption Me surgente quid istae? by which the young poet bumptiously referred to his own exalted merits. It excited so much ridicule on the part of his contemporaries that the title page was suppressed almost as soon as the edition appeared. Francisco de Quevedo Villegas is represented by two volumes of great rarity, “The Spanish Parnassus and Castilian Muses” (1660), “The Last Three Castilian Muses” (1670), as well as by important editions of his prose works.

The rather doubtful honor of making fashionable the artificial, over-ornate style that characterized Spanish poetry in the seventeenth century is generally accorded to Luis Carrillo y Sotomayor, whose works are found here in the edition of 1613. His innovations seem timid enough when compared with the bold experiments of Luis de Gongora, a far greater poet who was the storm center of a most bitter literary controversy in the early years of the seventeenth century. Gongora is here represented by rare editions of 1644, 1648, and 1658, and also by a valuable manuscript collection. The library also contains the first edition (1629) of the verse of one of Gongora’s most devoted admirers and imitators, the Count of Villamediana, who met a tragic death one evening in the year 1622 on his return from an entertainment at the Royal Palace. Rumor whispered that the Count had paid court too openly to the Queen. There is also an important manuscript collection of this poet’s works.

Important Cervantes items are editions of “Don Quixote” of 1607 and 1608 and a French translation of 1639; an edition of the “Exemplary Novels” of 1615, with an Italian translation of
1629; a copy of the exceedingly rare first edition of the "Eight Comedies and Eight Interludes" (1615), sumptuously bound in red morocco; and the 1617 edition of the "Wanderings of Persiles and Sigismunda." Of great sentimental interest is Haedo's "Topography and History of Algiers" (1612), which incidentally describes the heroism of Cervantes during his years of captivity by the Barbary pirates. The author, a good friar, wrote his narrative long before Cervantes became famous.

Spain's pastoral novel began with the publication of Montemayor's "Diana," a famous book that merited imitation by Shakespeare. The library contains editions of 1561, 1580, 1585, and 1624; French translations of 1592 and 1615, and the even rarer edition of Montemayor's lyric poetry published in 1554. Practically all the subsequent novels of this type are found here in first or early editions, for example, "The Golden Age in the Forests of Erifile" (1608) of Balbuena; "The Constant Amarilis" (1609) of Suarez de Figueroa; "Cintia of Aranjuez" (1629) by Gabriel de Corral; and "Experiences of Love and Fortune" (1633) by Francisco de las Cuevas.

The creation of the rogue or picaresque novel was Spain's greatest contribution to European fiction in the sixteenth century, and nearly all the famous Spanish rogues are found in the library. The prototype, "Lazarillo de Tormes" is here in an edition published at Antwerp in 1555, one year after the original edition. His illustrious descendant "Guzman de Alfarache" by Mateo Aleman follows in an edition of 1615, and in a beautiful English translation (1622) by James Mabbe (who signed himself Diego Puede-Ser, translating his name into Spanish), which contains, along with other interesting preliminary matter, verses by Ben Jonson in praise of the author and the translator. From the Salva Library comes a copy of "The Entertaining Journey" (1603) by Agustin de Rojas, with its delightful description of the experiences of a troupe of strolling players. Other rogue novels are the famous "Picara Justina" (1608), with a French translation of the year 1636, and Vicente Espinel's "Life of Marcos de Obregon" (1618).

The Italian collection at our University owes its importance to Francis Campbell Macaulay who, during a residence abroad of many years, collected rare Italian books and, on his death at Naples in 1896, bequeathed his library to the University of Pennsylvania. The Dante collection, consisting of about 2500 volumes, was catalogued with the assistance of Dr. Theodore W. Koch and was opened to the public in 1901.

Editions of the "Divina Commedia" naturally deserve first
mention. The earliest is the Nidobeatine text printed at Milan in 1477-78, which is closely followed by the rare Venice edition of 1478. The two other incunabula in the collection are the Venice edition of 1484 with Landino's commentary, and the Venice edition of 1497 with occasional woodcuts and vignettes.

The Aldine edition printed at Venice in 1502 leads the sixteenth century texts. This is of interest because of the correctness of the text and typographical beauty, and also because it is the earliest edition in octavo. Beside it stands the first of the Aldine counterfeits printed at Lyons in 1502 or 1503.

Among the sixteenth century editions, which number twenty-eight, may be mentioned the exceedingly rare text printed at Florence in 1506; the handsome folio edition of Venice, 1507; Venice, 1512; Venice, 1515; Paganino's edition of 1515; and the folio edition of Venice, 1529, the first to contain a portrait of Dante worthy of that name.

Other rarities include a complete set of the volumes of the "Divina Commedia" issued by the city of Brescia in 1828; the edition of Filippo Macchiavelli (1819) with three volumes of original drawings by Gian Giacomo Macchiavelli, published at Rome in 1806-07; and the first edition of "De vulgari eloquentia" published at Paris in 1577.

The collection contains twenty-five translations in English of the "Divina Commedia," and versions in Armenian, Bohemian, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian dialects, Latin, and Spanish.

The two earliest editions of Petrarch in the Library are the Venice, 1490, edition of the "Trionfi, Sonetti et Canzoni" and the Cremona, 1492, edition of the treatise "De remediis utriusque fortunae." We also have the Venice, 1501, edition of the "Opera," the second collective edition of the Latin works, and the fourth edition of the same, together with the Italian verse, published at Bâle in 1554. We have a total of thirteen editions of the "Rime" published during the sixteenth century.

Of Boccaccio we have a fifteenth century manuscript of the "Teseide;" a very rare edition of the Latin work "De genealogiis deorum gentilium," Venice, 1472, bound with the treatise "De montibus, sylvis, etc.," Venice, 1473; Marchigiano's very rare translation of the "De Mulieribus Claris," Venice, 1506; editions printed at Venice of "Filocolo" (1488) and "Fiammetta" (1491); the Florence edition, 1516, of the "Corbaccio," and various editions of the "Ameto" beginning with the Florentine of 1521.

The Library contains eighteen sixteenth century editions of
the “Gerusalemme Liberata” beginning with three published in 1581 at Ferrara, Casalmaggiore, and Lyons, the last of which is especially rare. We have also a nearly complete collection in original editions of the controversial works written to criticize and defend Tasso’s epic. The many editions of the “Rime” begin with those printed at Venice and at Ferrara in 1582; and the collection includes many texts of the “Aminta,” beginning with the Aldine of 1581, and the first edition of “Il Re Torrismondo” of Bergamo, 1587.

Aside from the works of the four masters, the Library furnishes good facilities for the study of Italian literature and linguistics, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Of particular note is the collection of Italian lyric poets of that period, a collection which we have been gradually gathering for many years. This includes early editions of almost all the lyric poets from Serafino dall'Aquila and Tebaldeo, to Giambattista Marino and his contemporaries, as well as a valuable collection of the many anthologies printed during that period.

PTOLEMAIC STUDIES
By Dr. Walter Woodburn Hyde

Two additions to the Library have been made recently from the Lamberton Fund which are notable enough, from the point of view of cost and importance, to be worthy of rather extended notice:


This is the first complete translation into any modern language of the Geography of Ptolemy, the last of the Greek geographers, who worked at Alexandria 1700 years ago, notwithstanding that there have appeared over fifty editions of the Greek text since the editio princeps of Erasmus at Basel in 1533. The translator is widely known for his many contributions to the fields of historical geography and cartography. The size and cost of this sumptuous volume, published by the New York Public Library, are largely due to the cartographic supplement which takes up nearly half of it. The paper, typography, and binding in half-leather are superb. Only 250 copies have been issued.

The translation is based on Greek and Latin manuscripts of the Geography, the former dating from the eleventh century, the latter from the Renaissance or from the early fifteenth century;