

His versification however is uniformly easy, and flows with harmonious facility; but the passions, the sentiments, the noblest emotions of patriotism, or the unblushing avowal of profligacy, succeed each other in heterogeneous confusion, without producing the smallest impression upon a cultivated audience, because they are merely the offspring of bombast declamation, and have not the smallest connexion with the heart. Sophisms are frequently substituted in the place of argument, and tedious similes introduced as a covering for want of imagination. Of all the tragedies of Dryden, two only rise above the level of mediocrity. Had the last four acts of 'All for Love' been equal to the first, it would have been surpassed by very few theatrical productions. The reconciliation between Don Sebastian and Dorax approaches very nearly to perfection. But his Montezumas and Almanzors, which he seems to consider as prototypes of heroical excellence, would be better placed among the monsters of the Opera stage, than among the personages of a drama, that at least affects to be rational.

The political ascendancy acquired by Spain in the course of the sixteenth century, diffused the knowledge of the language, and spread the literary productions of that nation among the most polished people of Europe. Since that time the study of the Castilian tongue has been universally neglected, and possibly might never have been resumed, had not the ill-judging policy of Buonaparte, by rousing the energies of a degraded people, made every thing belonging to them interesting. France had no acquaintance with the dramatic literature of the Peninsula, except from the translations of Linguet. But the selection he made was far from judicious, and the execution was conformable to the choice. The only pieces translated were comedies of intrigue, which, notwithstanding they abound in striking situations, are not the most brilliant ornaments of the Spanish theatre. It is in their historical compositions that the romantic genius of the Castilian poets is displayed with the greatest éclat.

It was not before the middle of the sixteenth century, that the dramatic art was brought to perfection, and in the seventeenth it began to decline. Since the 'War of the Succession,' it would be difficult to produce a single play, which does not indicate a deteriorated taste, and an almost total defect of imagination. Spanish pretenders to wit affect to treat with contempt the ancient national poets, but the people still regard them with enthusiastic admiration, whether represented at Mexico or Madrid. It is however quite absurd to talk of the taste of a nation, which regards the men who abolished the Inquisition, and laid the foundations of a free constitution, as enemies to their religion and country.

The progress of the dramatic art in Spain is marked by the names

names of
and Cal
upon thi
witness
in prom
scriptio
youth.
coratio
Siege o
classed
what re
never s
deur a
Lop
fame,
years
tion.
swell
his w
toler
play
and
In
borro
unpo
isted
plays
humo
not p
mode
scrip
to str
At
mete
every
nius
joine
spect
of th
of th
upwa
alleg
and
poem
age o