

capital, with whom, on the completion of his studies, he associated till he left Madrid to follow a soldier's life. He served during the war in the Low Countries, but this pursuit not proving congenial to his tastes he was soon glad to renew his profession of authorship. The plays of the young poet increased in popularity and on the death of Lope de Vega Phillip IV called Calderon to court to write for his theatres. Never had any writer such golden opportunities to show his genius, for everyone knows that Phillip IV., though an imbecile ruler, was inferior to no one as a patron of the liberal arts. For sixteen years Calderon lived at court where his dramas never failed to gain universal applause. "Like the high-souled poet that he was he soared above all that was base, dwelling in a region higher than any one that had gone before him, and farther removed from all taint of evil. Neither the allurements of applause, nor the example of his predecessors tempted him to descend. And having captivated the people by awaking interest in every way, by brilliant spectacle, glowing verse, mystery, and exciting incidents he raised the popular mind to still higher things, to such solemn dramas as "Life is a Dream," or the touching story of "The Two Lovers of Heaven."

In 1651 Calderon entered a religious order, and after a time was ordained priest. Henceforth his writings took another turn. No longer restrained by the necessity of pleasing the tastes of courtiers and "Castilian grandees," he now revealed the true structure of his mind, by giving to the public those wonderful "autos" which have placed him at the head of romantic dramatists. He continued to write till his death, which occurred in May, 1681. For the last eighteen years of his life he had been a priest of the Congregation of St Peter, and fulfilled the office of chaplain to the king. A monument erected over his tomb by his fellow citizens, was, later on, swept away, and his place of burial forgotten. It was only in the middle of the present century that the grave of this famous dramatist was again discovered. His remains were removed to the church of Our Lady of

Atocha, in Madrid, where they still lie.

The works of Calderon may be broadly divided under the two heads of secular and religious. His secular writings include historical dramas, mythological and romantic pieces, together with comedies of intrigue and some minor productions such as farces and interludes. The religious poems of Calderon comprise his "Religious Dramas," written for the royal theatres; and the "Autos," or Sacred Dramas, exposing some of the truths of religion, and written in honor of the Blessed Sacrament. Hence they were commonly called "Autos Sacramentales." Of this latter class, Mr. McCarthy has translated two, "The Divine Philothea," and "Belshazzars Feast." "In the "Divine Philothea" the Soul, the Spouse of Christ, waits for His coming in the castle of the body, having with her the five senses and the virtues. The stronghold is assailed by the army of the demon, but the Prince of Light comes in the ship of the pageant, bringing a heavenly food that will give strength and victory to his spouse. An immense amount of doctrine is involved in all the speeches and action of this allegory." The above description of this play gives us an idea of what these dramas of Calderon really were. The circumstances in which the pieces were presented to the public are worthy of notice. As they were designed to honor the Blessed Sacrament, they were, at first, acted only on the feast of Corpus Christi. Later on, the occasions for presentation became more frequent, till at last they were of rather frequent occurrence. They took place, sometimes, in the open air, but generally in the court of some distinguished person. The king and nobility, as well as the multitude, were in attendance. How sublime a sight must not have been this open profession of belief by king and people in the greatest mystery of the Catholic religion, and how well it shows the warm temperament of these southern people!

"Belshazzar's Feast" the other "auto" mentioned above commemorates the feast of the Babylonian king, the warning of Daniel, and the mysterious writing on the wall. An extract from Mr. McCarthy's translation follows: