

vividly that the reader, in the absorbing consciousness of its presence forgets the words employed in summoning it. To succeed in description, the writer must recognize the limits of language. He must have learned that the printed page cannot rival the glowing canvas; that the pen is no substitute for the chisel; and that action, not beauty, and not still life, is the proper subject of description.

If, in this difficult department of composition, M. Routhier has been on the whole successful, it is because he has successfully resisted the temptation to indulge in fine writing, contenting himself with a faithful account of the things he has seen. We may single out for approval his descriptions of Madrid and the Escorial; of Granada and the Alhambra; of Seville, its cathedral and its Alcazar; of El Kantra and the Desert. Had space permitted we should have adorned our columns with the two last of these, not because they are better done, but because they are less hackneyed than the others.

M. Routhier's study of Spanish literature is comprehensive and profound. From Seneca to Saavedra, the great writers of Spain pass under his scrutiny. Legends of national heroes, from Rodrigo, the last of the Gothic kings, to the Cid Campeador;—dramas from the earliest Miracle Plays to the Don Juan Tenorio of Zorilla, are placed before us; extracts are given, and judgment is pronounced.

It is not unnatural, perhaps, that our author should set a peculiar value upon the literature of Spain. His literary taste was doubtless formed by the study of the classic writers of his mother tongue; and their genius was dominated by the genius of the Spanish dramatists. It was to Spain the great Corneille went to seek the elevation of soul and the vigor of thought that the France of his day had lost. It was from a Spanish hero,—the Cid—, and from a Spanish author—De Castro, that he took the title and the plot of the drama that won for him deathless fame. From Alarcon he borrowed largely; there are whole scenes in "Le Menteur" of Corneille, that are simply translations from "The

Truth suspected" of Alarcon. Again, it was from Tirso De Molina, "the cassocked Beaumarchais of Spain" that Moliere borrowed his "Don Juan," and his "Princess d'Elide" is a mere translation of Moreto's "Disdain for Disdain." So to Calderon, the last and greatest of all Spanish poets, the harmonious Racine was deeply indebted. While Euripides and Tacitus, the old mythology and the Sacred Scriptures, furnished him with the elements of his drama; while Horace lent him the brilliant accuracy of his diction; it was from Calderon that he learnt the dramatic art. And when, after twelve years of silence, his genius woke anew; when on the eve of his dissolution he gave to an admiring world the delicious idyll of "Esther," and the prophetic warnings of "Athalie," it was from Spanish devotion to religion, and from Spanish hatred of tyranny that he drew his inspiration.

It was inevitable, then, that a French critic should place what seems to us an exaggerated estimate upon the value of Spanish literature. To the average Englishman, however, Spanish poets and romancers—Cervantes excepted—present little attraction. Though Italian Euphuism once infected England, the extravagant conceits of the Castilian dramatists had never serious imitators in English imaginative literature. We must admit, indeed, that the Spanish stage is the purest in the world; and that the Spanish drama presupposes in the spectators a knowledge of Scripture and of the doctrines of the Roman Church for which we must look in vain elsewhere. It must be conceded, too, that when the Spanish dramatist succeeds, his success is of no ordinary character, for at his best he sets before us models of ideal beauty and raises us to a world into which nothing enters but the highest elements of his nation's genius. But Spanish literature has its characteristic defects. It exhibits an almost Asiatic pomp of expression; highflown images; an exuberance of metaphor: perpetual recurrence of the same figures: brilliant but false conceits; insipid affectations; hyperbolic