

REGIONALISM IN SPANISH FICTION FROM 1654

TO THE PRESENT DAY, WITH ESPECIAL

REFERENCE TO PEREDA.

Thesis

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CHAPTER I.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CUADRO DE COSTUMBRES
INTO THE MODERN REGIONAL NOVEL.

Owing to geographical and racial conditions, an intense localism has always characterized the Spaniard. It was not till the nineteenth century when the Episodios Nacionales⁽¹⁾ of Pérez Galdós were read in every corner of the land that Spaniards as a whole acquired a sense of national unity. This local spirit one would expect to find reflected in the literature of the country, and it is so, for regionalism is its very hall-mark; and no literary form flourished more in the nineteenth century than the regional novel.

The germs of the modern regional novel are to be found in the cuadro or sketch of local customs. This is a relatively modern genre, not because tipos and paisajes are scarce in Spanish literature, but for the reason that up to the nineteenth century these features chiefly appeared only incidentally in dramas and novels. Thus, for example, the Celestina⁽²⁾ and its imitations cannot, properly speaking,

(1) The first two series appeared from 1873 to 1879; the second and third series from 1898 to 1907; and the "Serie Final" from 1908-1912.

(2) Burgos, 1499.

be classified as cuadros de costumbres, nor can the picaresque novels, though the life of the hero is usually the only thread holding together the various sketches of which these are composed. Few will dispute that the first and probably unsurpassed cuadro de costumbres ever written in Spanish was the Rinconete y Cortadillo⁽¹⁾ of Cervantes. There is little or no action in this novela ejemplar, but we are presented with a finished and realistic painting of the heroes of the brotherhood of Monipodio. We can say, therefore, that the cuadro has existed from the time of Cervantes as a literary form independent of the novel. Occasionally, however, it retains a suggestion of action, just sufficient to throw the various characters into relief. The cuadro, in its embryonic state, can also be discerned in the work of Quevedo⁽²⁾ (if one forgets the political aim of some of the Sueños); of Liñán y Verdugo, whose Guía y aviso de forasteros⁽³⁾ is an enchanting book; of Luis Vélez de Guevara,

(1) Madrid, 1613. Vide Novelas Ejemplares (La Lectura ed., vol. I, Madrid, 1914) p. 133.

(2) 1580-1645.

(3) Avisos y guía de forasteros que vienen a la Corte, historia de mucha diversión..., donde verán lo que sucedió a unos recién venidos (1620).

author of El Diablo Cojuelo,⁽¹⁾ into which the fantastic element enters; and in the very unequal Criticón⁽²⁾ of Baltasar Gracián. More genuine precursors of the costumbristas of the nineteenth century were Salas Barbadillo who proved himself to be a clever imitator of Cervantes in El curioso y sabio Alejandro;⁽³⁾ and, especially, D. Juan de Zavaleta, the merits of whose book of sketches, El día de fiesta⁽⁴⁾ were not fully recognized until long after its publication in 1654. El día de fiesta is the true cuadro de costumbres, containing no action whatever, and, therefore, the year 1654 may be said to mark the beginning of genuine costumbrismo in Spanish literature, of the type which was to flourish in the nineteenth century. El día de fiesta reveals powers of observation but the style is, unfortunately, affected and severe. Francisco Santos, in his Día y noche de Madrid,⁽⁵⁾ modelled himself on Zavaleta exaggerating his defects of style. In the eighteenth century, an age of

(1) 1641.

(2) Published in three parts (1651-53-57).

(3) El curioso y sabio Alejandro, fiscal y juez de vidas ajenas (1634).

(4) El día de fiesta por la mañana y por la tarde (1654).

(5) 1663.

literary sterility, few costumbristas distinguished themselves and the genre seems to die with D. Diego de Torres,⁽¹⁾ a poor imitator of the inimitable Cervantes, and with D. Ramón de la Cruz,⁽²⁾ whose sainetes are, for the most part, cuadros in dialogue form, so thin is their plot.

The advent of the nineteenth century, however, saw a renaissance of the sketch of local customs, which was to reach its fullest development in that century and prepare the way for the modern novel of manners. French influence was supreme in Spain during the first half of the century and the Spanish costumbristas sought inspiration not only in the native tradition but also in foreign models, particularly in the work of the now forgotten French writer, Etienne Jouy.⁽³⁾ José Somoza⁽⁴⁾ was a friend of Quintana's and one

(1) 1693-1770.

(2) 1731-1794.

(3) Victor Joseph Etienne de Jouy, author of various books upon Parisian customs. His L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin ou Observations sur les Moeurs et les Usages français au commencement du XIXe Siècle was especially popular in Spain (6th ed., Paris, 1815). Vide Cánovas del Castillo, El Solitario y su Tiempo (1883) (Colección de Escritores Castellanos), vol. I. cap. iv., pp. 139-40.

(4) 1781-1852. The most convenient edition of Somoza's works was published in Madrid, 1913, with a critical introduction by José R. Lomba y Pedraja.

of the best writers of the glorious Salamancan school, his work being free from the affectations which occasionally mar that of its poets. In his Recuerdos e Impresiones - short, delicate sketches containing an occasional reminiscence of the English humorists (principally Sterne) - he gives us a most brilliant picture of a Spain which was fast disappearing. His style has an exquisite sobriety which never degenerates into sentimentality. He may be regarded as a worthy forerunner of the great costumbristas of the nineteenth century, Serafín Estébanez Calderón, Ramón de Mesonero Romanos and Mariano José de Larra.

D. Serafín Estébanez Calderón⁽¹⁾ was a man of many parts, being, as he was at various periods of his career, advocate, prefect, military judge, counsellor of state, occasional poet and Arabic scholar. He has, however, bequeathed to posterity only one book, Las Escenas Andaluzas, a real flower of the soil, but one whose delicate perfume is apt to vanish outside Spain. The Escenas first appeared in the Cartas Españolas⁽²⁾ over the pseudonym of El Solitario (inspired, it would seem, by the Hermite of Etienne Jouy). They were published in

(1) 1799-1867.

(2) 1831-32.

collected form in 1847. The book consists of some twenty sketches. These treat of typically Andalusian themes and the regional types are reproduced in a photographic, most personal art. Pulpete and Balbeja,⁽¹⁾ rivals in love, and Manolita Gásquez,⁽²⁾ a veritable Tartarin of the Guadalquivir, are all drawn according to the best native traditions. El Solitario's merits lie in the purity, richness and vigour of his language and in his brilliant descriptive powers. Menéndez y Pelayo has termed him one of the most Castilian writers of the day: "D. Serafín Estébanez Calderón (El Solitario), uno de los escritores más castellanos de estos tiempos, si no en la elección de cada palabra, a lo menos en el giro y rodar de la frase; cosa que vale mucho más y es harto más rara, como discretamente ha hecho notar el moderno y elocuente panegirista de las Escenas andaluzas."⁽³⁾

The archaic language of El Solitario - a beautiful blending of Mateo Alemán and Quevedo - is the despair of the translator and has prevented his merits from being recognized until

(1) Escenas Andaluzas (1847 ed.), pp. 1-7.

(2) Ibid., pp. 51-61.

(3) Vide Menéndez y Pelayo: Prologue to the Obras Completas of Pereda, vol. I. (1921 ed.), p. xxxv. The reference is to El Solitario's biographer, A. Cánovas del Castillo. Vide supra p. 6, N. (3).

comparatively recently.(1)

What el Solitario did for Andalucía, Ramón de Mesonero Romanos(2) did for his native Madrid in his Escenas Matritenses. These appeared in the Cartas Españolas and in the Semanario Pintoresco Español (which he founded and directed) over the signature of El Curioso Parlante. First published in 1832, further volumes appeared in 1835 and in 1836, and Mesonero gave the complete work the general title of Panorama matritense, cuadros de costumbres de la capital. These scenes constitute a complete picture of Madrid at a time when the old order was giving way to the new. Every phase of the life of the capital is portrayed by the shrewd and witty bourgeois who loves his native town passionately with all its virtues and defects. It is obvious that this acute observer was not blind to the latter and he ridicules them in amiable fashion. This transition period has been perfectly caught by the photographer and the resultant pictures constitute precious historical documents. Mesonero leans towards the past though he cannot justifiably be termed a reactionary. Every foreign importation, whether it be in the realm of fashions,

(1) cf. Menéndez y Pelayo, op. cit., p. xxxv.

(2) 1803-82.

language or customs, gives him an opportunity of poking fun at the gaucherie and the stupidity of the imitators. He is emphatically for the mantilla against the hat, for the capa against the overcoat, and the reader is in entire sympathy with him. His love of the old order is admirably shown in Las Memorias de un setentón.⁽¹⁾ Some of these sketches such as Los aires del lugar⁽²⁾ and Los paletos en Madrid⁽³⁾ are veritable comic scenes, while La noche de vela⁽⁴⁾ and El día de toros⁽⁵⁾ - which suggest Bretón de los Herreros and Ramón de la Cruz respectively - are only one stage away from the short story.

Mesonero had not the genius of Calderón and his style presents a complete contrast to the latter's. Mesonero's scenes are drawings done in black lead, delicate and accurate, but somewhat pale compared with the brilliant water colours

(1) First published in La Ilustración Española y Americana, and later in a separate volume (Madrid, 1881).

(2) Vide Mesonero Romanos, Artículos Escogidos de las Escenas Matritenses (Bib. Universal) 1879, vol. I., p. 53.

(3) Ibid., p. 146.

(4) Ibid., vol. II., p. 61.

(5) Ibid., p. 5.

of the Escenas Andaluzas.⁽¹⁾ As Larra puts it: "Mesonero retrata más que pinta."⁽²⁾

Not the least important of the satiric triumvirate is Mariano José de Larra.⁽³⁾ Of the three writers it was he who exercised most influence over his contemporaries on account of his political, social and literary ideas. His life was a short one - a mere twenty-eight years - but his reputation has continued growing to the present day. Las cartas del pobrecito hablador⁽⁴⁾ constituted his real début. In these the satire is measured and polite for absolutism was just on the wane and Cea Bermúdez had succeeded Calomarde. But his darts become sharper and more numerous after the death of Fernando in a number of articles contributed under the name of Fígaro to the Revista Española, the Revista Mensajero, El Observador and El Español. The Carlist rebels are bitterly satirized in Nadie pasa sin hablar al portero⁽⁵⁾ and in El

(1) Cf. Mariano José de Larra, Artículos De Crítica Literaria y Artística (La Lectura ed., vol. II., Madrid, 1932), p. 263: "En general, tiene cierta tinta pálida, hija acaso de la sobra de meditación o del temor de ofender, que hace su elogio, pero que priva sus cuadros a veces de una animación también necesaria."

(2) Vide op. cit., p. 263.

(3) 1809-37.

(4) 1832.

(5) Vide op. cit., vol. III., p. 50.

Faccioso,⁽¹⁾ while national defects are mercilessly exposed in En este país,⁽²⁾ ¿Entre qué gentes estamos?⁽³⁾ and in Vuelva V. mañana.⁽⁴⁾ El día de difuntos de 1836⁽⁵⁾ is full of irony and bitter disillusion and is flavoured with the neurasthenia which was to lead Fígaro to suicide (Feb. 13, 1837). Larra was one of the ablest writers of the century and his affectedly friendly manner is more penetrating than direct invective. His work calls to mind that of Voltaire and P.-L. Courier.

Costumbrismo now enjoyed a tremendous vogue and tipomanía became a veritable epidemic. Some of the leading costumbristas collaborated to produce Los españoles pintados por sí mismos (1843), and Las españolas pintadas por los españoles was published in 1871 under the direction of Roberto Robert. Reference must be made in passing to Sebastián Miñano, whose Cartas del pobrecito holgazán⁽⁶⁾ contributed to the success

(1) Ibid., p. 71.

(2) Ibid., vol. I, p. 145.

(3) Ibid., p. 196.

(4) Ibid., p. 105.

(5) Ibid., vol. III, p. 255.

(6) Lamentos políticos de un Pobrecito Holgazán que estaba acostumbrado a vivir a costa ajena (1820).

of liberal politics during the second constitutional period, to Santos López Pelegrín,⁽¹⁾ who wrote under the pseudonym of Abenámar, to Antonio María Segovia (El Estudiante)⁽²⁾ and to the historian, Modesto Lafuente.⁽³⁾ These were the ablest imitators of Mesonero and Larra.

The sketch was to develop into the modern novel of manners about the middle of the century. We have noticed that some of Mesonero's sketches - such as La noche de vela - approximate to the short story. It was to fall to the lot of Fernán Caballero⁽⁴⁾ to found the novel of manners in Spain, a type of fiction where the plot is often so slight as to be negligible, and where the characters and the sketches of local customs are of primary interest. Fernán Caballero was born in Switzerland of a German father and a Spanish mother, her real name being Cecilia Böhl von Faber. Educated in Hamburg by French teachers between the ages of nine and seventeen, she later resided in Spain, a country which she adopted as her own. Cosmopolitan by her upbringing,

(1) 1801-46.

(2) 1808-74.

(3) 1806-66.

(4) 1796-1877.

she was by way of being a polyglot, and we are not surprised to learn that some of her novels were originally written in German while others were written in French.

When Fernán Caballero began to write, the public was reading mediocre novels of adventure such as Cardelas, José María and Los siete niños de Ecija, or translations or adaptations of popular French novels of which Martín el expósito and El judío errante were typical. Her first novel, La Gaviota, was published in 1848, and it may be said that this colourful novel of Andalusian manners, in addition to solidly establishing the author's reputation, was the first modern Spanish novel worthy of the name. Her motto was: "The novel is not invented, it is observed," and she attempts throughout her work to give an exact picture of contemporary Spanish life. She tells us in her prologue to La Gaviota: "Y, en verdad, no nos hemos propuesto componer una novela, sino dar una idea exacta, verdadera y genuina de España, y especialmente del estado actual de su sociedad, del modo de opinar de sus habitantes, de su índole, aficiones y costumbres. Escribimos un ensayo sobre la vida íntima del pueblo español, su lenguaje, creencias, cuentos y tradiciones. La parte que pudiera llamarse novela, sirve de marco a este vasto cuadro que no

hemos hecho más que bosquejar."⁽¹⁾ Plot, then, was the least of Fernán Caballero's worries. Her real inspiration was her love for all that surrounded her and it was this intelligent affection which led her to collect popular songs, legends, proverbs and idioms, even childish games and riddles. La Gaviota and her other books (such as Clemencia⁽²⁾ and the Cuadros de costumbres) are a veritable treasury of Spanish folklore. She put her heart into her work and it was her Spain and her Andalucía that were best known to foreigners of her day.

Fernán Caballero's chief defects are a certain sentimentalism, quite foreign to the nature of the scenes which she describes, and an irrepressible tendency to intervene in her works in order to deliver untimely, if well-meant, sermons. A novelist, of course, should not interrupt the action of a tale in order to inculcate moral sentiments, but should infuse them discreetly into his work as a whole. The didactic tendency, however, has from earliest times been a pronounced characteristic of Spanish literature and few writers are free from it. Pereda and, perhaps to a lesser

(1) Vide op. cit. (1928 ed.), p. 5.

(2) 1862.

extent, Galdós could both be accused of the same vice as Fernán Caballero.

However, even those most critical of her faults cannot fail to recognize Fernán Caballero as the creator of the Spanish regional novel. Likewise, they must admit that all who cultivated the regional novel after the publication of La Gaviota and Clemencia were indebted to this novelist, and among these was Pereda who, sympathizing intellectually with Fernán Caballero, was always proud to acknowledge his debt to her. Worthy of note then is the influence of Fernán Caballero in the work of Pereda, there being, of course, notable differences due to their different temperaments. We may say with Menéndez y Pelayo that in Pereda there is "más vigor y menos ternura."⁽¹⁾

Another precursor of Pereda's was the Basque, Antonio de Trueba,⁽²⁾ who in a certain ingenuous style was to exaggerate the optimism of Fernán Caballero and was to insist on seeing popular customs only in their poetical, idealistic aspects. His first book, El Libro de los Cantares,⁽³⁾ brought great

(1) Vide Menéndez y Pelayo, op. cit., p. xxxvii.

(2) 1819-89.

(3) 1852.

popularity to "Antón, el de los cantares," as he is still called on the shores of the Nervión. Pink and green were Trueba's favourite colours. His psychology, too summary, obviously lacks depth, but he also has known how to reach the heart of the people with whom he was in perfect sympathy, speaking their language and sharing and giving expression to their feelings. And it was for the people that he wrote, ignoring the disdain of the more refined.

Pereda's treatment of popular types was to be quite the reverse of that of Trueba. Nevertheless, the novelist of the Montaña was always a great admirer of the Basque writer, and he considered it a great honour that his first book of sketches, Escenas Montañesas(1) should be preceded by a prologue from the pen of Trueba, a prologue which, as we shall see, was to do a great disservice to the man who was destined to be Spain's greatest regional novelist.

(1) 1864.

CHAPTER II.JOSÉ MARÍA DE PEREDA: BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

José-María de Pereda was born on February 6th, 1833, at Polanco, near Santander. A son of D. Juan Francisco de Pereda and of Da. Bárbara Sánchez de Porrúa, he was the last of twenty-two children. Shy and retiring by nature and averse from public appearances, his life was a quiet one and can be outlined in a few words.

His childhood years were spent in the rural quiet of his native hills amid such scenes as are described in El Sabor de la Tierruca and Peñas Arriba. In 1844 his parents moved to Santander with the object of ensuring a better schooling for their children. It was thus that José-María became acquainted with the squalid, old Santander of those days and its hardy fisherfolk. Later, he was to immortalize both town and people in one of his masterpieces, Sotileza. At this early period Pereda already possessed the traits which were to distinguish him throughout his entire career. Tall in stature and of commanding appearance, he was respected by his schoolmates. At this age, too, he gave evidence of the reserve which was to characterize the man.

His family was of hidalgo stock, and felt that the honour of their house demanded that José-María should embrace

a military career. Accordingly, in 1852, he was sent to Madrid to study as an artillery student. Pereda's stay in the capital was a brief one, a mere two years, as he found that figures were by no means congenial to his temperament. His residence in Madrid, however, was not in vain, for it was then that he obtained his first impressions of the political whirlpool of the villa y corte as an eyewitness of the Revolution of 1854. There, too, frequenting the theatres and the various literary cenáculos of the age, he became aware for the first time of his literary inclinations. Although at the Instituto Cantábrico in Santander he had not revealed any particular interest in literature, in Madrid he acquired an affection for Victor Hugo and the elder Dumas, for Paul de Kock and Eugène Sue. Among Spanish novelists he admired Fernán Caballero. Frequenting the theatre he became acquainted with the works of the Romantics: Martínez de la Rosa, García Gutiérrez, Hartzenbusch, Zorrilla, Bretón de los Herreros, Ventura de la Vega, Tamayo y Baus and López de Ayala. And we are not surprised to learn that the young montañés, like Galdós and like Cervantes, tried his hand at the theatre. "En la biblioteca de don Federico de Vial existe el manuscrito de La suerte en un sombrero, comedia en un acto, en verso,

firmada por J. M. de Pereda y fechada en Madrid el mes de febrero de 1854. Es, tal vez, su primera comedia, escrita en su hospedaje de la calle del Prado. En la maleta del mozo montañés haría el viaje desde Madrid a Santander cuando el presunto artillero fracasó en sus ideas. Es lo cierto que La suerte en un sombrero se conserva inédita. Por lo menos no está incluida en el tomo que de las obras escénicas de Pereda se conoce."⁽¹⁾

He returned to his native Montaña in 1854 deeply conscious of his literary vocation and determined to have nothing more to do with things military. Apart from one excursion to Madrid in a political capacity, Pereda spent the years from 1854 to 1872 in Santander. Master of an ample fortune, he was thus free from financial worries; in fact, his career can be cited as an outstanding refutation of the theory that letters and poverty are inevitably linked together. In the words of Pérez Galdós: "Es un escritor que desmiente, cual ningún otro en España, las añejas teorías sobre la discordia entre la riqueza y el ingenio. Por no dejar hueso sano al convencionalismo, le ha perseguido y destrozado hasta en esa rutina cursi de que el escritor es un ser esencialmente pobre. Así, en ninguna parte se

(1) Vide José Montero: Pereda, Glosas y comentarios de la vida y de los libros del Ingenioso Hidalgo montañés (Madrid, 1919), p. 105.

conoce tan bien a nuestro buen príncipe montañés como en aquellos hospitalarios estados de Polanco, residencia placentera y cómoda, asentada en medio de la poesía y de la soledad campestres, entre los variados horizontes y los paisajes limpios y puros de aquella hermosa costa, que con su ambiente fresco y su templada luz parece ofrecer al espíritu mayor suma de paz, más dulces recreos que ninguna otra región de la Península."⁽¹⁾

Pereda now decided to devote himself entirely to literature, and this period of his life may be termed one of apprenticeship. He began by contributing a number of sketches of local customs to a Santander paper, La Abeja Montañesa. His first article, La gramática del amor,⁽²⁾ was published on the 28th of February, 1858. It was unsigned, being published above a P. Later, he used the pseudonym, Paredes. Finally, his name appeared under Los zánganos de la prensa, printed in La Abeja on July 20th,

(1) Vide Prologue to El Sabor de la Tierra (1929 ed.) p. 12.

(2) According to José María de Cossío in La Obra Literaria De Pereda (Santander, 1934), p. 16. The authors of the invaluable Apuntes Para La Biografía de Pereda, published in the Diario Montañés of Santander (May 1st, 1906) and later included with Pachín González to form vol. XVII. of the Obras Completas of Pereda, assert (1922 ed., p. 327) that Ya escampa (25-VIII-1858) was Pereda's first published article, but this is contradicted by Cossío.

1864. A little later, Pereda founded a review, El Tío Cayetano, named after a popular Santander beggar; this publication, however, was doomed to come to an early end, only some nine issues appearing. Collecting his various cuadros de costumbres Pereda published them in one volume in 1864 under the title of Escenas Montañesas.

Pereda was always a staunch conservative, which at that time meant a Carlist, and in 1871 he was sent as Carlist deputy to Cortes representing Cabuérniga. In the corrupt political world of the Spanish capital Pereda was like a fish out of water, and he returned within the year to Santander, sad and disillusioned, and determined not to be tempted again from his native region. The impressions of political life which Pereda formed at that time were to remain with him throughout his life and to colour not a few of his works. In 1872 he bought a country home at Polanco, whence most of his books are dated, and during the following score of years and more he published the fifteen volumes of masterly prose which constitute the main part of his life's work.

During the last ten years of his life Pereda wrote practically nothing. An immense sorrow - the loss of his eldest son by suicide - saddened his old age and contributed

to sap the vigour of the illustrious writer. In 1897 he was made a member of the Royal Spanish Academy, and thus a great and noble career was fittingly crowned. Pereda died in 1906.

His biographer and enthusiastic panegyrist, José Montero y Vidal, has left us the following portrait of the novelist: "Por su aspecto exterior, lo mismo que por la recia contextura de su espíritu, fué en la vida mortal el arquetipo de una casta de hidalgos ya desaparecida. Era de noble y grave continente, mediano de talla, enjuto de carnes, recio de tronco y hermoso de cabeza. Tenía la color de avellana, correcta la nariz, alta la frente, velados los ojos, bigote bien poblado y de altas guías, perilla larga y ancha, entrecana como el mostacho... La melena rebelde, se encrespaba bajo el chambergo derribado airosamente sobre la sien. Vestía pulcramente, sin rendirse a las tiranías de la moda, sino a lo que le ordenaban la limpieza y la holgura. A veces se abrigaba con la capa española, que llevaba con gentileza, y entonces acababa de dar a su persona el aire de un antiguo caballero de Castilla. Robusto y musculoso, parecía labrado en madera de un roble montañés de buena veta. Era miope

como Quevedo, y después de Cervantes nadie escribió mejor que él."(1)

(1) Vide op. cit., pp. 3-4.

CHAPTER III.

THE CUADROS: ESCENAS MONTAÑESAS AND TIPOS
Y PAISAJES.

The Escenas Montañesas were published in one volume in 1864. The majority had already appeared a good many years before, mostly in La Abeja Montañesa, and four (Las visitas, El Trovador, El Jándalo and La Primavera) in El Tío Cayetano during its short existence. The title was of a type which was popular at the time and would probably be suggested by the analogy of the Escenas Matritenses of Mesonero Romanos. We must, however, state definitely that, except for one or two of the minor cuadros (such as Las Visitas⁽¹⁾), there is nothing else in common between the two writers. The atmosphere, technique and vigour of Pereda have no counterpart in Mesonero Romanos.

The Escenas were almost ignored by the Madrid press on their publication and received only cold eulogies from that

(1) Las Visitas was transferred to Esbozos y Rasguños (1922 ed., p. 9) when the Complete Edition of the author's works was published.

of Santander.(1) However, Pereda was more than compensated for the coldness and indifference of the press by the testimonies of esteem received from friends such as Hartzenbusch, D. Antonio Flores and Mesonero Romanos, the last of whom qualified him in a letter as "the first Spanish costumbrista."(2) The fact was that Trueba's prologue,(3) to which we have already referred, did inestimable harm to Pereda's reputation and prevented his literary merits being recognized as early as they deserved. It was an unhappy choice, for, although the subject matter of Trueba's and Pereda's sketches was similar, their literary temperaments were utterly contrasting; that of Trueba was optimistic and superficial while Pereda's was hard, sombre and imbued with a profound sense of humour

(1) Cf. El P. Blanco García, La Literatura Española En El Siglo XIX, p. 511: "No hay dificultad en la explicación de tal injusticia; como que lo incógnito del escenario y del autor, el realismo franco de que éste alardeaba dentro de justos límites, y la fisonomía de aquellos héroes rudos y andrajosos, eran más para herir a la rutina que a la curiosidad, principalmente por no ser cosa de allende los Pirineos."

(2) Cf. José M^a De Cossío, op. cit., p. 66.

(3) Trueba's prologue was suppressed when the Escenas Montañesas were published (in a modified form) in the Complete Edition of Pereda's works.

which could often be more penetrating and aggressive than pessimism. The somewhat crude realism of the Escenas, coupled probably with the inveterate prejudice which the Basques have against the Montaña, induced Trueba to make the following remarks in his prologue. "Hay que confesar que la Montaña, si no es muy feliz en el concepto que de ella tienen sus vecinos, tampoco lo es en los informes que de ella suelen dar los escritores. Pereda mismo, que es uno de sus amantísimos hijos, que tiene un privilegiado talento para estudiar y describir sus costumbres populares, y que ha consagrado un libro al estudio y a la descripción de las costumbres montañesas, ha tenido el mal gusto de pasar de largo por delante de lo mucho bueno que hay en la Montaña, y detenerse a fotografiar lo mucho malo que la Montaña tiene, como todos los pueblos."⁽¹⁾

Trueba thus insisted on the harsh tone of the Escenas and Menéndez y Pelayo rightly predicted that the epithets which he had used with reference to Pereda - pesimista, sarcástico and gran fotógrafo⁽²⁾ - would long remain. José María de Cossío in his recent study questions if it was

(1) Quoted by Cossío, op. cit., p. 60.

(2) Cf. Menéndez y Pelayo, op. cit., p. xxxviii.

really Pereda's intention to give a good impression of the Montaña in the Escenas. "Ese aspecto antipático que notaba Trueba en las Escenas, esa energía expresiva, diremos nosotros, que tan cruelmente presenta los aspectos menos favorables de tipos y sucesos, ese aire de sarcasmo con que Pereda va a descubrir las costumbres rurales y marineras de sus paisanos, ¿puede considerarse como signo de simpatía, de verdadero cariño a su tierra?"⁽¹⁾ Cossío then adduces various facts which would suggest that Pereda was not overfond of the Montaña at the time when some of the Escenas were written. He quotes, first, a letter written by Pereda from Madrid in 1853 to his cousin, Domingo Cuevas (9.XII): "Ay, Mingo, preciso es que te confiese que aquí, cuándo por fas, cuándo por nefas, siempre hay alicientes que arrastran a uno en pos de la Corte, y que al fin y postre llega uno a mirarla con demasiado apego, y llegará día en que se sienta trocar por la pluviosa e insípida Montaña."⁽²⁾ He next refers to an unedited article of Pereda's which was published recently by Ramón Menéndez Pidal, in which Pereda

(1) Vide op. cit., p. 61.

(2) Ibid., p. 62.

despises the tone and language of the montañeses.⁽¹⁾ This is extremely interesting in view of the fact that his imitation of these very things was to constitute his greatest artistic triumph. Then, years later, Cossío informs us, Pereda wrote a letter to Menéndez y Pelayo (26-X-91), asking him to warn D. Rodrigo Amador de los Ríos to be careful which of his works he read by way of preparation for his book on Santander: "No estará de más que adviertas al señor de los Ríos la conveniencia para sus fines de no fijarse mucho en las Escenas y Tipos, donde hay pinturas de cosas que ya no existen; así como la de empaparse un poco en el jugo de El Sabor de la Tierruca, y en La Puchera, obras en las cuales hay más Montaña, tanto en costumbres como en paisajes, que en aquellas colecciones de cuadros de caballete."⁽²⁾ Those who have read the complete works of Pereda will have no difficulty in agreeing that there must have taken place a big evolution in Pereda's attitude towards the Montaña in the time which elapsed between the writing of the letter to Cuevas and the publication of his

(1) The article appeared in the special number of the Boletín de la Biblioteca de Menéndez y Pelayo published to commemorate the centenary of the novelist's birth (1933).

(2) Vide op. cit., p. 65.

novels, of which Peñas Arriba was the culminating point. The Escenas are much nearer the disdain of the former than the panegyrics of the latter. In Suum cuique,⁽¹⁾ for example, where the merits and defects of city and country life are contrasted, the treatment is quite impartial, no preference being shown as yet for the country; while in Peñas Arriba, on the other hand, country life is eulogized in no uncertain fashion.

Despite the disservice Trueba had done him, Pereda never ceased to admire "el mejor y más fecundo cuentista de cuantos se pasean en España."⁽²⁾ However, in his prologue to Tipos y Paisajes (1871), a second series of cuadros, he defends himself ably against the charges which had been levelled against him.⁽³⁾ There are two ways of representing men, he tells us: as they are, and as they ought to be. His aim is to represent them as they are. He is a portrait painter copying from Nature and, as Nature is not perfect, its defects are necessarily visible in the copy. "Retratista yo, aunque indigno, y esclavo

(1) Vide Escenas Montañesas (1924 ed.), p. 181.

(2) Vide Pedro Sánchez (1923 ed.), p. 308.

(3) Vide op. cit. (1920 ed.), p. 5.

de la verdad al pintar las costumbres de la Montaña, las copié del natural; y como éste no es perfecto, sus imperfecciones salieron en la copia."⁽¹⁾ It should be noted, nevertheless, that the tone of the Tipos y Paisajes is not as harsh as that of the Escenas Montañesas, that the treatment is more sympathetic. We read, for instance, in Pasacalle: "...tienes cuanto necesitas para poder saludar al pueblo de la Montaña en sus diversas zonas y jerarquías como a persona conocida; de lo cual me felicito, pues juzgándote leal, confío en que harás justicia a mis paisanos, concediendo sin rebozo que si en sus costumbres hay mucho que reprender entre algo que aplaudir, hay, en cambio, muy poco que castigar. ¡Dichosos los pueblos de quienes, en los tiempos que corremos, se pueda decir otro tanto!"⁽²⁾ Las brujas,⁽³⁾ where the protagonist, a victim of superstition and ignorance, is portrayed in moving and sympathetic language, can also be cited to illustrate this point.

Some of the cuadros depict life among the Santander

(1) Ibid., p. 7.

(2) Ibid., p. 494.

(3) Ibid., p. 147.

fisherfolk while in others the customs of the country people of the valleys and hills of the interior of the province are portrayed. We agree with the eminent critic, fellow-countryman and friend of Pereda's, Menéndez y Pelayo, that the scenes of maritime life are superior to those of country life. And in our opinion Pereda has written nothing finer than La leva⁽¹⁾ and El fin de una raza⁽²⁾ La leva appeared in the Escenas and El fin de una raza in Esbozos y Rasguños, but, when the complete edition of the author's works was published, the latter was happily transferred to the Escenas in order to enhance the unity of the book. These two scenes constitute a veritable poem of the Santander fishing community, and it is noteworthy, as shedding light on Pereda's technique, that he was to develop this theme in his great masterpiece of the sea, Sotileza.

The leva was the tribute paid by the local fisherfolk to the navy and the repetition of such levies caused great distress and sorrow. This blood levy was detested in Santander, the more so, as the neighbouring Basque provinces, Vizcaya in particular, were exempted by their local rights.

(1) Vide Escenas Montañesas (1924 ed.), p. 133.

(2) Ibid., p. 409.

Thus the author could not have chosen a theme which penetrated more deeply to the hearts of the people. As an example of Pereda's sympathetic treatment, we shall quote the scene at the port as the men are on the point of departing, some of them perhaps never to return. "Una apiñada multitud de gente de pueblo se revolvía, gritaba, lloraba e invadía la última rampa, a cuyo extremo estaba atracada una lancha. En esta lancha había hasta una docena de hombres vestidos de igual manera que el Tuerto; y también como él llevaba cada cual un pequeño lío de ropa al brazo. De estos hombres, algunos lloraban sentados; otros permanecían de pie, pálidos, inmóviles, con el sello terrible que deja un dolor profundo sobre un organismo fuerte y varonil; otros fingiendo tranquilidad, trataban de ocultar con una sonrisa violenta el llanto que asomaba a sus ojos. Todos ellos se habían despedido ya de sus padres, de sus mujeres, de sus hijos, que desde tierra les dirigían, entre lágrimas, palabras de cariño y de esperanza. Entretanto, algunos otros, tan desdichados como ellos, se deshacían a duras penas de los lazos con que el parentesco y la amistad querían conservarlos algunos momentos más en tierra. Por eso las palabras "padre," "madre," "hijo," "amigo," eran las únicas que dominaban aquella triste armonía

de suspiros y sollozos. ¡Terrible debía ser la pena que hacía humedecerse aquellos ojos acostumbrados a contemplar serenos la muerte todos los días entre los abismos del enfurecido mar!"(1)

In its sequel, El fin de una raza Pereda strikes an epic note as he describes the storm (el galernazo) of that sábado de Gloria of 1896 when an entire fishing fleet was wiped out. Tremontorio,⁽²⁾ the veteran sailor, dies as a result of his experiences and the author describes the funeral procession as it climbs the cuesta de la Ribera. He notes that, of those who follow the enormous coffin, el Tuerto is the only one whose dress recalls somewhat the garb of the old Santander sailor. "La raza indígena pura del mareante santanderino, tal cual existía aún, desde tiempo inmemorial, diez u once años ha, iba en aquel ataúd a enterrarse con Tremontorio, porque bien puede asegurarse, que éste fué el último de los ejemplares castizos y pintorescos de ella."(3)

Menéndez y Pelayo who "almost learned to read in the

(1) *Ibid.*, pp. 160-61.

(2) Cf. El P. Blanco García, *op. cit.*, p. 511: "soberbia figura artística que hubiera envidiado Shakespeare."

(3) *Op. cit.*, p. 441.

Escenas"(1) gave unstinted praise to this little epic of the Santander fisherfolk. He returns to these sketches again and again. "Yo no conozco ni en la literatura antigua castellana, ni en la moderna, cuadro de tan honda y conmovedora impresión como la que dejan en el ánimo las últimas páginas de La Leva y de El Fin de una raza."(2) And again stressing the human qualities of our author he returns once more to the theme. "En este artículo de La Leva, que nunca me cansaré de citar, porque desde Cervantes acá no se ha hecho ni remotamente un cuadro de costumbres por el estilo (igualado, pero no superado, por otros del autor), hay alcoholismo como en los libros más repugnantes de la escuela francesa, hay palizas y riñas conyugales, inmundicia y harapos, y un penetrante y subido olor a parrocha, y sin embargo, ¡qué melancolía y ternura la del final! ¡Cómo sienten y viven aquellos pobres marineros de la calle del Arrabal! ¿Qué héroe de salón o de boudoir interesará nunca lo que el desdichado Tuerto, lanzando en la escena del embarque aquel solemne largueta? Si esto es realismo, bendito sea. Si realismo quiere decir guerra al

(1) Cf. op. cit., p. XLIII: "recuerdos infantiles, imposibles de borrar en quien casi aprendió a leer en las Escenas."

(2) Ibid., p. XL.

convencionalismo, a la falsa retórica y al arte docente y sermoneador, y todo esto en nombre y provecho de la verdad humana, bien venido sea. Así pintaba Velásquez."⁽¹⁾

With reference to the fact that many have dubbed Pereda the Teniers cántabro on account of his love of popular scenes, the same critic asserts that readers who sniff at Cafetera, el Tuerto, Tremontorio, el tío Jeromo, Juan de la Llosa, the mayorazgo Seturas, the jándalo Mazorcas and the erudite Cencio will have to turn up their noses also at Rinconete y Cortadillo, at Lazarillo de Tormes, at Guzmán de Alfarache and at all the innkeepers, rogues and muleteers of Spanish literature of the Golden Age, and likewise at the heroes of the Rastro, immortalized by D. Ramón de la Cruz. Similarly, the crude passages in the Escenas (for instance, the consequences of Arroz y gallo muerto⁽²⁾) can easily be paralleled by similar crudities in the Quijote (such as Sancho's trouble during the fulling-mill adventure⁽³⁾). The roots of Pereda's realism are therefore deeply planted in genuine Spanish soil.

(1) Ibid., pp. XL-XLI.

(2) Vide op. cit., p. 333.

(3) Primera parte, cap. XX.

There were many at the time, however, who thought they saw in his so-called pessimism French naturalism, and who therefore sought to affiliate him to Zola and the French Naturalist School. Such an affiliation was absolutely without foundation for Zola had not yet published anything⁽¹⁾ and at that time Pereda was not at all well versed in French literature. Pardo Bazán with her usual acuity of judgement pronounced the final word on the matter. "Pereda es argumento vivo y palpable demostración de que el realismo no fué introducido en España como mercancía francesa de contrabando, sino que los que aman juntamente la tradición literaria y las demás tradiciones, lo resucitan. Cosa que no cogerá de nuevo a los inteligentes, pero sí a la turba innumerable que cuenta la era realista desde el advenimiento de Zola."⁽²⁾

All the qualities which were to characterize Pereda's later works are to be found in these two volumes of cuadros. We have already drawn attention to the very Spanish realism

(1) Zola's first work, Contes à Ninon was published in October, 1864. This is also the date of the Escenas Montañesas, but the majority of these sketches had already appeared years before.

(2) Vide Emilia Pardo Bazán; La cuestión palpitante, p. 270.

of these sketches. Equally manifest is the intense religious spirit of the writer, which is clearly revealed in the cuadros entitled A las Indias⁽¹⁾ and El fin de una raza. In the latter there is an illuminating dialogue between el Tuerto and Tremontorio, shipwrecked and on the point of perishing in the storm. Tremontorio advises el Tuerto to discard his trousers in order to swim more easily. "¿Qué más quisiera yo que poder anadar, retiña! - me respondió. - Pues, ¿por qué no puede? - Porque me jalan mucho los calzones. Parece que tengo toa la mar metida en ellos; y a más a más, se me ha saltao el botón de la cintura. - ¡Arríelos, puño! - ¡Tiña, que no puedo! - ¿Por qué? - Porque esta mañana se me rompió la cinta del escapulario, y le guardé en la faltriquera. - ¿Y qué? - Que si arrío los calzones, se me va a pique con ellos la Virgen del Carmen." "Hecho y dicho rigurosamente históricos," Pereda tells the reader in a footnote.⁽²⁾

The author's marked reactionary tendency is clear to see. Interesting in this respect are Dos sistemas,⁽³⁾

(1) Vide Escenas Montañesas, p. 69.

(2) Ibid., p. 437.

(3) Vide Tipos y Paisajes, p. 17.

according to which new methods in commerce would seem to spell ruin; Para ser buen arriero...,⁽¹⁾ where we hear of a certain village couple living happily until they are cursed with an unexpected fortune; La romería del Carmen,⁽²⁾ in which modern innovations are deplored. "Yo deploro ese espíritu inquieto y ambicioso que viene, años hace, apoderándose del hombre; yo abomino ese monstruo de pulmones de hierro (i.e. the railway) que, devorando distancias y taladrando el corazón de las montañas, ha arrojado de nuestros pacíficos solares las tradiciones risueñas y el inocente bienestar de los patriarcas."⁽³⁾

We note his growing dislike of politics in Un tipo más.⁽⁴⁾ "-; Qué conciencia ni qué...! Pues si en elecciones (como en las últimas me decía el candidato mío) se fuera uno a doler de la conciencia por una barbaridad más o menos, ya podría cerrarse por eneterno el Congreso de los Diputados. Desengáñese usted: los delitos, por gordos que sean, son pecados veniales cuando se cometen electoralmente."⁽⁵⁾ And

(1) Ibid., p. 49.

(2) Ibid., p. 112.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid., p. 423.

(5) Ibid., p. 445.

in Al amor de los tizones⁽¹⁾ - one of the most delicious of his cuadros - he reveals his prejudice against the society of the "gran mundo" as he portrays in sympathetic language a tertulia of villagers.

We shall see in the course of this study that the tendency to moralize - so characteristically Spanish - is almost inseparable from the work of Pereda. In the cuadros it is particularly obvious in Ir por lana...⁽²⁾ and in consequence this sketch suffers from conventionalism. Leaving her native village, Fonsa goes into service in Santander in the hope of bettering her social position. The temptations of the city, however, prove too great for the inexperienced village girl and, succumbing to them, she sinks lower and lower until she ends her days as a prostitute in the streets of Madrid whither she has fled to be out of reach of her parents and friends. Fonsa's existence in Santander is described in the greatest detail, but the climax is precipitated and is lacking in proper psychological gradation. Her life in Madrid is despatched in half a dozen lines: "No contándose segura en Santander, adonde volvió cuando se

(1) Ibid., p. 391.

(2) Ibid., p. 349.

escapó de casa, largóse a Madrid con el doble objeto de continuar su carrera en mayor escala y vivir más a cubierto de la persecución de su familia. Entregóse en la corte a todo género de licencias; perdió muy pronto las pocas gracias que debía a la naturaleza; y hambrienta, casi desnuda y enferma, cayó una noche de enero sobre un montón de basura en un rincón de una plazuela, y allí se recogió al amanecer su rígido cadáver."⁽¹⁾ We may note at this point that Pereda does not encourage ambition and his characters seldom prosper when they enter a new social sphere.

In these two volumes there are two finely drawn cuadros, Suum cuique⁽²⁾ and Blasones y talegas,⁽³⁾ which are really short novels. This literary genre has illustrious fore-runners in Spanish literature in the Novelas Ejemplares of Cervantes, and Pereda was to cultivate this form further in his Bocetos al temple which mark a transition stage between the cuadros and the long novels of the author. In Blasones y talegas Pereda appears to be more in sympathy with his age than in most of the cuadros. Don Robustiano Tres-Solares y

(1) Ibid., pp. 389-90.

(2) Vide Escenas Montañesas, p. 181.

(3) Vide Tipos y Paisajes, p. 215.

de la Calzada recalls to mind classical characters in Spanish literature such as the third master of Lazarillo de Tormes and don Mendo of Calderón's El Alcalde de Zalamea. Like these, he starves while feigning prosperity. But, whereas don Mendo, when his servant, Nuño, advises him to ask the hand of the wealthy but plebeian Isabel, loses his temper, scorning the idea of having a commoner as a father-in-law, don Robustiano accepts, albeit unwillingly, the advice of another nobleman more attentive to the rhythm of the world than he, and consents to his daughter, Verónica, marrying the plebeian Antón, the rich heir of Toribio Mazorcas, alias Zancajos. The latter, unlike Pedro Crespo, has not the dignity of his class and only desires that the chaqueta and the terrones come to an end with his generation "y que de ella en adelante aparezcan otras más lucidas; vamos, que, a ser posible, nazca desde hoy la gente de mi casa con la levita puesta, como el otro que dice."⁽¹⁾

Pérez Galdós was so favourably impressed by this little novel that he resolved to visit the Montaña and make the acquaintance of the author who had so charmed him. This ambition was realized soon after and Galdós was to remain a

(1) Ibid., pp. 269-70.

firm friend of Pereda's and of the Montaña throughout his entire life.

In the Escenas the noble Castilian tongue attained a new perfection. Hitherto, written and spoken Spanish had been almost distinct languages. They were now united, for in the language in which the cuadros are written the literary and the colloquial styles are beautifully blended. We have already referred to Pereda's realism and indicated how thoroughly Spanish it is. Pereda was steeped in the Spanish classics and his style suggests that of Cervantes more than that of any other writer of the Golden Age. There is an occasional archaic construction which at once suggests the Quijote as, for example: "Blas se hacía todo ojos, y así veía azucarillos como mamelucos."⁽¹⁾ This can be paralleled by the following among many another example from the Quijote: "Confusas estaban la ventera y su hija y la buena de Maritornes oyendo las razones del andante caballero, que así las entendían como si hablara en griego."⁽²⁾ Pereda's style not only resembles that of Cervantes in construction but also in tone. There is the

(1) Op. cit., p. 89.

(2) Cf. José A. Balseiro, Novelistas Españoles Modernos (New York, 1933), p. 63.

same geniality, the same intimacy between author and reader, an intimacy which is so infectious that even when we do not approve of Pereda's arguments, our hearts warm towards the man who is so utterly human in his outlook.

CHAPTER IV.

BOCETOS AL TEMPLE AND TIPOS TRASHUMANTES.

The boceto, as we have already indicated, represents an intermediate stage between the cuadro and the novel. The germs of the short story and the novel are also to be found in several of the Escenas Montañesas and particularly in the excellent Blasones y talegas of the Tipos y Paisajes. But the novelesque element is most obvious in La Mujer del César,⁽¹⁾ the first of the Bocetos al temple, which were published in 1876. The Bocetos consist of three narratives of different character which corresponded to three of the genres which Pereda was to cultivate in the novel.

La Mujer Del César is set in the capital and is a satire on aristocratic life and manners. This type of satire was to be intensified later in one of the author's long novels: La Montálvez. The moral of the tale is epitomized in the last chapter in these words: "... debe hacerse comprender a la mujer que no le basta ser honrada, sino que, como la del César, necesita parecerlo."⁽²⁾ It

(1) Vide Bocetos al temple (1922 ed.), p. 9.

(2) Ibid., p. 119.

deals, therefore, with the Calderonian conception of honour. The woman in question is one Isabel, wife of Carlos, who is of montañés stock and a successful Madrid lawyer. Isabel, we are told, is of a classic beauty and absolutely devoid of feminine coquetry. "Tras una fisonomía como aquélla, lo mismo podía albergarse el fuego de todas las pasiones, que el hielo de todas las indiferencias: todo parecía caber en aquel busto majestuoso, menos la pueril veleidad de la femenil coquetería."(1) Brought up in the "gran mundo," however, Isabel has one of its vices: "la ostentación, pero sencilla y sin el menor alarde."(2) Isabel, in a word, is fond of the salones, where she is jealous of her reputation as the most elegantly dressed woman in Madrid. And it is this which causes her to commit one or two indiscretions, the gravest of which consists in accepting a diamond necklace from the attentive and dandyfied vizconde del Cierzo in order to eclipse the condesa viuda de Rocaverde at the latter's reception. At this time Carlos's brother from the Montaña, Ramón, is staying with them and, horrified at what he suspects is going on, he decides suddenly to attend the reception in

(1) Ibid., p. 23.

(2) Ibid., p. 23.

the hope of clearing things up. There he gives the vizconde a beating after overhearing him brag over his latest conquest, namely Isabel. As a sequel, the vizconde gives Carlos satisfaction by publicly clearing Isabel's honour in a certain jeweller's, the rendez-vous at that time of the Madrid elegants.

And thus does Isabel learn her lesson. She offers willingly to desert the "gran mundo" for the Montaña, but Carlos replies that a happy medium is to be found in Madrid itself; and, upon Isabel enquiring what he means, he answers: "El hogar doméstico; sus mil detalles, que no conoces todavía, al calor de los cuales, y no de otro modo, se forman y viven las dos grandes figuras de la humanidad: la esposa y la madre."(1)

Admirably well done is the description (in cap. VII) of the salón of the condesa de Rocaverde. We meet there the inevitable cronista in the person of Lucas Gómez, a type whom Pereda loved to satirize and whom we shall meet again in La Montálvez.

Oros son triunfos⁽²⁾ (the second of the Bocetos) depicts life in a provincial capital and satirizes the type of mother

(1) Ibid., p. 120.

(2) Ibid., p. 121.

who, like doña Sabina, is so fond of gold that she will sacrifice her daughter for it and give her advice of this nature: "...te encargo como madre tierna y te aconsejo como amiga cariñosa, que no te dejes vencer nunca de los impulsos de tu corazón de mujer; que estudies bien a los hombres que se te acerquen, y que, en la duda, si duda puede caber en esto, te decidas siempre por el más rico, sin que por eso te hagas esclava de ninguno. A esto te obligan tus conveniencias, la sociedad en que vives y el nombre que llevas."⁽¹⁾ Isabel loves and is loved by César, but she marries an unscrupulous indiano in order to replenish her father's dwindling fortune. The introduction of the indiano, who, along with the jándalo, is a favourite type with Pereda, is to be noted. The type will reappear and will be drawn in greater detail in Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera.

Los Hombres de Pro⁽²⁾ (the last of the Bocetos) initiates the series of novels of montañés village manners and it is at the same time a notable political censure. This same political satire we shall find in Don Gonzalo González de la

(1) Ibid., p. 156.

(2) Los Hombres de Pro, originally published in Bocetos al temple, constitutes vol. I. of the Obras Completas.

Gonzalera and in other works of our author.

The chief interest of this tale arises from the autobiographical element. Simón Cerojo's election experiences were those of Pereda himself, and his description of Simón's journey⁽¹⁾ is narrated with a vividness only possible in one who was intimately acquainted with the district. As Cossío has pointed out, the impressions made on Pereda by his journey through the gorge of La Hermida and over the high passes of Peña Sagra to Polaciones, and later to Tudanca, were to enable him to communicate to the reader, not only in this work, but also in other later ones (principally Peñas Arriba), a feeling of the serene grandeur of those magnificent Cantabrian heights.⁽²⁾

The tale is a satire on the Spanish parliamentary system and, as is the case with most of Pereda's romans à thèse, only one side of the picture is presented. The protagonist, the ambitious Simón Cerojo, ascends through progressive stages from humble tavern-keeper in his native pueblo to member of Cortes, thus fulfilling his great ambition. The reader easily foresees, however, what the

(1) Vide Los Hombres de Pro (1922 ed.), pp. 89-143.

(2) Cf. Cossío, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

poor man's fate will be in Madrid. And indeed he falls a prey to any who care to flatter him. He is prepared to do anything, no matter how senseless it may be, provided it will raise his social status. Needless to say, his political career is a complete fiasco and his maiden speech is as involved as it is meaningless. His wife too is hopelessly outclassed in her social activities, and both confess themselves glad to return in the end to the Montaña, shorn of two-thirds of their fortune and of their daughter, who has eloped with an ambitious periodista. What Simón has gained, however, is a little commonsense to which these simple words testify: "-El mal no está en que, por casualidad, salga de un mal tabernero un buen ministro, o un gran alcalde, o un perfecto modelo de hombres de sociedad; la desgracia de España, la del mundo actual, consiste en que quieran ser ministros todos los taberneros, y en que haya dado en llamarse verdadera cultura a la de una sociedad en que dan el tono los caldistas como yo."(1)

Apart from the tendency, perhaps too frequent in Pereda, to deride human ambition (cf. Ir por lana...), the treatment is too conventional. Simón Cerojo is raised to prosperity

(1) Cap. XXIV., pp. 238-39.

and then lowered again in an artificial mechanical way; in other words, he is a mere puppet in the author's hands. Success at the lottery is largely responsible for his rise in social status, and the bankruptcy of an excellent business, owing to a most improbable chain of circumstances, plays an important part in casting him down. His daughter, Julieta, elopes with Marañas who must inevitably be a fraud. The reader of to-day, as did those of Pereda's own time, feels that it is caricature and not real life.

Los Hombres de Pro, nevertheless, has definite merits although it cannot aspire to be ranked with the Escenas. Apart from the autobiographical interest, it contains excellent cuadros de costumbres and some finely drawn types. The electoral journey of D. Simón de los Peñascales, as he now dubs himself, is undoubtedly the finest scene in the book.⁽¹⁾ D. Recaredo, a local cacique,⁽²⁾ stands out among Pereda's characters. In this genial and dignified hidalgo one can foresee a precursor of those patriarchal rural kings so admirably painted in Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera and in Peñas Arriba. It is probable too that

(1) Vide supra, p. 49, N. (1).

(2) Cap. XI., pp.124-34.



Don Recaredo's house was the casona of Tudanca, the setting of Peñas Arriba.⁽¹⁾ Highly amusing also is the oratorical fiasco of Simón in the Cortes,⁽²⁾ and admirable is the dialogue of the girls in the "villa que no quiero nombrar."⁽³⁾ The description of the cruelty of these aristocratic girls to Simón's child reveals a keen psychological insight on the part of Pereda into the character of the child. Menéndez y Pelayo expresses his admiration for this scene as indeed for the work as a whole which he terms "glorioso trofeo de la única campaña electoral y de la única aventura política de Pereda."⁽⁴⁾

At this point the student of Pereda naturally asks himself: was Pereda's temperament that of a novelist or rather that of an author of cuadros de costumbres? Light is thrown on this interesting problem by D. Juan Barcia Caballero in an article entitled: Pereda y sus obras.⁽⁵⁾ It is not a study of great importance, but the writer makes an interesting parallel between the novelist of the Montaña

(1) Cf. Cossío, op. cit., p. 81.

(2) Cap. XX.

(3) Cap. III.

(4) Vide op. cit., p. XLV.

(5) Vide Revista de la Juventud Católica de Santiago (1888). Article quoted by Cossío, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

and Mesonero Romanos in an attempt to answer this question. "Sobre ninguno de ellos (the sketches of customs of Mesonero) se ocurre a nadie fundar una novela, ni al mismo Curioso Parlante se le ocurriría hacerla en todos los días de su vida, porque no era su aptitud literaria. Los personajes de Mesonero desaparecen, se anulan tras la pintura de la costumbre que representan; los de los cuadros de Pereda brillan en ellos con luz meridiana que hace empalidecer todo lo demás." Barcia Caballero's verdict is therefore favourable to the novelistic aptitudes of Pereda. Menéndez y Pelayo, whose intimate friendship with Pereda did not prevent him being his ablest critic, also sanctions his vocation as a novelist. Writing of the Bocetos, he says: "El nuevo libro de nuestro ilustre conterráneo, no superior a los primeros, porque fuera difícil esto, pero igual a lo menos en el conjunto, aventajándolos en ciertos datos, ha venido a colmar nuestras esperanzas haciéndonos desear tan sólo que así como pasó el señor Pereda del breve cuadro de costumbres a la novela corta, ascienda de ésta a la novela larga, y la haga suya por derecho de conquista..."(1)

(1) Vide La Tertulia, 2ª época, p. 122.

The Tipos Trashumantes were published in 1877 and were included with Bocetos al temple to form vol. VIII. of the complete collection of the author's works. In these sketches the costumbrista proposed to present a gallery of the different types who invade the capital of the Montaña in the summer months, "para buscar en ella quién la salud, quién la frescura y el sosiego; ora en las salobres aguas del Cantábrico, ora contemplando y recorriendo el vario paisaje que envuelve la ciudad, mientras la raza indígena la abandona y se larga por esos valles de Dios ansiando la soledad de la aldea y la sombra de sus castañeras y cajigales."⁽¹⁾

In these last words we can detect Pereda's aversion from the summer visitors whom he regarded as intruders, come to disturb the calm and rythm of provincial life. Pereda ends his preface with a warning: "cuando pinto, no retrato,"⁽²⁾ and indeed his paintings are cruel caricatures, many and varied types being the butt of his sarcasm. We shall single out the cronista de salones in Las de Cascajares,⁽³⁾ the politicians in El Excelentísimo

(1) Vide Bocetos al temple, p. 241.

(2) p. 242.

(3) p. 243.

Señor⁽¹⁾ and En Candelero,⁽²⁾ the sabio⁽³⁾ and particularly the periodista in Luz Radiante.⁽⁴⁾ Pereda's aversion from this type (who will reappear in Nubes de Estío) knew no limits. The one in question is studious, always with a book in his hand; "un si es no es macilento, desmayado de barba, corto de vista y regularmente ataviado."⁽⁵⁾ Witty and popular with the ladies, he is acquainted with all the literary and musical phraseology, with all the clichés current in Madrid. He explores the province in some three days and immediately despatches a series of articles thereon to a Madrid newspaper, as a result of which, adds Pereda, "se queda el corresponsal tan satisfecho, el periódico tan hueco, los lectores que no conocen esta provincia, tan enterados, y los pocos montañeses que le leen haciéndose cruces con los dedos."⁽⁶⁾ Magnificent too is the burlesque of the young Romantic, the victim of a

(1) p. 257.

(2) p. 373.

(3) p. 279.

(4) p. 313.

(5) Ibid.

(6) p. 321.

grande passion in Un Joven Distinguido.⁽¹⁾ It is worthy of comparison with the famous El Romanticismo y los Románticos of Mesonero Romanos.

The tipo which evoked most comment, however, was that entitled Un Sabio,⁽²⁾ which ridicules the philosophic sect who professed to be followers of Hegel. "Ni la experiencia," wrote Pereda, "ni la erudición más vasta en el campo de los viejos sistemas, le merecen el menor respeto; porque él ha asistido durante dos meses a una cátedra de filosofía krausista en la universidad de Madrid, y sabe, por boca de uno de los oráculos españoles de esta escuela alemana, que 'cada filósofo debe construir su propia ciencia sin necesidad de abrir un libro'. Y tan al pie de la letra ha tomado el consejo; a tal extremo ha llevado el asco a los libros, que ni siquiera conoce la gramática castellana."⁽³⁾ J. A. Gavica in an enthusiastic, sincere article⁽⁴⁾ on the book in question took the liberty of making a few observations regarding the painting of the

(1) p. 249.

(2) Vide supra, p. 55, N. (3).

(3) p. 282.

(4) Vide El Aviso (9-VIII-77) and cf. Cossío, op. cit., pp. 88-99.

sabio, which was in reality a cruel caricature of persons and a school of thought very dear to the writer. He accused Pereda, and with justice, of weakening his claim to be considered a true costumbrista by laying on the colours too thick when he was combating certain political principles or ridiculing a certain philosophic school. This criticism marked the beginning of a long polemic in which Menéndez y Pelayo intervened, not so much, it would seem, to defend Pereda, as to attack what he regarded as a detestable philosophic sect. He tells us that "los trashumantes fueron para él (Pereda) un juguete, y deben ser para sus lectores un entremés o entreplato, que entretenga y avive el gusto para los sólidos y succulentos manjares que han de venir después."⁽¹⁾

Pereda could not altogether escape Gavica's charge; but he defended himself with his customary sincerity. Defining the satiric nature of the tipo, he wrote: "En el Sabio... no se trata de ridiculizar a la escuela porque sea o deje de ser racionalista, no llegan a tanto mis fuerzas; ni aunque llegaran, pudiera empeñarlas en tal empresa, a causa de que ignoro lo que es, en español, esa ciencia.

(1) Vide the Revista Cántabro-Asturiana (a continuation of La Tertulia).

Esto se sabrá cuando los krausistas de la tierra de los garbanzos logren traducirla al castellano neto. Entre tanto esa jerga bárbara en que corren impresos los libros que de ella tratan, está con respecto a la sátira, en el mismo caso que los libros de caballerías, los predicadores estrafalarios y los dramaturgos como don Eleuterio Crispín de Andorra, contra cuyas plagas se escribieron, para exterminio de éstas y honra de las letras patrias, el Quijote, Fray Gerundio de Campazas y la Comedia nueva."⁽¹⁾

The chief interest of the polemic is that it throws light on the character of Pereda.

This satirical book directed against the summer visitors to Santander is typical of Pereda's localism. The tipos make pleasant reading, but they will certainly never occupy a place in the glorious world of the imagination in which his previous sketches are assured of immortality. They are of interest principally as a forerunner of Nubes de Estío, some of whose types are vividly recalled by those of this book. Later, upon the publication of the novel just mentioned there will be a violent reaction on the part of Madrid against the prejudices of the novelist of the Montaña.

(1) Vide El Aviso (28-VIII-77): letter written by Pereda to the editor. This polemic, in detailed form, was published by Miguel Artigas (Bol. de la Bib. de Menéndez y Pelayo, Año X. No. 4).

CHAPTER V.

EL BUEY SUELTO.

The foreword of El Buey Suelto(1) is dedicated to Menéndez y Pelayo. The latter had been Pereda's companion when he scribbled this "rimero de cuartillas, escritas sin plan meditado y verdaderamente a vuela pluma."(2) Pereda had hesitated to publish the little book and only did so in view of the flattering opinion which Menéndez y Pelayo had of it.

The title was suggested by the first part of the Spanish proverb: "el buey suelto bien se lame." The author states in the foreword that, while hundreds of books against matrimony had been written and translated in Spain, "no existe un libro en que se narre y puntualice escrupulosamente lo que se divierte un hombre esclavo de las teorías de esos caballeros sublimes que abominan de las suegras y sueñan con las demasías de los chiquillos y se pasan la vida haciendo que se ríen de ciertas prosas."(3) The "prosas" are of

(1) 1878.

(2) Vide El Buey Suelto (1921 ed.), p. 5.

(3) Ibid., p. 6.

course those of matrimony and it is clear from the beginning of the book that El Buey Suelto was inspired by the desire of opposing the thesis which Balzac sustains in his novels: La Physiologie du Mariage⁽¹⁾ and Les Petites Misères de la Vie Conjugale.⁽²⁾ It is interesting to note that Pereda had already treated the theme of matrimony in an article published in El Tío Cayetano (1858), entitled Contigo pan y cebollas, in which he discusses the pros and cons of celibacy without arriving at any definite conclusions.⁽³⁾

The chief merit of El Buey Suelto is the excellent cuadros de costumbres which it contains. As a novel it is disconnected and patchy; it has little action and it is poor in character studies. Menéndez y Pelayo suggests that this was perhaps the deliberate intention of the author. To personify a certain social plague, Pereda chose an insignificant, vulgar type: "un ser por excelencia prosaico, envuelto en las más ruines y mezquinas contradicciones de la vida."⁽⁴⁾ Certain it is that as we follow the miserable

(1) 1828.

(2) 1845-46.

(3) Cf. Cossío, op. cit., p. 107.

(4) Vide op. cit., p. XLIX.

existence of Gedeón from housekeeper to boarding-house, from boarding-house to hotel, and thence back again to another housekeeper, and as we witness the persecution to which he is subjected by his mistress, Solita, her father and by D^a Regla, the housekeeper, we realize that the protagonist is a mere puppet, absolutely deprived of free will.

The kernel of Pereda's thesis as opposed to that of Balzac is to be found in cap. XII.⁽¹⁾ It takes the form of a conversation between Gedeón and his doctor who is Pereda's mouthpiece in the novel. The latter dwells upon the many examples of abnegation and of disinterested love with which he meets in the course of his duties. Gedeón, steeped in Balzac, cites the French novelist in self-defence; whereupon the doctor asserts that the matrimonial life depicted by Balzac is that of the gran mundo and therefore something entirely artificial. Balzac insists on the fact that one's illusions disappear very soon after marriage. This is a commonplace, continues the doctor, which every husband knows. But what is far more important than one's first illusions, born of physical charms, is the deep love and devotion which

(1) pp. 123-36.

commonly take their place. These are to be found within the bosom of the family, these are the things which are essential to man's happiness and it is for lack of these that the bachelor is miserable.

This thesis is the one which we would expect Pereda to defend in view of his strong conservatism and his deep-rooted love of family life. Carried away by his convictions, however, he depicts the lot of the bachelor in colours which err on the sombre side; his character studies become caricatures and his novel a sermon. As we have already hinted, the chief merit of the book lies in the abundance of the wonderful cuadros which are full of life and energy. Menéndez y Pelayo stresses the excellence of these cuadros while regretting that Pereda over-emphasized the tendency to caricature. "Cada capítulo trae nuevos personajes y escenas nuevas, reproducidas unas veces con el pincel de Stein y de Teniers, otras con el brioso toque de la escuela española. ¡Lástima que en algunos pasajes la tendencia a la caricatura aparezca tan de resalto, y convierta en falsos, tipos que, de cómicos, no debieran degenerar en bufos!"(1)

Let us mention particularly, among the many excellent

(1) Vide op. cit., p. L.

cuadros, the description of D^a Ambrosia's boarding-house,⁽¹⁾ that of the fonda,⁽²⁾ (Pereda's description recalls to mind the caustic observations made by Larra about the Spanish fonda⁽³⁾), and the deliciously drawn tertulia of La tienda de la esquina.⁽⁴⁾ Gedeón's experiences, as he searches for a suitable boarding-house, are narrated with a few masterly touches. "En sus pesquisas para hallar un albergue, como el otro una posición social, ha recorrido medio pueblo y ha oído con paciencia el completo catálogo de las humanas vicisitudes, de boca de las innumerables pupileras que le han solicitado para huésped. Ninguna de ellas ejercía la industria por ascenso: todas habían bajado hasta ella desde los puestos más encumbrados en armas, en nobleza y en dinero; siendo de notar que cuantos más humos revelaba una señora de esta clase, menos fuego calentaba su cocina."⁽⁵⁾ After many a fruitless journey Gedeón at length settles in D^a Ambrosia's establishment. D^a Ambrosia is delightfully sketched in a few telling words: "A creerla,

(1) Vide Jornada Segunda, caps. V-VII., pp. 77-91.

(2) Ibid., VIII., p. 99.

(3) Cf. op. cit., vol. I., p. 158.

(4) Vide Ultima Jornada, cap. VI., p. 287.

(5) p. 77.

tiene casa de huéspedes porque, acostumbrada en vida de sus papás, y más tarde de sus maridos, a un trato escogido y ameno, la soledad la mata. Para ella, son familia sus pupilos; por lo cual admite pocos, y éstos de arraigo, de formalidad y de educación: a Dios gracias, no necesita el tráfico para comer."(1)

Cossío draws attention to Gedeón's dog, Adonis, whose various moods are portrayed with a sureness of touch which bear testimony to the author's knowledge of elemental psychology. Cossío writes: "pienso que no se ha parado mientes en la destreza con que Pereda trata de las más elementales psicologías, y ante todas (si vale llamarla así) la del perrillo Adonis, que vive en las páginas del libro con la evidencia que el gran perrazo somnoliento en Las Meninas, el gran cuadro de Velásquez."(2)

With the exception of Menéndez y Pelayo, all the critics, Clarín in particular, expressed disappointment with the book. El Buey Suelto clearly proved that the author would be wise to limit himself to painting the life and customs of the race of which he possessed a first-hand knowledge, namely

(1) p. 78.

(2) Vide Cossío, op. cit., p. 108.

that of the Montaña.⁽¹⁾ This novel, however, increased Pereda's fame as a writer and enhanced his growing reputation as a staunch supporter of the traditionalist camp.

(1) Cf. El P. Blanco García, op. cit., p. 513: "El buey suelto... descubre en la ejecución lo errado del camino que en mal hora escogió el novelista privado de sus habituales recursos, del aire de la montaña, donde únicamente respira con holgura; del colorido y los aromas del paisaje; del mundo real cuyas imágenes llenan halagadoras su fantasía."

CHAPTER VI.

DON GONZALO GONZÁLEZ DE LA GONZALERA.

Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera⁽¹⁾ is the second novel of the political trilogy which was initiated with Los Hombres de Pro and which ends with Pedro Sánchez. In Los Hombres de Pro Pereda had depicted the tragedy of the man who, carried away by his inordinate ambitions, tries to shine in a sphere for which he is incompetent. Don Gonzalo... is a caricature of the revolution of 1868, the revolution which was largely responsible for Pereda's newspaper work and for his sitting in the first cortes of the new régime as a member for Cabuérniga. Being a good caricature, Don Gonzalo... is reduced to the scale of a little montañés township in which are to be found all the cruelty, all the knavery and all the absurdities of big revolutions, but - to meet the exigences of the author's thesis - none of the noble motives and good deeds which also abound in them.

The locality of Coteruco, the montañés village where the events narrated in Don Gonzalo... take place, has not

(1) 1879.

been definitely ascertained, but landscape and customs would suggest the banks of the Saja, perhaps Ruerte or Ucieda.⁽¹⁾ When the reader is first introduced to Coteruco it is a tranquil country village the inhabitants of which live contentedly under the patriarchal rule of the local squire, don Román Pérez de la Llosía. Don Román is the type of country squire dear to Pereda's heart. He has received a university education, but has preferred to return to his native Montaña, there to play the rôle of a benevolent and understanding father to the community: "había nacido y se había formado en el campo; su alma estaba identificada con aquellos horizontes y aquella fragancia de la naturaleza, y se le entumecía en el cuerpo cuando se consideraba en lo porvenir ensartando sofismas en el foro, como jurisconsulto, o recetando a tientas contra las mil y mil plagas físicas, anejas a la doliente humanidad."⁽²⁾

Don Román's travels and studies have made him realize that the greatest wealth of his village countrymen is their ignorance: "su sencilla y honrada ignorancia."⁽³⁾ And

(1) Cf. Cossío, op. cit., p. 126.

(2) Vide Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera (1925 ed.), cap. I., p. 13.

(3) Ibid., p. 14.

he does his utmost to preserve them in that (according to him) happy state. Nevertheless, he does not omit to let his neighbours share the benefit of his experience, but, knowing the proverbial caution of the montañeses, takes good care not to thrust anything upon them. For instance, his method of introducing a new agricultural instrument to the community is to use it on his own estate and let his neighbours judge of its utility for themselves.

The day's work finished, the coterucanos betake themselves to don Román's kitchen, which becomes thus the social centre of the village. The description of this hila in the introductory chapter⁽¹⁾ is one of the finest of the many colourful cuadros to be found in Don Gonzalo... It is noteworthy, as illustrative of Pereda's technique, that the model of don Román's house and of this hila was the casona of Tudanca which was also to provide the setting of Peñas Arriba, and which was visited by Pereda during his election journey.⁽²⁾ So well attended are the gatherings in the cocina that even the tax-collector goes there to collect his taxes! There we meet local types like the sharp-tongued

(1) Ibid., pp. 20-39.

(2) Cf. Cossío, op. cit., p. 126.

Chisquín Bisanucos, and Carpio and Gorio who in their dialogues, which serve as commentaries to the actions of the principal characters, recall the chorus of the Greek tragedy. There also we meet Patricio Rigüelta, "hombre de cincuenta años, moreno, enjuto, de ojos pequeños y mirada innoble, muy risueño y muy hablador."⁽¹⁾ Rigüelta is a very different type from the majority of the coterucanos. Dissatisfied with the existing order simply because he exercises no authority, he is the leader of all the loafers and good-for-nothings in Coteruco, and his sole aim in visiting the cocina is to spy and to breed discontent. Rigüelta had already appeared in some of the author's early political satires. We meet him in El Tío Cayetano and later as the chronicler of a famous political banquet.⁽²⁾ Cossío regards him as the political rogue par excellence. "El arbitrista allí abocetado (in the early sketches) toma en este libro proporciones extraordinarias, enriquece su psicología hasta llegar a ser representante insuperable de toda la trapacería, malicia y perversión aldeanas, y puede quedar como modelo ejemplar de picaresca política no superado

(1) Cap. I., p. 22.

(2) Cf. Obras Completas, vol. XVII. (1922 ed.), p. 111.

por novela alguna anterior ni posterior a su creación definitiva."(1)

The year 1868 was a revolutionary one and Rigdelta does his best to infect the coterucanos with the lust for suffrage and power. On one occasion he accuses don Román of having kept his neighbours in a state of ignorance as to political events. Don Román's reply reveals the sincerity of his convictions (and of Pereda's, for the squire is his spokesman). "Esta es mi convicción arraigada. Por las noticias al menudeo, se llega a los comentarios; por los comentarios, a la disputa; por la disputa, a la pasión, y por la pasión, al olvido de los deberes propios. La educación, el talento natural y otras mil causas providenciales, pueden, enhorabuena, hacer de la madera de un rústico labriego un gran legislador; pero esta preeminencia no se adquiere manejando la esteva, y algo la revela que yo no he visto todavía lucir en la frente de ninguno de mis convecinos de Coteruco, ni la espero a merced de cuatro noticias de otros tantos sucesos políticos, o de media docena de discursos de un estadista vulgar o de un novelero ambicioso y desautorizado. Por esto, señor

(1) Cf. Cossío, op. cit., p. 127.

Patricio, y mucho que se le parece, he desterrado de mi tertulia todo género de noticias que con la política militante se rocen, como se roza la que usted ha traído. Lo que fuere sonará, y entonces sabremos lo que ha sucedido, y estas sencillas gentes harán lo que hoy: obedecer al que mande, y trabajar en sus haciendas para llenar el desván de panojas y el pajar de buena yerba."⁽¹⁾

How masterly too is the portrait of don Lope del Robledal de los Infantes de la Barca, Ceballucos y la Portillera, who hides a heart of gold beneath a rough exterior! We shall not find him in don Román's kitchen, for he lives a very secluded life, rarely venturing forth from his casa solariega, but doing many a service for the coterucanos in his quiet, unobtrusive way. Don Lope is a type who remains firmly imprinted on the mind of the reader. "Era alto, robusto, de hermoso y varonil semblante, bien encajado entre una espesa barba y una recia y tupida cabellera, de ordinario rapada. Había en toda su persona, no obstante el desaliño con que la ataviaba y la rudeza de su trato, cierta noble marcialidad que, al decir de sus convecinos, revelaba la madera de la casta. Jamás salió

(1) Cap. I., pp. 38-39.

del valle nativo; y en él fué siempre su principal distracción subir a Carrascosa y sentarse a horcajadas en un escueto peñasco que avanza tres varas sobre el río, y estarse así las horas muertas fumando su pipa y contemplándole deslizarse a cuarenta pies bajo los suyos, o arrojando astillitas al torrente para ver cómo el agua las sorbía en un punto y las escupía más abajo. Sin duda por lo que el hidalgo le montaba, era conocido aquel peñasco, y aún lo es, en Coteruco, con el nombre de Potro de don Lope."(1)

Don Román with don Lope and don Frutos, the parish priest, are the benevolent fathers of Coteruco. Their enemies are Patricio Rigüelta, his son Gildo and the student, Lucas, nephew of don Lope and the plague of his existence. The real villains of the piece are Patricio and Gildo, ambitious upstarts, who will stop at nothing in order to serve their own ends. As for Lucas, he has more than once been expelled from Madrid University to the Montaña under caution for dabbling in revolutionary plots. It is in such circumstances that he returns to the Montaña in 1868, the year of our novel, prepared and disposed to

(1) Cap. IV., pp. 76-77.

teach the new doctrines to the coterucanos. One thing is necessary, however, before these rogues can begin their campaign: money. At this juncture there arrives at Coteruco the rich indiano, don Gonzalo, whose name gives the novel its title and, needless to say, he is immediately the object of the tender cares of Lucas and the Rigüeltas.

A word or two is necessary as to the antecedents of don Gonzalo.⁽¹⁾ Years before there had lived in Coteruco one Antón González, more commonly known as Antón Bragas, on account of the old, ill-fitting trousers he usually wore. Bragas was a perpetual drunkard and subsisted on charity. His son, Colás, realizing that there was no future for him if he remained in Coteruco, set forth and tried his hand at various occupations. His innate ambition growing all the time, he eventually saved enough money to pay his passage to America where, by dint of hard work, he succeeded in making a fortune.

At this point his vanity induces him to return to his native soil and dazzle the coterucanos with his wealth and finery. Colás has great expectations of the rôle he

(1) Cap. VI.

will be called upon to play in Coteruco. "-Llegó mi hora, y hay que aprovecharla. Por de pronto, a Europa por los Estados Unidos, a cepillar un tanto la persona y a tomar los aires del día y la substancia del saber de los tiempos. Con esto, y lo que aprendido tengo en mis lecturas y lo que a un hombre se le alcanza de por sí cuando es ilustrado y ha corrido el mundo, como yo, y, sobre todo, con una renta, bien saneada de tres mil dureses, como la mía, a Coteruco. Coteruco estará como yo le dejé, mitad en barbecho y mitad de por labrar. Unos cuantos melenos que andan en dos pies por milagro; un cura que les llenará la cabeza de cuentos; un señor que se dará humos de personaje porque tiene cuatro terrones y una casa con portalada; un infanzón con más hambre que vanidad... y pare usted de contar."⁽¹⁾

In the novelist's first works the indiano is depicted in very sorry colours. Later this judgement will be rectified. The passage where Colás chooses for himself a name worthy of his fortune is clearly reminiscent of the similar passage in the Quijote.⁽²⁾ Though long, it is too good not to quote. "Juzgándose en Liverpool, y ya con los

(1) *Ibid.*, pp. 111-12.

(2) Cf. Parte primera, cap. I.

retratos en la maleta, a las puertas de su casa, asaltóle a las mientes una idea abrumadora: ¿con qué nombre se presentaba él en la sociedad española, siquiera fuese la de Coteruco? Su padre, vulgo Antón Bragas, se llamó Antonio González; su madre, Nisia Boñigones; él tenía por nombre Nicolás; y llamarse Nicolás González a secas, valía tanto como Perico el de los Palotes, y añadir los Boñigones maternos, era tumbar de espaldas al más valiente.

Torturándose el magín para salir de este apuro, recordó que tenía dos nombres de pila, y que el segundo era Gonzalo, por el santo del día en que nació; el cual nombre le sonó bien; y parecióle, no sólo fino, sino hasta de buen solar; pero uníale luego al apellido, y ya resultaba la monotonía y hasta la vulgaridad. Lo que necesitaba era cierta música, algo como cascabel al remate del apellido, que le diera resonancia y aun remedos de añeja estirpe. Había en el pueblo Pérez de la Llosía, y Robledal de los Infantes de la Barca, Ceballucos y la Portillera, y entre otros sembrados por el valle, Gutiérrez de los Coteros, Coterones de la Cuérniga, López de los Acebales, y Sánchez de la Pedreguera; y algo por el estilo de estos sonoros y campanudos apéndices quería él; como si, por ejemplo, en vez de González, se llamase... de la

Gonzalera... - 'Y ¿por qué no? - se dijo, dándose de pronto una palmada en la frente, como quien halla inesperada resolución de arduo problema-; ¿no soy González?; ¿dejaré de serlo por estirar un poco el apellido?; ¿no le encogen otros, o le ponen en abreviatura? Pues el más o el menos no quita la calidad a las cosas... Pero habrá escrupulosos que se empeñen en que yo sea hijo de mi padre, y que a todo trance me firme González después del nombre de pila, que, de por sí, ha de serles sospechoso.'

Y dándose así de calabazadas con estas dificultades, ocurriósele al fin llamarse de la Gonzalera, sin dejar por eso de firmarse González; con lo cual, tras de tapar la boca a los reparones, combinaba una firma de rechupete, al modo y manera de las más sopladas de los contornos de Coteruco. En cuanto a los que pudieran tacharle el remoquete final... ¿estarían ellos muy seguros de que tenían más claro el origen y la explicación los de la Pedreguera, de los Acebales o de los Camberones con que se engreían y pavoneaban?

Acto continuo voló a encargarse a un litógrafo un millar de tarjetas de variadas cartulinas, con el nombre, estampado en ellas en anchos y repicoteados caracteres de múltiples colores, de GONZALO GONZÁLEZ DE LA GONZALERA."⁽¹⁾

(1) Cap. VI., pp. 115-17.

And so don Gonzalo reaches Spain, like many a type depicted by Larra, full of contempt for everything Spanish. He is soon chagrined to find that, with the exception of a few of the oldest inhabitants, who cross themselves in their amazement that the Almighty could have worked such a miracle as to transform the ragged boy Colás into such a fine gentleman, no one in Coteruco pays any attention to him. He receives formal visits from don Román and don Lope, but the latter are not impressed by the indiano's vulgar bragging and his ill-concealed vanity.

Treated with indifference by don Román and spurned by Magdalena, don Román's beautiful daughter, don Gonzalo is driven into the opposite camp, that of the Rigüeltas and Lucas. Out of pique he is induced to finance the plottings of these villains who begin by making the tavern the social centre of the village. Various inducements - games, free drinks, etc. - are offered in order to attract the men of Coteruco. These culminate in a gargantuan banquet which lasts for half a day and is attended by the majority of the male population of the village. El Festín⁽¹⁾ is one of the most vigorous and colourful of the cuadros in the book and has been described by Menéndez y Pelayo as "un cuadro

(1) Cap. XVI.

de Teniers, con toque más vigoroso y más caliente entonación. Parece que sentimos el peso de la becerra sobre la mesa, y el del vino tinto en las cabezas de los comensales."⁽¹⁾

At these festivities the ringleaders take care to talk scandal about the priest and don Román. The latter, it is alleged, has kept them in a state of ignorance in order to further his own ends; even his goodness and his services are belittled. Don Frutos, the priest, too comes in for his share of reviling, it even being insinuated that he has a mistress. Thus it is that the men whom don Román has trained to be honest, industrious and good citizens, become in the course of a few weeks the henchmen of a handful of scoundrels. Don Gonzalo, whose overweening vanity blinds him to the fact that he is merely the tool of the Rigüeltas, hesitates at first to go to extremes, but Magdalena's indifference decides him in the end. Things get to such a pass that the men of Coteruco are drunk every night and the farming operations all but neglected. The priest's house is stoned⁽²⁾ and a hostile demonstration is staged in front

(1) Vide op. cit., p. LV.

(2) Cap. XII.

of don Román's residence.⁽¹⁾

Don Román, thoroughly disillusioned, asks himself⁽²⁾ how the work of so many years could collapse in a few days. Reading his soliloquy we seem to hear the very voice of Pereda himself. "Examinó en seguida la marcha de los acontecimientos; y vió, de una parte, imposturas groseras, calumnias mal urdidas y ambiciones mal disimuladas; de la otra, incapacidad absoluta de distinguir el bien del mal, la verdad de la mentira. 'Aquí está el flaco,' se dijo; y luego discurrió así: '¿De qué procede esta incapacidad? De falta de criterio. ¿Y la falta de criterio? De otra falta de educación. Y esta falta, ¿se me puede imputar a mí como una culpa? No. Yo me he afanado por enseñar a estos hombres cuanto podía conducirlos a mejorar su condición de labradores, y por ilustrarles la inteligencia en todo lo que fuera compatible con esa misma condición... Pero también me afané porque ignorasen lo que, mal entendido, los llevaría a aborrecerla por deseo de otra cosa que no penetrarán jamás sin dejar de ser lo que son. ¿Hice mal en esto, por lo que, en la apariencia, se opone al curso

(1) Cap. XVI.

(2) Cap. XVIII.

de las ideas, según el criterio de los flamantes reformistas? No, mientras no se me demuestre que puede hacerse de cada tosco labrador un estadista, sin dejar el arado de la mano; o que pueden resignarse a labrar sus heredades y a no comer otro pan que el que produzcan éstas, los hombres que poseen la ciencia del gobierno de los pueblos; o en fin, que lo de Jauja no es conseja estúpida, y puede llegar un día en que, siendo todos los españoles consumados políticos y altos funcionarios, de la tierra broten, en virtud de la ley maravillosa del progreso intelectual, las casas construídas, el pan en hogazas, y planchadas las camisas, y viertan las nubes, en vez de los prosaicos aguaceros de ahora y de antaño, las onzas acuñadas y la ciencia digerida..."(1)

Events develop as is to be expected. The old order is overthrown and is replaced by a new régime based on the principle of equality and freedom. Universal suffrage is introduced to Coteruco; don Gonzalo is appointed mayor. Among the many errors committed by the indiano and the Rigüeltas the most outrageous is the arresting of don Román and the seizing of Magdalena, as they are leaving church.(2)

(1) Ibid., pp. 270-71.

(2) Cap. XXIII.

This incident makes a very bad impression on the coterucanos and the reason for don Román's arrest is asked that same night at the newly-founded Club. The reply is unsatisfactory and things are looking bad when Lucas cuts the matter short with a discourse on freedom of thought and speech.⁽¹⁾ He has scarcely finished speaking when Bisanucos stands up and reveals how profitable Lucas's harangue has been to him by expressing his feelings regarding those in power with the utmost freedom. "-Pinto un caso: a mí se me figura, de muchos días acá, que a los presentes, y otros muchos más de este pueblo, se nos está engañando sin maldita la concencia... ¿Puedo decirlo a gritos?¡Aquí se nos engaña! (Rugidos de aprobación en la concurrencia) ¡Y además se nos roba! (Explosión de entusiasmo en los contornos; don Gonzalo manotea; Gildo se pone de pie, y Lucas vocifera en el púlpito.) Y quien nos engaña y nos esquilma es el señor, y el señor, y el señor (Chisquín va señalando al presidente, al secretario y a Lucas), y otro buena pieza que, a la presente, no se halla en el pueblo. (Aplausos horribles, entre protestas y conjuros.)"⁽²⁾

(1) Cap. XXV., pp. 369-70.

(2) Ibid., pp. 371-72.

The upshot is a free fight. It is now patent to the coterucanos that they have made a mistake in swearing allegiance to don Gonzalo, but they feel that it is now too late to return to don Román and ask his pardon. And so Coteruco continues thus till the day of the election when Polinar, one of don Gonzalo's henchmen, murders Patricio for attempting to cheat at the voting urn. Don Frutos tries to intervene, an action which all but costs him his life. (1)

The novel ends with the departure of don Román from the village. Saddened by what he has seen in the last six months and convinced that there is now no hope of salvation for Coteruco, he determines to abandon it to its fate and leaves for the city, accompanied by Magdalena and don Alvaro de la Gerra, now the husband of his daughter. Don Frutos remains behind in don Román's house to do what he can for his wayward flock. As don Román leaves Coteruco, he waves good-bye to his friend, don Lope, and the last picture we have of don Lope deserves quotation for its sober brilliance: "En aquel instante se fijó don Román en un bulto negro que descollaba sobre el Petro de don Lope. Eran las espaldas

(1) Cap. XXX.

del hidalgo. Enderezó éste todo el busto al oír el ruido de los que llegaban; volvió la varonil cabeza, y se descubrió con noble marcialidad al conocer a don Román. Contestaron éste y don Frutos al saludo en igual forma, y Magdalena con su pañuelo; y después de contemplarse breves instantes ambos caballeros, cubrióse don Lope y tornó a su primera postura, apoyando los codos en sus muslos y hundiendo la cabeza entre las manos... Visto de perfil en aquella actitud con su barba blanca, y descansando sobre las espaldas las anchas alas de su chambergo, tenía algo del viejo profeta llorando sobre los escombros de la ciudad impía."⁽¹⁾

The political thesis of Don Gonzalo... aroused on its publication as much criticism as its artistic qualities compelled admiration. Román Pérez de la Llosía, the champion of the old régime, is a model of the perfect gentleman, while don Gonzalo, the leader of the opposite band, is a compendium of all that is most vile. Pereda, therefore, sets out from a false basis. Don Román embodies Pereda's own theories. And the author has placed himself so wholeheartedly in the shoes of his character that the latter is

(1) Cap. XXXII., pp. 460-61.

painted in vigorous relief. On the other hand, hating Gonzalo, his portrait is of a most superficial nature. We merely see his exterior. He frequently resembles Simón Cerojo, that is, he is a mere puppet. González does not appear on the scene till one hundred and one pages have been read, and we wonder at times why the author named the novel Don Gonzalo...

There was a considerable press dispute after the publication of the novel over its antiliberal tendency. The local El Eco de la Montaña⁽¹⁾ combated the novelist's statements on the revolution disturbing the sacred and beneficent peace of village life and observed ingeniously that, but for that village ignorance of which Pereda was so enamoured, abuses such as occurred in Coteruco would not have been possible. Ricardo Olarán, also, in El Aviso disagreed with the political thesis of the book. "Persona que, como usted, tanto sabe no puede, sin incurrir en palmaria contradicción, sentar como un axioma... que la suprema felicidad de ciertas gentes es la ignorancia."⁽²⁾ Pereda answered this criticism in view of Olarán's authority

(1) 25-I-79.

(2) 28-I-79.

and their friendship. He quoted passages from the novel in which education is eulogized and tried to limit the significance of some of his statements. "Mi libro no es otra cosa que una novela de costumbres copiadas del natural, en cuya acción un vanidoso ignorante, recién vestido de señor, quiere a todo trance ser el gallito del pueblo: y para lograrlo se vale del auxilio de algunos bribones que le adulan para explotarle mejor. Ni más ni menos."⁽¹⁾ It is noteworthy that the most eminent critics of the day treated the polemic with disdain. Clarín, for example, in an article which is an unconditional eulogy of the writer, maintains that all that happens in Coteruco is merely an unimportant anecdote, since, if the author wished to give it any importance, the thesis would be quite inadmissible.⁽²⁾ From this point onwards Clarín and the art of Pereda are reconciled. Menéndez y Pelayo too, with his usual perspicacity of judgement, deprecates the significance of the thesis in Don Gonzalo... "No es el fin de éste, como a algunos podrá antojárseles, la sátira

(1) Vide El Aviso (1-II-79).

(2) Vide La Unión (28-III-79): "Si a Coteruco, Arcadia municipal, vienen a desbaratar el idilio de que gozaba el procomún, aquel endemoniado estudiante y el soberbio indianete, amén del ingeniosísimo Rigdelta, nada dice eso contra la gloriosa."

política, ni viene ésta más que como episodio, y sin salir de los límites del arte, debiendo estimársela como un recurso para poner en juego a los personajes."⁽¹⁾

The reader of to-day, if he is wise, will adopt the attitude of Menéndez y Pelayo and Clarín towards the novel. He will read Don Gonzalo... for its powerful cuadros such as La feria de Pedreguero, La romería de Verdellano and El Festín, and for its acute character studies, notably those of Patricio Rigüelta, don Román and don Lope. He will note how well drawn are popular types like Carpio and Gorio, "en quienes se cifra y compendia el carácter del campesino montañés con todos sus rodeos y suspicacia."⁽²⁾ He will admire finally the skill with which the interest of the narrative is sustained throughout the book, regretting perhaps the unsatisfactory final note, when don Román appears to acknowledge defeat too readily. To-day, now that the passions which were aroused by the proximity of events have died down, this novel can be counted among those works of Pereda which are most read and most highly considered.

(1) Vide op. cit., p. LI.

(2) Vide Menéndez y Pelayo, op. cit., pp. LIV-LV.

CHAPTER VII.

DE TAL PALO, TAL ASTILLA.

If the thesis in Don Gonzalo... occupied a secondary place, one cannot say the same of that of De tal palo, tal astilla.⁽¹⁾ Menéndez y Pelayo describes it as the least realistic of the author's works on account of the tendentious element. "La única diferencia substancial que encuentro entre esta novela y las demás de Pereda, y lo que me hace declararla realista a medias, consiste en que es un libro de tesis, donde abandonando el autor, hasta cierto punto, la observación desinteresada, principal musa suya, trata de inculcar, aunque no directamente, no una, sino muchas y varias moralidades."⁽²⁾ De tal palo... represents Pereda's reaction to Gloria,⁽³⁾ the famous novel of Pérez Galdós. In Gloria Galdós had depicted the struggle between love and strong religious convictions, giving victory to love. In De tal palo... Pereda portrays a similar struggle, but in this case (as was to be expected

(1) 1880.

(2) Vide op. cit., pp. LV-LVI.

(3) 1877.

from a writer of such sincere religious feeling) it is religious conviction which is adamant and love is defeated. It has been suggested that Pereda's novel had a possible precedent in Octave Feuillet's Sibylle,⁽¹⁾ where the same conflict is portrayed and resolved according to Catholic standards, but, without the provocation of Galdós it is hardly likely that Pereda would have written his novel. Menéndez y Pelayo emphasizes that the resemblance between De tal palo... and Sibylle is only a superficial one and points out that the christianity of Sibylle is artificial: "aquel cristianismo vaporoso es un cristianismo de salón, mundano y sentimental."⁽²⁾

The principal male character in De tal palo... is Fernando Peñarrubia, a young doctor of great promise, enlightened, scientifically educated, and of the type which Galdós delights in painting. Fernando is himself the son of a doctor whose home is in the little montañés town of Perojales. Although the home of the Peñarrubias is the casona of the village, the family is not a popular one. This, we are told, is due to their long absences and to

(1) Cf. Menéndez y Pelayo, op. cit., p. LVI.

(2) Ibid.

their irreligiousness. Irreligiousness is the hallmark of their race. Doctor Peñarrubia, as a result of his education, was a Voltairian in his ideas. It was logical then that his son, Fernando, should follow in his footsteps (De tal palo, tal astilla). His mother having died when giving birth to him, Fernando was brought up by the father. In Dr. Peñarrubia reason does not have complete and undisputed sway over the spirit. There are times, when, remembering his childhood and his mother's teaching, he is assailed by doubts. The son, on the other hand, has no such worries; "lo que en el padre fueron dudas, en el hijo negaciones terminantes. Este tomó las cosas donde y como el otro las dejó hechas, no sin fatigas ni desvelos. El padre construyó la senda; el hijo no tuvo más que caminar sobre ella. Hallábase en aquel terreno como el pez en el agua, convencido de que en otro elemento no se podía vivir. Como no tuvo dudas, no estudió las cuestiones más que por una cara: la de sus simpatías; y así, sin obstáculos ni contradicciones que le detuvieran, antes bien, aguijoneado por el estímulo de los aplausos que nunca faltan a los atrevidos, si por contera son brillantes, como Fernando, llegó éste a ser en Madrid una de las glorias militantes de la secta que preparó en España el actual

desbarajustado filosofismo que tanta saliva ha costado y ha de costar..."(1)

Agueda de Quincevillas, the principal mouthpiece of the Catholic faith in the novel, is another "chip of the old block." We learn that the señora de Quincevillas had been a woman of strong religious instincts; on the death of her husband her religious fervour had become more intense and she devoted the rest of her life to mysticism and self-mortification. Agueda's education can be easily imagined. "Que esta educación se fundó sobre los cimientos de la ley de Dios, sin salvedades acomodaticias ni comentarios sutiles, se deduce de lo que sabemos de la maestra, aunque está de más afirmarlo tratándose de una ilustre casa de la Montaña, todas ellas, como las más humildes, regidas por la misma ley inalterada e inalterable."(2) The Quincevillas live in Valdecines which is separated from Perojales by a wild and deep ravine. In the novel, so to speak, Perojales is the stronghold of rationalism, while Valdecines is the temple of faith, of religious belief.

When the reader makes the acquaintance of Agueda, she

(1) Vide De tal palo, tal astilla (1931 ed.), cap. IV., pp. 71-72.

(2) Cap. VII., p. 111.

is an attractive young woman of eighteen. She possesses "un carácter entre abierto y reflexivo, que era su mayor encanto; mezcla peregrina de candor y de madurez, ostentaba todo el brillo de la mujer discreta, sin la insufrible impertinencia de la joven resabida."⁽¹⁾ It is with such a woman that Fernando has the misfortune to fall in love. Agueda and he had met one summer in Santander. Since then he had been a frequent visitor at Agueda's home. The visits, however, came to an abrupt end when the señora de Quincevillas discovers that Fernando has no faith.

The novel opens with the death of Agueda's mother (who is attended by Fernando's father), and we witness the efforts of Fernando to break down the resistance of the daughter. Pereda's object was to exalt the inflexible virtue of a fervent woman Catholic, but the polemical discussions which take place between Fernando and Agueda do not always succeed in obscuring the strong emotional struggle which is present in the souls of both. These glimpses of the intimate drama of the two characters, the contrast between their tribulations and hopes, save the novel and keep the interest of the reader.

(1) Ibid., p. 115.

Fernando has two interviews with Agueda, the first shortly after her mother's funeral. He has come to offer his sympathy, but he is unable to take his departure without some reference to his personal feelings towards her. For the first time the reader sees the two young people together; and if Fernando strikes him as being too materialistic and unsympathetic in tone, Agueda seems almost inhuman, so little effect have her lover's impassioned appeals on her. After a long conversation during the course of which Agueda insists on the abyss which separates them from each other, Fernando appeals to her not to dismiss him from her heart and he evinces a desire to learn from her about her faith. "¿Quién sabe, Agueda, si la mujer que supo hacer vibrar en mi pecho desconocidas cuerdas, logrará con la luz de su talento y de su fe iluminar eso que tú crees antros de podredumbre y de maldad?... Ya ves si quiero transigir... Además, a mí nunca se me dijo que esas diferencias pudieran ser obstáculo a ninguno de los fines honrados de la vida... Con la buena fe de esta ignorancia te conocí y te amé. Acéptala en descargo de mi culpa, y óyeme... no ahora, sino cuando pasen algunos días, y con ellos lo más amargo del dolor que te aqueja... En suma, Agueda, ¡que no sea ésta

la última vez que yo hable contigo con el derecho de decirte que te adoro!"⁽¹⁾

Agueda's reply seems unnecessarily hard and disheartening. "-La extensión de tus errores - respondió - me deja sin la menor esperanza de que algún día se acorten las distancias que nos separan. ¿A qué tu empeño en estrechar esos vínculos, que al fin han de romperse? Y cuenta que temo por ti, - Fernando; porque te veo sin armas para resistir el peso de tu desdicha. No obstante, si tan extrema es la necesidad que sientes de que te oiga una vez más; si complaciéndote en ese deseo te pongo en ocasión de que tus ideas puedan tomar otro rumbo, satisfáganse tus ansias. Pero entiende que no se quebranta mi fe con argumentos sutiles. Guárdate de hacerlos, y no olvides que sólo con la ley de Dios, no en los labios, sino en el corazón, has de reinar en el mío..."⁽²⁾

Shortly afterwards, Fernando and Agueda have a second and last talk together. Once again Fernando's remarks are illuminated by the cold light of reason. He can see no objection to their getting married; he will respect Agueda's

(1) Cap. VIII., pp. 137-38.

(2) Ibid., p. 138.

conscience and she can respect his. Agueda, however, cannot reconcile her love and her conscience, and she points out that the children of such a union would be in a very unfortunate position. Any agreement on that point between them is impossible. Thereupon, Fernando invokes the power of love. "-No hay imposibles, Agueda, cuando hay amor; el amor es la ley suprema en el mundo; todo lo allana y lo purifica. Eso que tú llamas imposible, es el fanatismo que te ciega."(1)

And so the battle of wits continues. According to Fernando, Agueda's sense of duty is an 'obcecación'; while Agueda insists that no agreement is possible between them until Fernando believes in God. Pereda leaves the reader in no doubt as to which of the two has his sympathy. Agueda, however, is too rigid and unfeeling to win strong sympathy from the open-minded reader. Like Fernando we wonder what kind of love it is which can reason so coldly when so much is at stake. "En situaciones como la nuestra en este instante, las reflexiones de una dialéctica fría como la tuya, sólo sirven para acrecentar el martirio. ¡No te complazcas, Agueda, en escarbar la herida que me mata,

(1) Cap. XIV., p. 207.

y dime, si puedes, qué amor es el tuyo que así razona y escrupuliza, cuando el mío es incendio que me devora!"(1)

And he implores her again to effect his cure rather than abandon him mercilessly. But perhaps, he suggests, she is afraid of contagion? Agueda answers: "-No lo temo; pero sé que mis fuerzas no bastan para tan grande empresa, y que cuanto más avanza la gangrena, más dolorosa es la operación de cortar por lo sano. Eso es lo que vamos a hacer por mutua conveniencia, ahora mismo, dando por terminada esta ociosa contienda que me mata."(2) Fernando warns her that she is pronouncing his death sentence:

"-Estoy al bordo del abismo que nos separa; te opones a que pase sobre él, y no puedo retroceder, porque no quiero ni sé volver a lo que fuí. Tengo que hundir en el negro fondo mis ojos y mis pensamientos... Si el vértigo me arrastra, no olvides que tú dictaste la sentencia."(3)

From this point onwards the reader suspects that events are heading for a tragedy. Fernando confides his trouble in his father. He expresses his regret at not having

(1) Ibid., p. 211.

(2) p. 213.

(3) p. 214.

received any religious training as a child and discovers to his dismay that his father is not such an adherent to materialism as he had thought. Dr. Peñarrubia states that as he has grown older he has felt less and less enthusiasm for any particular ideas. "La tolerancia es mi bandera."⁽¹⁾ Whereupon the son accuses the father of being the primary cause of his present trouble. Fernando had adopted his father's philosophy and had shut his eyes to all others. "Tal cual me ves, obra tuya soy."⁽²⁾

Fernando decides to make one more effort; he decides to consult the priest of Valdecines in the hope that he can teach him his faith.⁽³⁾ We realize what this last effort costs Fernando when the author unfolds before us the very sorry picture which the young doctor has in mind of the Catholic faith.⁽⁴⁾ The priest in question is kind and sympathetic as are all the priests depicted by Pereda. He diagnoses Fernando's trouble correctly and, while not depriving him of hope, tells him frankly that it will be no

(1) Cap. XV., p. 224.

(2) Ibid., p. 227.

(3) Cap. XVIII.

(4) Cap. XV., pp. 233-34.

easy matter for him to acquire the knowledge which he desires. The simple priest is absolutely dumbfounded to learn that Fernando does not believe in anything. In Valdecines there may be poor Christians but there are no disbelievers. However, he tells Fernando to return the next day when he will have thought out a plan of campaign.

Unfortunately, however, circumstances conspire against Fernando. He cannot resist the temptation, when he is in Valdecines, to visit Agueda and he finds the door closed to him.⁽¹⁾ A few days later he returns to Valdecines with the intention of consulting the priest again but to his surprise he is stoned in the streets.⁽²⁾ Inquiring the reason of this outrage of Macabeo, Agueda's servant, he learns that it is on account of his visit to the priest. The villagers, aided and abetted by the unscrupulous don Sotero, co-guardian of Agueda and one of the vilest characters to be found in Pereda's works, have put the worst interpretation on this, and the rumour circulates that Fernando is going to feign conversion in order to win

(1) Cap. XVII., p. 248.

(2) Cap. XXVI., p. 367.

Agueda and her fortune. Fernando, who did not even know that Agueda was rich, returns home dazed and broken. And the reader is not surprised to learn that his body is found on the following day in the ravine.⁽¹⁾

Don Plácido, Agueda's uncle and guardian, commenting on Fernando's action, sums up the thesis of the novel in these words: "De un tibio y descuidado en materia de fe, nace un volteriano como el doctor Peñarrubia; de un volteriano un ateo que pierde los estribos al menor contra-tiempo, y se vuelve loco, o se quita la vida, que tanto monta..."⁽²⁾

Such is the thesis of the novel, but, as we have already indicated, it does not convince and the sympathies of the reader are with Fernando rather than Agueda.⁽³⁾ On the whole, Pereda was not so successful in the portrayal of the feminine character as he was in that of his male types. Commenting on this, Menéndez y Pelayo writes: "De

(1) Cap. XXVIII.

(2) Cap. XXXI., p. 414.

(3) Cf. Clarín, El Imparcial (19-IV-80): "En mi vida he visto ateo que se ahogara en tan poca agua como Fernando." Also el P. Blanco García (op. cit., pp. 515-16) who regards the suicide of Fernando as a weak dénouement: "Lo que justamente se ha censurado en la novela ultramontana es la solución del conflicto, que viene a desvirtuar la tesis del autor y casi resulta contraproducente."

fijo lo menos afortunado en la novela (i.e. De tal palo...) de Pereda es también el carácter de la heroína. Puede decirse, sin agravio de él, que los tipos femeniles y los diálogos de amor han sido, son y serán siempre la parte más endeble de su armadura de novelista."⁽¹⁾ The conception of Agueda as personifying the eternal struggle between passion and religious conviction was excellent and had great possibilities. "Pero, ¿era preciso para esto hacerla tan impasible, estoica y marmórea, cuando al fin era mujer y enamorada?"⁽²⁾ Most of the press organs, too, agreed in qualifying Pereda's thesis as a failure. Ricardo Olarán states that Pereda did not achieve his purpose and that Agueda is as cruelly chastised as the greatest rogue in the book;⁽³⁾ Miguel Maya writes in a similar tone: (Pereda) "Quiso, inútilmente, que Agueda fuese el reverso de Gloria. Porque Gloria no tiene reverso;"⁽⁴⁾ Tomás Tuero ingeniously remarks

(1) Vide op. cit., p. LVII.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Cf. La Voz Montañesa (13-IV-80): "Tan castigada resulta esta adorable criatura (Agueda) como el más desalmado bribón que anda por las páginas de De tal palo, tal astilla."

(4) Vide El Liberal (14-IV-80).

that the lesson taught by the novel is the contrary of the one Pereda wished to teach: "Tolerancia, mucha tolerancia, es lo que se desprende del libro de Pereda."⁽¹⁾ He refers to some of the author's other works of like tendency, such as the sabio of Tipos Trashumantes, and observes that Pereda appears to be incapable of painting a rationalist who is not a fool. In the Revista de Galicia there appeared an article, perhaps by Emilia Pardo Bazán, commenting upon Agueda's utter lack of human feeling: "No interesa Agueda por el exceso de estoicismo, que ya no resignación podemos llamarle. Cristiana y honrada era la Clemencia de Fernán Caballero, y, sin embargo, no escrupulizó la autora en hacerle latir un corazón en el pecho."⁽²⁾

If the two principal characters in De tal palo... are unconvincing, the secondary characters are excellent, particularly Macabeo, the faithful servant of the Quincevillas family. "¡Cuántas veces ha presentado el Sr. Pereda el tipo del campesino montañés, y sin embargo, no se ha repetido nunca! Y ahora, cuando la materia parecía agotada, nos regala a Macabeo, que vale él solo más que Carpio y Gorio y todos los

(1) Vide La Unión (4-VI-80).

(2) 10-V-80. Cf. Cossío, op. cit., p. 159.

anteriores juntos. Habla y discurre como ellos, tiene aire de familia, y, no obstante, es distinto."⁽¹⁾

Macabeo is typical of the peasant of the Montaña, and the peasant's caution and faith in old superstitions is patent in his conversation with Dr. Peñarrubia as he guides him through the ravine, so that he may reach the bedside of Agueda's dying mother. Equally entertaining is his courting of the mercenary Tasia and his contempt for her in the end, when she selects the wealthy but boorish nephew of the now deceased don Sotero.⁽²⁾

A source of perpetual joy to the reader is Macabeo's language, teeming with proverbs and pithy sayings in the real Sancho Panchesque vein. To cite one example: Agueda sends for Macabeo to ask a favour and his concrete mode of reply is characteristic: "-La carne soy; usté.el cuchillo: corte por dónde quiera!"⁽³⁾

Among the other characters a notable part is played by don Sotero, an unscrupulous moneylender who, by feigning piety, succeeds in winning the confidence of Agueda's mother

(1) Vide Menéndez y Pelayo, op. cit., pp. LVIII-LIX.

(2) Cap. XXX.

(3) Cap. XI., p. 167.

to such a degree that he is appointed co-guardian of Agueda and her sister along with don Plácido. Consequently, he is one of those who work hardest to upset Fernando's designs. It is don Sotero, the religious hypocrite, who is responsible in De tal palo... for intrigues of the type which Galdós had associated with Doña Perfecta and the Penitenciario. Agueda and the good Catholics in Pereda's novel never stoop to anything base. Menéndez y Pelayo thought this character admirably drawn, only second to Patricio Rigüelta.⁽¹⁾ It is to be regretted, however, that Pereda in the case of don Sotero relapsed into his old vice of putting on the colours too heavily. Had he not exaggerated don Sotero's vices, he might have created a character capable of ranking with Harpagon. As it is, he converts him into a type of melodramatic villain by means of intrigues which savour of the feuilleton, so grotesque and absurd are they.

Delightful are the descriptions of the tertulias⁽²⁾

(1) Cf. op. cit., p. LVIII: "Sólo el recuerdo, no fácilmente borrrable, de Patricio Rigüelta, puede perjudicar al malvado de esta otra novela, el don Sotero, abominable tartuffe, en cuya negra alma no ha temido penetrar y ahondar hasta con encarnizamiento el señor Pereda, como si quisiera dar hermosa muestra de que lo extremado de su ultramontanismo no corta las alas a su ingenio ni le hace ñoño o meticuloso."

(2) e.g. cap. XIII., p. 187.

held in the local botica of Valdecines, consisting of the chemist, the schoolmaster and don Lesmes, the local doctor who had attended to Agueda's mother. Although he had long since ceased practising, Dr. Peñarrubia consented to visit the señora de Quincevillas and there takes place a most amusing conversation between the two doctors. Don Lesmes had diagnosed the patient's malady as a nervous dyspepsia while she was really suffering from a pleural-pneumonia. Like the classic Dr. Sangrado he too had but one remedy: infusions of rib-grass!⁽¹⁾

One other but very important merit of this novel remains to be mentioned. In De tal palo... Pereda reveals himself as a consummate painter of landscapes. Admirable in this respect are the chapters entitled La hoguera de San Juan⁽²⁾ and Pateta⁽³⁾ "donde el diálogo supera a la descripción, con ser la descripción tan buena."⁽⁴⁾ Witness the powerful description of the storm which breaks in the ravine as Dr. Peñarrubia is journeying to visit

(1) Cap. II.

(2) Cap. XXII., p. 311.

(3) Cap. I., p. 9.

(4) Vide Menéndez y Pelayo, op. cit., p. LIX.

Agueda's mother: "El río, impetuoso y embravecido por la lluvia torrencial que cae hace dos horas, no cabe en su estrecho cauce, y muge espumoso, y salta y se despeña, y se lleva por delante árboles y terreros, con sus aguas desbordadas, que garras parecen con que trata de asirse a lo que encuentra al paso, asustado de su vertiginosa rapidez. En tanto, el huracán, oprimido entre los muros de tan estrecha y retorcida cárcel, silba y brama haciendo a ratos enmudecer al río; y troncos poderosos, y débiles arbustos, y rastros matorrales, se inclinan a su paso, dejando oír sobre sus copas desgredadas, al herirlas el pedrisco, el estridente machaqueo de una lluvia de perdigones sobre láminas de acero. Por imposible se tuviera que sobre estos ruidos juntos llegara a descollar otro más fuerte; y, sin embargo, cosa de juego parecen cuando, muy de continuo, retumba el estallido del trueno, y crece y se multiplica de cueva en cueva y de peñasco en peñasco. Entonces, al iluminar los relámpagos el temeroso paisaje, los robustos árboles adquieren formas monstruosas. Diríase, al verlos tocar el suelo con sus ramas, y enderezarse luego entre los cien caprichos de la sombra, que son gigantes empeñados en cruenta batalla, y que, en grupos desordenados y tumultuosos, riñen y se abofetean, se insultan y se

enardecen con la tremenda voz de la tempestad deshecha."⁽¹⁾

Pereda's imagery is frequently so colourful and picturesque that it impresses itself indelibly on the mind of the reader, as, for example, in the following delightful passage: "Luego comenzó a caer sobre el valle una llovizna tenue y sosegada, como espeso rocío. Recibiéronla los prados, sedientos con el calor de la víspera, con la fruición voluptuosa del chino que fuma su pipa cargada de opio; hasta que, saturados de ella, como verdaderos borrachos inclinaron la cabeza soñolientos; y fueron acostándose las verbenas sobre el llantén; el trébol sobre las verbenas, y las centauros sobre el trébol."⁽²⁾

In short, if Pereda was unsuccessful in the thesis which he set out to prove, the artistic qualities of the novel further enhanced his reputation as Spain's pre-eminent regional novelist. Even as exacting a critic as Clarín had nothing but praise for the regional aspect of De tal palo...: "¡Parece mentira que el autor de todas estas puerilidades pseudo-religiosas sea el mismo que hace hablar

(1) Cap. I., pp. 11-12.

(2) Cap. XVII., p. 239.

a Macabeo como Manzoni hacía hablar a Renzo!"⁽¹⁾

(1) Vide article cit., where Clarín also makes an apt criticism which could be applied to more than one of the author's works: "El Señor Pereda ha manejado esta vez el sermón rústico mejor que el sermón urbano."

CHAPTER VIII.ESBOZOS Y RASGUÑOS.

Pereda dedicates these "Rebuscos de mis cartapacios," as he terms the Esbozos y Rasguños, to don Manuel Marañón, and warns the reader that he is not claiming to offer him anything very ambitious.⁽¹⁾ The book was published in 1881 but nearly all the sketches contained therein are older in date. Some of the Esbozos were published in the press at different periods, others were unedited or forgotten works, others again were specially written for the book. Thus, the volume lacks unity in tone. Nevertheless, there is a sufficiency of sketches of a satirical or moral tone to give the book a character of its own. Roughly speaking, it contains two types of sketch: those which perpetuate memories of Pereda's life and which claim to be no more than sketches of local customs and those which have a satirical or moral import. When the author's complete works were published, the sketches entitled Un marino, Los bailes campestres and El fin de una raza were transferred from the Esbozos to the Escenas Montañesas, while Las visitas

(1) Vide Esbozos y Rasguños (1922 ed.) pp. 5-8.

and ¡Cómo se miente! were incorporated in the Esbozos y Rasguños.

Those sketches which contain personal memories are inestimable to the compiler of a biography of Pereda. They throw much light on his childhood and on local customs of those days. To quote Eduardo de Huidobro in the Apuntes ⁽¹⁾ published by El Diario Montañés on the death of Pereda:

"...los datos más exactos y abundantes acerca de la niñez de Pereda, hay que buscarlos en el volumen que tiene por título Esbozos y Rasguños, y especialmente en los artículos Reminiscencias, Más reminiscencias y El primer sombrero, que forman parte de la mencionada colección. Allí se hallará, y todo ello referido con admirable exactitud de pormenores: cómo iban entonces vestidos los muchachos; cuáles eran sus juegos y los 'avíos de sus juegos;' sus campañas de soldado de juguete como 'cabo primero de la compañía mandada por el Capitán Curtis' (que, corriendo los años, fué uno de los generales más bizarros del ejército español), 'a las órdenes del general Saba;' la vivísima emoción que le produjo el teatro la primera vez que a él asistió; su paso desde la escuela de Rojí, 'donde le trataban hasta con mimos,' a los

(1) Vide supra, p. 21, N. (2). This number of the Santander paper devoted to Pereda was the work of a number of eminent literary men of the Montaña, namely: D. Enrique Menéndez Pelayo, D. José María Quintanilla, D. Eduardo de Huidobro, D. Ramón de Solano and D. Evaristo Rodríguez de Bedía.

horrores de la clase del espantoso don Bernabé en el Instituto Cántabro, que fué 'como dejar el blando y regalado lecho en que se ha soñado con la gloria celestial, para ponerse delante de un toro del Jarama, o meterse, desnudo e indefenso, en la jaula de un oso blanco en ayunas;' la ferocidad de aquel dómine sin entrañas, las penas de daño y de sentido de aquel purgatorio, y cómo se le pasaban 'las noches de claro en claro, estudiando el Carrillo, sacando oraciones y traduciendo a Crodea;' y finalmente que, 'robustote y fuerte por naturaleza,' a los catorce años representaba diecinueve, y se vió obligado a salir a la calle con sombrero de copa el día del Corpus, y lo que le aconteció en ella con la 'velluda cúspide,' a la cual vuelto a su casa, infirió cuatro mortales heridas con el cortaplumas, 'con el placer que puede sentir un africano al desbandullar a un sabio inglés.'"(1)

These recollections of his childhood days were read with great pleasure by Pereda's contemporaries in Santander. But not all were of the same mind as the novelist in regard to persons and things. Amos de Escalante, for example, re-vindicates the memory of the abused don Bernabé in an extremely

(1) Vide Obras Completas, vol. XVII. (1922 ed.) pp. 367-68.

interesting article⁽¹⁾ which clearly reveals the difference in their literary temperaments. If the Humanity master was a veritable ogre to Pereda with his free and undisciplined genius, to don Amos, a fervent admirer of the discipline of the classics, his cruelties seemed only severity necessary for the discipline which the importance of the subject demanded.

Perhaps the finest sketches of autobiographical interest are those entitled Reminiscencias, Más reminiscencias, El primer sombrero and La guantería. The guantería⁽²⁾ was a círculo charlamentario, the most characteristic literary tertulia of Santander. The shop of Juan Alonso, the glover, to whom the esbozo is dedicated, provided a haven for Pereda and his friends in the very heart of the business quarter of Santander in the picturesque calle de la Blanca. Pereda emphasizes the fact that the guantería had become part and parcel of their lives to such an extent that it would have been irreplaceable. "En una ocasión - he says - addressing himself to the glover - y por un motivo que no quiero recordarte por no afligir tu corazón de padre, hallé cerrada

(1) Quoted by Cossío, op. cit., pp. 169-70.

(2) p. 137.

la puerta, ¡caso inaudito!, en un día de trabajo. Nunca, hasta entonces, había reparado yo en el aspecto de los sillares de aquella puerta, desnudos de las charoladas hojas que de ordinario los revisten; jamás me pareció la calle de la Blanca más larga, más silenciosa, más triste. Llegaron varios contertulios, pasmáronse, como yo, ante tal espectáculo, y mustios y cabizbajos dímonos a divagar por la población. Sobrónos el tiempo, aburrímonos en todas partes, y tornamos a casa con el mayor desaliento..."(1)

This affection for that place and that tertulia survived till the death of Juan Alonso in 1898.

Of the esbozos written with a satirical or moral purpose, very interesting are Manías, Las bellas teorías and El cervantismo. In Manías(2) the author's remarks on bibliophiles are very illustrative of his opinions on erudition and his attitude towards rare books.(3) In Las bellas teorías(4) Pereda ridicules Spanish publishers and the taste of the Spanish public. Juan has completed his

(1) pp. 153-54.

(2) p. 279.

(3) pp. 291-94.

(4) p. 65.

book entitled: Conquistas y derechos de la razón. He succeeds in having an interview with an editor, from whom he learns that it is quite impossible to get a book published in Spain, unless the author is well-known or a foreigner! He is also informed that there exists in Spain a Mutual Praise Society which one must join, if one hopes to publish anything; also, that the only type of book which sells profitably is the horrific, sensational novel: "Si fuera una novela patibularia, incendiaria, foragida, parricida o adulterina, poniéndole algunas láminas al cromo y portadas alegóricas a diez tintas, tal pudiera haber en ella de horrores, que se la compraran a usted, a pesar de su poco nombre."⁽¹⁾ These satirical remarks have an added interest for us, when we learn that Pereda had written a great deal before the Madrid critics deigned to pay much attention to his work. This silence on the part of Madrid was to prove exceedingly irritating to one of his nervous temperament and in a later work - Nubes de Estío - he will discharge a lot of accumulated bile against the press critics of the capital.

(1) p. 76.

El cervantismo⁽¹⁾ contains some of the wittiest pages in the book. Pereda reminds us that comparatively recently only a few of the most eminent Spanish scholars really knew Cervantes, when suddenly cervantismo became fashionable and his masterpiece was analysed and interpreted by all, competent and incompetent. He condemns all kinds of commentaries on the Quijote, only admitting a few notes where the sense is obscure and the language archaic, preferring the errata of Juan de la Cuesta to the best patchwork of the most expert present-day botcher. Let one definitive edition be made by competent scholars and then let it be declared a national monument. The State would never dream of allowing its national monuments to be tampered with. Let its literary monuments be respected in the same way.

Articles whose blatant social criticism aroused adverse comment from some critics were El peor bicho,⁽²⁾ Fisiología del baile⁽³⁾ and La mujer del ciego ¿para quién se afeita?⁽⁴⁾ In the two last mentioned the theme is

(1) p. 313.

(2) p. 155.

(3) p. 87.

(4) p. 169.

similar to that of the boceto entitled La mujer del César, namely, that a married woman should not only be a model of virtue but should also seem to be so. And Pereda, who subscribes to the Spanish proverb: La mujer casada, la pierna quebrada, y en casa, is astonished that, while the maiden is so closely guarded, the married woman should enjoy complete liberty. He attacks dancing very violently, maintaining that a woman at a dance throws discretion to the winds, arouses illicit desires on the part of men and thus imperils the honour of her husband.

These pages are too violent in tone to be effective satire and they contain much that is crude. Amos de Escalante, referring to those "páginas en que una señora no pudiera pararse sin herida y ofensa de su propio respeto," writes: "El escritor que satiriza o saca a 'la vergüenza flaquezas de prójimos, si carga mucho el acento o levanta la voz, se aventura a que su indignación parezca encono, o suene a ira, y entonces degenerando la censura en invectiva pierde autoridad y fuerza.'"(1) This prejudice of Escalante against Pereda's moral tone persists always as Pereda will have reason to know on the publication of La Montálvez.

(1) Quoted by Cossío, op. cit., pp. 182-83.

CHAPTER IX.

EL SABOR DE LA TIERRUCA.

The next work to be published by Pereda - El Sabor de la Tierruca⁽¹⁾ - is one of those which have no lesson to teach and whose purpose is simply to make one feel and enjoy the atmosphere of the Montaña. Menéndez y Pelayo, confessing that he is incapable of criticizing the novel, tells us that he did not read El Sabor de la Tierruca, but that he felt it. Hailing it enthusiastically he writes: "¡Bendito sea, pues, este libro rústico y serrano, que viene cargado de perfumes agrestes, y no nos trae ni problemas ni conflictos, ni tendencias ni sentidos, ni otra cosa ninguna, sino lo que Dios puso en el mundo para alegrar los ojos de los mortales: agua y aire, hierba y luz, fuerza y vida!"⁽²⁾ In El Sabor de la Tierruca Pereda has essayed the idyllic novel, a literary genre peculiar to the nineteenth century and one which the writer had already practised with success in certain of his early sketches and in episodes of his political and moral novels. Referring to the novel,

(1) 1882.

(2) Vide op. cit., p. LXIII.

Pereda talks of the "deshilvanados retazos de este insustancial relato," and it is true that the book consists merely of a collection of sketches and scenes, loosely strung together by the thin thread of a story.

In view of the fact that De tal palo... had been composed expressly to contradict him, the public were surprised to find El Sabor de la Tierruca preceded by a prologue from the pen of Galdós. Galdós's pages are not those of a critic. His tone, extremely cordial, is that of the panegyrist who has forgotten the enormous disconformity between his ideas and those of Pereda and he praises even the defects of his friend. El Sabor... is the "flor la más pura quizás del ingenio de Pereda;"⁽¹⁾ and as for De tal palo... it is described as "encantadora novela."⁽²⁾ As we have seen, Galdós experienced his first desire to know the Montaña when reading the Tipos y Paisajes. He visited Santander about 1871, and was so captivated by the town and district that he decided to use the capital of the Montaña as a summer-resort, and built there his house, San Quintín. The friendship thus begun

(1) Vide El Sabor de la Tierruca (1929 ed.) p. 16.

(2) Ibid.

between the two leading Spanish novelists was strengthened with every passing year. Together they explored Cantabria and, later, Portugal. Pereda was present at all functions in honour of Galdós; for instance, on March 23, 1883, a banquet was given to Galdós, to the liberal, if not to the antireligious writer, and Pereda, the ex-Carlist deputy, was present. Likewise in March, 1895, the anticlerical La Voz Montañesa celebrated a banquet in honour of Galdós and on this occasion Pereda pronounced his Va de cuento...,⁽¹⁾ an overflowing of cordiality, of noble effusion. Finally, Galdós disputed with Menéndez y Pelayo the honour of welcoming Pereda into the Real Academia Española.

The novelesque part of El Sabor de la Tierruca deals with the friendship and frequent quarrels between Don Juan de Prezanes and don Pedro Mortera, two of the principal inhabitants of Cumbrales, the Highland village where the story has its setting. We may indicate, in passing, that Cumbrales and Rinconeda (the other village mentioned in the novel) are different quarters of Polanco, Pereda's native town.⁽²⁾ Don Juan and don Pedro are well acquainted with

(1) Vide Obras Completas, vol. XVII. (1922 ed.) p. 255.

(2) Cf. Cossío, op. cit., p. 196.

each other's good points and each holds the other in the highest esteem; but, owing to incompatibility of character, a period of unbroken friendship between them seems almost impossible. Don Juan is described by Pereda as suspicious, impetuous and crabbed in temperament, while Pedro is phlegmatic and reflective.⁽¹⁾ Juan is, therefore, the more susceptible of the two and he misinterprets every word and every deed of Pedro's, whose only fault is a somewhat brutal frankness.

Apart from differences in character, there exists an additional element of provocation in their opposed political views: for Pedro is a liberal, while Juan has Carlist sympathies, or rather, he is the tool of a number of Carlist intriguers. Pedro warns Juan again and again that he is being duped and every time adds fuel to the flames of the latter's nervous passion.⁽²⁾

Eventually the two men are reconciled by the marriage of Pedro's son, Pablo, to Juan's daughter, Ana.⁽³⁾ They are even reconciled politically by the union of Pedro's daughter, María, and the son of don Rodrigo Calderetas,⁽⁴⁾

(1) Cap. IV., p. 57.

(2) Cap. V.

(3) Cap. XX.

(4) Ibid.

the cacique for whom don Juan had worked. Moreover, a few shots fired by one or two Carlists who had penetrated into Cumbrales one night so scare don Juan, who has rather a narrow escape from being killed, that his political passions abate as do also his fits of temper.(1)

The eternal wrangling between the two men may appear tedious at times, but the character of don Juan de Prezanes has this interest that possibly Pereda wished to embody in him part of his own temperament and character with his nerves and apprehensions and innate kindness. Perhaps, too, for that reason he is careful to excuse the failings of the jurisconsult. Pereda could be described, borrowing a graphic phrase from Quevedo, as "un sistema nervioso pegado a un hombre," and there is evidence that the slightest contrariety could upset him for a long period.

However, as we have already hinted, the real interest of this novel, one of the most charming of the author's, lies in the secondary characters and in the brilliant scenes of Highland life with which it teems. One of the most unforgettable portraits in the book is that of don Valentín, the veteran of the Carlist wars, "el héroe de Luchana."

(1) Cap. XXVII.

This veritable relic of the past sees everything through anti-Carlist spectacles, and he is ever trying to rouse the worthy inhabitants of Cumbrales to action by announcing that a Carlist invasion is imminent. Unfortunately, he meets with scant sympathy and the veteran is appalled and disheartened at the poor spirit displayed by his countrymen. When, at last, a handful of Carlists are reported to be in the vicinity of Cumbrales, the alcalde and others do their utmost to hide the fact from don Valentín, afraid that he will do something rash. However, the veteran is not long in scenting the presence of the enemy and, donning the armour which he had worn at Luchana, he sets out to put to flight the "monstruo de la tiranía" which he had buried at Vergara.

Thus does don Valentín declare himself to be in a state of war: "No hay remedio" - discurría mientras atacaba de papeles la badana interior del morrión, añadía ropa vieja al peto de la casaca y colgaba las prendas de la paz en la percha de castaño-: me declaro a mí mismo en estado de guerra, y publico yo solo y para mí solo la ley marcial!... Haré el último esfuerzo para adquirir auxiliares; y si no los hallo, yo seré general, y ejército, y hasta plaza fuerte; y después... ¡a vencer o morir! ... ¿De qué lado vendrá el

enemigo? No lo sé. ¿Qué fuerza será la suya? No debe importarme. Sé que anda cerca y que puede estar aquí a la hora menos pensada, y esto me traza la senda. A ello me atengo, porque ése es mi deber. Sabré cumplirle."⁽¹⁾

In this guise and in this spirit don Valentín sallies forth and such is his misfortune that he encounters the two or three Carlists who are roaming round the outskirts of the village. The latter are tempted to take to flight on descrying such a fearsome spectacle as don Valentín presents, but the valiant veteran effects his own undoing by accusing them of cowardice, with the result that the retreating soldiers return and don Valentín is wounded in the ensuing fray, dying as a result of his injuries.⁽²⁾

Don Valentín is a character of real flesh and blood and he lives in the memory of the reader.⁽³⁾ It is possible to discern a precedent for this genial character in a work of Pereda's written years before, namely

(1) Cap. XXVII., pp. 363-64.

(2) Cap. XXVIII.

(3) Cf. el P. Blanco García, op. cit., p. 518: "Cervantes mismo no se habría desdeñado de ser el padre de este nuevo Quijote, amartelado de ideales no menos abstractos que doña Dulcinea y herido por los yangüeses de Cumbrales como el hidalgo de la Mancha."

Arqueología,⁽¹⁾ an article which appeared in El Tío Cayetano and which amounts to a witty dialogue with a militiaman of Esparterista sympathies. The latter cannot recognize in the demagogues of the first republic the descendents of the liberals of Cádiz and Luchana. The militiaman, full of faith and confidence in his ideals, is a fairly well-defined outline of the future don Valentín.

Of the remaining secondary characters a word must be said of Nisco and Catalina. Nisco is the alcalde's son, a fine, handsome young man, and Catalina is reputed to be the prettiest girl in Cumbrales. The two young people make an ideal couple and it is the common assumption in Cumbrales that they will marry each other. Nisco, however, is consumed with the demon of vanity and, associating with the well-educated Pablo, cherishes in his secret heart the hallucination that the latter's sister, María, will marry him some day. When Catalina accuses him of being false to her, Nisco reminds her that he had not pledged himself by any written contract to be faithful to her. "Ninguna escritura habíamos firmao tú y yo," he says, and Catalina's reply is a testimony to the nobility of soul

(1) Cf. Cossío, op. cit., p. 197.

to be found among the countryfolk of the Montaña: "¿De cuándo acá necesita escrituras el querer con alma y vida, trapacero y engañoso! ¿Qué más escritura que el sentir de la persona! Desde que sé pensar, para ti ha sido día y noche el mi pensamiento: cortejantes me rondaron sin punto de sosiego...; bien sabes tú que ninguno fué capaz de quebrantar la mi firmeza; y si la cara me lavaron a menudo por vistosa, por ser yo prenda tuya no tomé a embuste las alabanzas. Bienes tiene mi padre que han de ser míos: no dirás que por cubicia de los tuyos te perseguí. Señor fuiste de mi voluntad; y con serlo y todo, nunca en mi querer vistes obra que no fuera honrada y en ley de Dios... ¿Qué mejor escritura de mi parte! Y si no me engañabas cuando tanta firmeza me prometías, ¿por qué hace tiempo que de mí te escondes? Y si para mirarme a mí te puso Dios los ojos en la cara, como tantas veces me dijiste, ¿por qué no cegaron desde que no me miran? Si para mí eras en el porte la gala de Cumbrales, ¿para quién son ahora las prendas con que te emperejilas hasta para ir al monte?"⁽¹⁾ Later, Nisco is told a few home truths by his friend, Pablo, and by La Rámila, the

(1) Cap. VIII., p. 105.

so-called witch of Cumbrales.⁽¹⁾ This and the news that María is going to marry opens the young man's eyes and the course of love runs smoothly once again for Nisco and Catalina.

Throughout his entire work Pereda stresses the fact that to be happy in married life one must marry within one's own social station. Nisco will be as happy with Catalina as Pedro Sánchez will be unhappy with Clara, living in a sphere to which he does not belong. The advice given by Pablo to Nisco is interesting as it throws light on Pereda's attitude towards marriage. "Y yo creo, Nisco, que el matrimonio en que el marido no sabe guardar su puesto, es mal matrimonio; y el puesto se guarda valiendo el marido más que la mujer, es decir, siendo rey y señor de su casa, no sólo por más fuerte, sino por más entendido en cuanto les rodee en la esfera que ocupen ambos. Cuanto más tenga la una que aprender del otro, más se ufanará con él y más alta se pondrá en la consideración de las gentes. Pues dame el caso a la inversa, y verás a los dos en la picota de la zumba; porque ésa es la ley... y así debe de ser. Y si esto sucede aun siendo la mujer y el marido de

(1) Cap. XV.

una misma alcurnia y de idéntica educación, ¿qué no sucederá cuando, además de ignorante, él es tosco destripaterrones, y ella una dama culta y discreta?"(1)

Conjugal happiness and the advantages of the simple village life are favourite themes with Pereda. Pablo, having completed his University course, decides to "ahorcar los libros" and devote himself to the labours of the farm, where he feels he will find true happiness.

But when one thinks of El Sabor de la Tierra it is not so much the characters as the atmosphere of the Montaña that it conjures up. One has a vision of a country fair,(2) of a deshoja,(3) of a cachurra,(4) the game which the montañeses play on the stubble once the crops have been gathered. The witch of Cumbrales and the superstitions of the countryfolk come to mind. A storm scene is recalled such as that which occurs when the South wind (el ábrego) plays havoc(5) in Cumbrales or

(1) Cap. XIII., pp. 177-178.

(2) Cap. XVIII., p. 229.

(3) Cap. XVI., p. 203.

(4) Cap. XVII., p. 217.

(5) Cap. XXII., p. 287.

the amazing fight which takes place between the young people of Cumbrales and those of Rinconeda,⁽¹⁾ both of which are episodes which seem worthy of the metre of the old epics rather than modern prose. The prose of Pereda, however, has an epic quality all its own. As an illustration of the author's now well-developed descriptive powers, we shall quote the description of the scene which follows the setting free of the various farm animals, when the municipal council has decided on the derrota. It is one of the most delicious pages in Pereda: "Desaparecieron como por encanto los portillos y seturas de las mieses, y cada una de las brechas resultantes fué vomitando en la vega el ganado a borbotones, en abigarrada y pintoresca mezcla de especies, sexos, edades y tamaños: la mansa oveja y el retozón becerro; la cabra arisca y el perezoso buey; la dócil burra y la gentil novilla; la sosegada vaca, el inquieto potro de recría y el toro rozagante...

¡Válgame Dios, qué triscar el suyo y dar corcovos y sacudir el rabo! ¡Qué mugir los unos, y relinchar los otros, y balar aquestos, y rebuznar por allí, y bramar por

(1) Cap. XXIII., p. 297.

el otro lado! ¡Qué embestir los chicos a los grandes y hacerse éstos los temerosos y los débiles por chanza y pasatiempo! ¡Qué revolcarse los burros, y galopar los potros sin punto de sosiego, como si el lobo los persiguiera! ¡Qué derramarse por la cuesta abajo el compacto rebaño, y entrar en la cañada, largo, angosto y serpeante, verdadero río de lana, tomando la forma de su lecho! ¡Qué gallardearse a lo mejor el becerrillo negro, con humos de toro, junto a la apuesta novilla, y escarbar el suelo, y bajar la cabeza, y mirar en derredor con vista fiera, y hacer la rosca con el rabo, sin qué ni para qué, puesto que ningún rival le disputaba el campo! ¡Qué perder el tiempo en estos alardes que no eran agradecidos, ni siquiera observados! Hasta el manso y trabajado buey olvidaba su esclava condición, sus años y sus fatigas para tomar parte en el general holgorio con tal cual amago de corcovo mal hecho y aun ciertos asomos de galanteo a la vaca de su vecino."(1)

Azorín, in a short study of Pereda as a painter of Nature, draws attention to the lack of colour in his pictures. Referring to the first chapter of El Sabor...

(1) Cap. XVII., pp. 220-21.

he admits that the description of the landscape is admirable, but he adds: "Pero nótese un detalle curioso: salvo el principio, cuando el autor no ha comenzado todavía la gran pintura; salvo el principio, en que encontramos las 'manchas verdes' de los boscajes y las 'montañas azuladas,' en todo el resto del vasto - y verdaderamente magnífico - panorama que el autor nos describe no hay ni una sola nota de color. El autor es un maravilloso dibujante, que no emplea los colores."(1)

And later Azorín gives this most apt judgement on Pereda as a painter of natural scenes: "Pereda es un soberbio, fuerte, poderoso dibujante de luz y sombras, a lo Rembrandt."(2)

The novel was not acclaimed unanimously by the critics on its publication. Criticism was still affected by memories of the satire of Don Gonzalo... and the thesis of De tal palo... Some, disappointed by the lack of action in the book, denied it the name of novel, a judgement which was to be rectified by Menéndez y Pelayo: "Novela es, aunque sencilla, y llámese así o de otro modo, no dejará

(1) Vide Andando y pensando (Madrid, 1929), p. 206.

(2) Ibid., p. 207.

de ser un libro excelente. Novelas más celebradas hay que no tienen más acción; algunas, no tanta."⁽¹⁾ Perhaps the most objective and best-balanced criticism was that of F. Miquel y Badía: "El Sabor de la Tierruca produce en la lectura una impresión idéntica a la que producen los cuadros de Bretón, de Bastien Lepage, de Michetti..." - "si no es una novela acabada, constituye por lo menos una interesante galería de preciosos cuadros de costumbres, descritos en gallarda prosa castellana."⁽²⁾ And the truth is that El Sabor... can scarcely be judged as a novel; rather is it an enlarged cuadro, and one of the most exquisite which has come from Pereda's pen.

(1) Vide op. cit., p. LX.

(2) Vide Diario de Barcelona (15-VII-82).

CHAPTER X.PEDRO SÁNCHEZ.

Pedro Sánchez⁽¹⁾ was a trial of strength on the part of the novelist. It was written as an answer to those critics who, while acknowledging his merits, accused him of being provincial. The chief of those critics was the illustrious writer, the Condesa de Pardo Bazán. In her book, La cuestión palpitante, she had written thus of Pereda's work: "Puede compararse el talento de Pereda a un huerto hermoso, bien regado, bien cultivado, oreado por aromáticas y salubres auras campestres, pero de limitados horizontes; me daré prisa a explicar esto de los horizontes, no sea que alguien lo entienda de un modo ofensivo para el simpático escritor. No sé si con deliberado propósito o porque a ello le obliga el residir donde reside, Pereda se concreta a describir y narrar tipos y costumbres santanderinas, encerrándose así en breve círculo de asuntos y personajes. Descuella como pintor de un país determinado, como poeta bucólico de una campiña siempre igual, y jamás intentó estudiar a

(1) 1883.

fondo los medios civilizados, la vida moderna en las grandes capitales, vida que le es antipática y de la cual abomina; por eso calificué de limitado el horizonte de Pereda, y por eso cumple declarar que si desde el huerto de Pereda no se descubre extenso panorama, en cambio el sitio es de lo más ameno, fértil y deleitable que se conoce."⁽¹⁾ Pereda, a typical montañés, suffered from that same susceptibility which he condemns so often in his fellowcountrymen. Thus it was that the comparison with the "huerto hermoso... pero de limitados horizontes" rankled with him and induced him to write Pedro Sánchez, much of whose action takes place in one of the big capitals to which Pardo Bazán had referred: Madrid.

The result exceeded the highest expectations. For once all the critics, both of Madrid and of the provinces, were unanimous in their praise. In particular, Pardo Bazán⁽²⁾

(1) Vide op. cit., (4th ed., Madrid, 1891), cap. XIX., pp. 268-69.

(2) Cf. El Liberal (17-III-84) and Polémicas y estudios literarios, p. 84, where Pardo Bazán writes: "El propósito firme de ensanchar sus horizontes, la sabia precaución de no dejarse avasallar por tesis y moralejas de menor cuantía, la dulce indulgencia y la simpatía humana, musas que Pereda no solía invocar; la vida especial de la narración, que pica en autobiográfica, y, por último, la inspiración, levadura que hace fermentar la masa realista, se reunieron para producir Pedro Sánchez, una de las novelas más hermosas que nunca se habrán escrito en castellano, y la perla de la colección de Pereda."

and Clarín,⁽¹⁾ (who had also encouraged Pereda to broaden his canvas), showed in their sincere eulogies their great satisfaction at the success of the experiment. Perhaps the only two men who were surprised at the favourable reception accorded to the novel were Menéndez y Pelayo and the author himself. Menéndez y Pelayo praised the new novel with reservations. "A mí me ha encantado más que a nadie el éxito de Pedro Sánchez; pero con este encanto iba mezclado en cierta dosis el temor de una deserción. Me tacharán de crítico apocado; me dirán que ésta es la novela más transcendental y más universal de Pereda, la más comprensible para todos, la más traducible... Todo esto es verdad; pero cada cual tiene sus manías, yo me vuelvo a La Robla, y a La Leva y a Suum cuique."⁽²⁾

To explain Menéndez y Pelayo's modified praise of Pedro Sánchez it is necessary to bear in mind the great critic's attitude towards the art of Pereda. He regarded Pereda as the poet of Cantabria and he confesses repeatedly that

(1) Cf. Sermón perdido, p. 84 and El Día (27-I-84): "En mi humilde opinión la mejor novela de Pereda, y una de las mejores que se han escrito en España en estos años de florecimiento del género. Para mí Pedro Sánchez es a Pereda lo que la Desheredada a Galdós."

(2) Vide op. cit., pp. LXVI-LXVII.

he feels incapable of judging the novelist's works coldly and impartially. In the opening page of his prologue to the complete collection of Pereda's works he writes:

"Nunca he acertado a leer los libros de Pereda con la impasibilidad crítica con que leo otros libros. Para mí (y pienso que lo mismo sucede a todos los que hemos nacido de peñas al mar), esos libros, antes que juzgados, son sentidos."⁽¹⁾ And so in the case of Pedro Sánchez, a novel of the big city, Pereda's illustrious fellowcountryman could not feel the atmosphere of the book with the same intensity as in his regional sketches. Pereda himself, as his correspondence with Menéndez y Pelayo proves,⁽²⁾ was likewise surprised at the very favourable reception which was accorded to the novel. Moreover, he confessed later in the course of the polemic with Pardo Bazán which followed the publication of Nubes de Estío: "sin esos dichos me hubiera yo ahorrado el trabajo de escribir, por probar de todo, Pedro Sánchez y La Montálvez."⁽³⁾

The protagonist of the novel is one Pedro Sánchez, a

(1) Vide op. cit., p. V.

(2) Cf. Cossío, op. cit., pp. 205-06.

(3) Ibid., p. 204.

modern Gil Blas from the Montaña, whose adventures in Madrid form the subject of the book. These provide the author with an excellent opportunity of satirizing various spheres of life in the capital, notably the political, the literary and the aristocratic.

Pedro Sánchez journeys to Madrid in 1854, the year which witnessed the triumph of popular revolution. Pereda himself, as we know, had been a student in Madrid from 1852 to 1854 and had witnessed the events of July, 1854, at great personal risk, being almost hit by a bullet on July 19th as he was crossing the calle del Príncipe. In view of the fact that many such scenes are incorporated in the novel it is tempting to regard Pedro Sánchez, as did Ortega Munilla and Luis Alfonso, as a replica of the author himself.⁽¹⁾ We rather incline, however, to Cossío's view⁽²⁾

(1) Cf. El Imparcial (24-XII-83) and La Epoca (4-I-84) where Luis Alfonso wrote: "y tengo para mí que Pereda ha utilizado sus propias memorias juveniles y ha labrado la figura novelesca en madera de su propio cuerpo; así corre la sangre de la vida por todas las páginas del libro."

(2) Cf. op. cit., p. 207. Cf. also Clarín, article cit.: "yo creo que en aquel Pedro Sánchez que hizo tantas atrocidades patrióticas de que el Señor Pereda sería incapaz, hay algo del alma del autor, sobre todo al principio, cuando vive en su provincia y siente aquellos arrebatos religiosos en la catedral, y cuando reflexiona de manera tan sensata al escribir tales recuerdos."

that the incidents related in the novel are merely memories of distant happenings in which Pereda's own part must not be exaggerated. The already-quoted authors of the Apuntes give a very judicious analysis of the autobiographical element in the novel: "Su primer viaje en diligencia a Madrid, ya terminada la segunda enseñanza; la penosa impresión que le causó perder de vista los montes de la tierruca y contemplar el 'paisaje negro y esponjoso, como rimero de escorias,' de las llanuras castellanas; su llegada a la Corte; el retrato de los estudiantes montañeses que tuvo por compañeros en la casa de huéspedes donde paró; la afición que cobró al teatro y a las novelas; el estado de la literatura en aquellos años; algo de lo que presenció en las calles de Madrid en los días de la revolución del 54, y algunas otras relaciones de Pedro Sánchez, no cabe duda de que se pueden aprovechar con discreción para trazar la biografía de Pereda, utilizando materiales por él legados."⁽¹⁾

The corrupt political atmosphere, which prevailed in the capital under the regency of María Cristina, is conveyed wonderfully well in Pedro Sánchez, and the various actors whom Pereda places on the stage are all true to type. Señor

(1) Vide op. cit., pp. 369-70.

don Augusto Valenzuela is the very incarnation of the unscrupulous politician of the period, who is ever ready to change his coat to suit the colour of any government which comes into power, and to whom all is grist that comes to his mill. It was this "rumboso manchego" who lured Pedro Sánchez from his native village. Pedro's ambitions had been very modest ones; he had merely aspired to the secretaryship of the local ayuntamiento, but don Augusto, who along with his family had been spending the summer in the Montaña, induced Pedro to accompany him to Madrid, promising him an important post in the political arena.⁽¹⁾ Having seized what seemed to be a heaven-sent opportunity, Pedro is soon disillusioned when he knocks repeatedly but in vain at the door of don Augusto's office.⁽²⁾ Pedro's experience recalls to mind Larra's essay: Vuelva Vd. mañana.⁽³⁾

Equally convincing is the portrait of don Serafín Balduque, the eternal cesante, a victim of the vicious political system of the time. Pedro meets him in the stage-

(1) Vide Pedro Sánchez (1923 ed.), cap. VI.

(2) Caps. X., XIII., XIV.

(3) Cf. op. cit., vol. I., p. 105.

coach during his memorable journey from the Montaña to Madrid.⁽¹⁾ D. Serafín, in spite of his trials, is one of the most genial figures in the novel. He confides to Pedro among other things that he had been cesante twenty-three times and that: "Había sido empleado en casi todas las poblaciones de España en que hay oficinas del Estado, y pasaban de tres las ocasiones en que al ir a tomar posesión de su nuevo destino, atravesando para ello toda la Península, antes de presentar sus credenciales al fin de la jornada, ya era cesante otra vez."⁽²⁾

Tired of knocking in vain at don Augusto's door, Pedro is on the point of returning to his village, when Matica (a student friend, typical of the intellectual desengañado of the age) obtains a post for him as reporter to El Clarín de la Patria, a paper of extreme revolutionary ideas. Pedro's first services to El Clarín are those of gacetillero, that is to say, he is in charge of the society gossip column. Later, the editor, Sr. Redondo, having been impressed by some literary efforts of Pedro's, offers him the post of literary critic. Pedro hesitates to accept, pleading incompetence, but Sr. Redondo will not take a

(1) Cap. VIII., pp. 91-111.

(2) Ibid., p. 102.

refusal and makes light of the duties of a revistero. The secret of success, according to him, is contained in the following piece of advice which he gives to Pedro: "comience usted por dividir las obras que examine en dos grandes grupos: las de nuestros amigos y las de los otros. Entiendo por obras de nuestros amigos las comedias, las novelas, los folletos, cuanto publiquen los hombres de nuestras ideas o de nuestra amistad íntima, o aquéllos a quienes siquiera hablemos u oigamos hablar en el café, o nos merezcan alguna estimación en cualquier concepto simpático; y entiendo por obras de los otros las que publiquen los enemigos de la libertad y no nos saluden en la calle."(1)

Pedro is not long in adapting himself to his new office. He becomes therefore an esprit fort and, following Redondo's advice, applies to writers the ley de razas. He uses this argument when he explains his disdain for Fernán Caballero, who had just published Clemencia, a work which enlightened criticism considered at that time and still considers as one of the chief landmarks in the history of the evolution of the Spanish novel. Her defects are many, according to the newly-fledged revistero. In the first place, she is a

(1) Cap. XXI., pp. 302-03.

persistent propagandist of reactionary ideas (a fact sufficient in itself to condemn her work), secondly, her work has no unity of action, and her books are full of charranadas andaluzas. But her greatest blemish has yet to be mentioned. She is an outsider: "Además, era de los de afuera, otra casta de escritores que había descubierto yo; porque es de saberse que casi iba persuadiéndome de que no se podía tener talento en España más que en Madrid. Para estas pobres gentes usaba yo un procedimiento particularísimo, de mi exclusiva propiedad: una ironía zumbona, sobre la cual retozaba una sonrisa de protectora compasión; tal, que no parecía sino que la mención aquella era un mendrugo arrojado de caridad al hambriento de mis elogios."⁽¹⁾ It may be said, in truth, that the entire literary career of Pedro Sánchez is a satire on the methods of the press critics of the time. It was a fact that eminent writers in the provinces were too often ignored, and this was particularly so in the case of Catalonia, whose literature was flourishing at the period. Pereda himself had been a sufferer and in his private letters to friends after the publication of his

(1) Ibid., pp. 316-17.

books, he complains bitterly about the silence of Madrid. His nervous temperament contributed to make him bitterly resentful of this injustice and he returns to the attack more than once, particularly in Nubes de Estío, a novel whose publication was to arouse a veritable storm of protest from the critics of the capital. It is curious that the latter paid no heed to the satire in Pedro Sánchez. On the contrary, criticism was almost unanimous in its unconditional praise of the book. Clarín rejoices, in view of the tendentious element in previous books by the author, that there is no thesis in this novel, no "moros ni cristianos," thereby showing a strange lack of perspicacity.⁽¹⁾

Of great interest are the pages in which Pedro Sánchez reviews the state of the novel in Spain at this period.⁽²⁾ In these pages he is not writing for El Clarín but simply giving his own impressions, that is to say, those of Pereda. We now learn his true opinion of Fernán Caballero when,

(1) Vide article cit.: "en esta novela no hay moros ni cristianos; no hay ley de razas. Al enemigo (de las ideas del autor) se le pinta bien, como pide la verdad, y se le pinta sin rencor, sin complacerse en sus defectos."

(2) Cap. XXI., pp. 299-318.

talking of Clemencia, he deplores the fact that the public prefers the extravagant romantic episodes in the novel to the colourful and realistic cuadros which are to be found there. "Esto se desechaba por vulgar y poco elegante; y, sin embargo, era la miga del ingenio de Fernán; lo que ha hecho que viva y no muera jamás esta novela, como no morirán La Gaviota ni otras muchas de la misma ilustre autora, precisamente por estar llenas de 'vulgaridades' por el estilo."⁽¹⁾ Antonio Flores's Fe, Esperanza y Caridad, we are told, is interesting, but it is crammed with commonplaces such as one would expect to find in a popular social novel. Much better is his gallery of pictures, Ayer, Hoy y Mañana.⁽²⁾ Antonio Trueba, despite the ill-service which he had rendered Pereda on the occasion of the publication of the Escenas Montañesas, receives high praise, being described as "el mejor y más fecundo cuentista de cuantos se pasean en España, y el autor español más traducido a extrañas lenguas."⁽³⁾

Pedro is a great success as a critic, but his ambition

(1) Ibid., p. 307.

(2) Ibid., pp. 307-08.

(3) Ibid., p. 308.

is not satisfied by his literary work; he feels himself more and more attracted by the political vortex of the capital. Accordingly, he writes a Cuento Oriental, an allegorical article, in which he mercilessly exposes the corruption and depravity of the government. The article is published in El Clarín, having for some inexplicable reason escaped the censor's pen, and Pedro Sánchez becomes famous overnight. As a result of the scandal which follows the publication of Pedro's article, the government falls and there is a popular uprising. The scene in the Puerta del Sol, as the feelings of the mob gradually work themselves up, is admirably described by Pereda in pages of perfect prose: "¿Qué pasaba allí? Creo que nadie lo sabía. Notábase un oscilar de cabezas y un ruido sordo, como de resaca, de mar de fondo. Alguna voz más alta que otra, o un grito aislado, casi siempre de mujer: graznido de gaviota augurando tempestades sobre una mar preñada de misterios. Quizá no había en toda aquella masa bullente una sola persona con propósito bien determinado. Los huracanes populares se forman casi siempre de la manera más extraña: gentes inofensivas que caminan por la calle más de prisa que lo acostumbrado; rostros pálidos y miradas en las cuales se pintan el temor

y la curiosidad, el afán de lo desconocido; noticias extraordinarias, absurdas tal vez, que parecen circular por sí solas en las ondas del aire, de barrio en barrio, de grupo en grupo, de oído en oído; diez curiosos detenidos delante de un edificio, porque en él hay algo de lo que estorba al común anhelo; otros diez que se detienen después por la misma causa; y luego otros tantos, y en seguida ciento, y mil, y más, hasta que ya no se cabe; y empiezan, con el roce y el tufillo de las muchedumbres, el escozor de la curiosidad no satisfecha y la inquietud nerviosa en cada burbujita, que luego engendra el lento bamboleo de toda la masa; y el bamboleo, el hinchazón de las olas; las olas, el choque, el estruendo y la espuma, y al fin, el desastre."⁽¹⁾

The spirits of the mob reach boiling-point, and the popular fury is on the point of revenging itself on the reactionaries, beginning with Sr. de Valenzuela, when Pedro Sánchez, who has been an eye-witness of the scene, makes himself known and is acclaimed as a popular hero. Owing to the influence which he succeeds in wielding over the crowd, he dissuades them from pillaging the home of the

(1) Cap. XXIV., pp. 354-55.

Valenzuelas, and, while they are engaged elsewhere, he runs to warn the Valenzuelas of their danger and to conduct them to a place of safety. Pedro confers this kindness on the family of the man, who had done so little for him, solely on account of Clara, Valenzuela's daughter, who exercises a powerful attraction on him. Clara and her mother, Pilita, are typical of the shallow, pleasure-loving aristocracy of the age, and in Clara and Pilita and in the other types whom Sánchez meets in the various salones which he frequents, Pereda satirizes the class as a whole. It may astonish the reader that Pedro, so perspicacious in other matters, should have been so blind in the matter of women. He is obviously loved by Carmen, Balduque's daughter, but he is seduced by and eventually marries Clara, whom at first he had found cold and almost disagreeable. In our opinion, however, Pereda reveals his keen psychological penetration of the masculine character in allowing Pedro to make the choice that he does. We feel that the average man would probably have fallen into the toils of the cunning Clara Valenzuela and would have thought, as Pedro did, as he sealed his love with a kiss: "¡Ay! ¡Aquella hermosa estatua; lo que yo creí, en un tiempo,

frío y duro mármol, abrasaba!"⁽¹⁾ Clara, of course, only marries Pedro because political circumstances have made him the man of the moment, the man who can enable her to live with all the luxury which she desires. And so, when, in the inevitable course of events, the government falls and Sánchez once again becomes a nobody, Clara's interest in her husband vanishes completely and the reader is not at all surprised when a climax is reached with Pedro's discovery of her unfaithfulness.

At this point in the tale Pedro Sánchez, utterly disillusioned, leaves Madrid for Andalucía where he devotes himself to business.⁽²⁾ There he learns of the death of Clara and of Pilita and, returning to Madrid, he marries Carmen. He is destined, however, to enjoy only a few years of happiness with her, for she and her child both fall victims to an epidemic. His cup of bitterness is filled to overflowing when news reaches him of his father's death as well as that of his best friend, Matica. Thereafter, he returns to his native Montaña, there to spend the rest of his life. This last chapter in the novel is open

(1) Cap. XXVII., p. 445.

(2) Cap. XXXIV., p. 557.

to criticism on the grounds that it is overcrowded, dealing, as it does, with no less than twenty-five years of Pedro Sánchez's life.(1)

Although the setting is the villa y corte, the novel begins and ends in the Montaña and Pereda never allows the reader to forget that he has no love for Castilla, "aquel paisaje negro y esponjoso, como rimero de escorias"(2) nor for Madrid; and we feel that the author sympathizes with don Serafín when, on descrying Madrid from the stagecoach, he exclaims: "Aquello es Madrid... ¡Ah! ¡si yo tuviera poder para tanto! ... Un recadito secreto a las gentes honradas para que escurrieran el bulto; luego una lluvia espesa de pólvora fina; en seguida otra lluvia de rescoldo... y como en la gloria todos los españoles."(3) The lesson to be learned from Pedro Sánchez is one which the author stresses constantly throughout his work, namely, that the simple country existence is the best. Pedro Sánchez would have been happier, had he stifled his ambitions

(1) Cf. José A. Balseiro, op. cit., pp. 86-87, and Luis Alfonso, article cit., where, referring to the abrupt ending of the novel, he criticizes la furia homicida of the author.

(2) Cap. VIII., p. 96.

(3) Ibid., pp. 109-10.

and never left the Montaña.

Those who are keen lovers of Pereda's local work will prefer Sotileza and Peñas Arriba to Pedro Sánchez, but the average reader will probably consider the novel under review to be Pereda's masterpiece. Pedro Sánchez reveals a fertile and able imagination and disproves the belief that in Pereda inventive power is inferior to his other gifts. The situations created are those of real life without giving the impression of photographic copies; there are conflicts capable of captivating universal interest but which, nevertheless, are essentially Spanish. As for the characters in the novel, they live physically and morally. With no axe to grind, Pereda does not identify himself with any of them, and bestows on each one the necessary psychological attention. We have noted how in Los Hombres de Pro and in Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera the characters had been mere puppets moulded to fit into a certain preconceived action; in Pedro Sánchez, on the other hand, the unfolding of the tale appears as a natural consequence of the character of the actors. Unforgettable is the portrait of the fraudulent rogue, D. Augusto Valenzuela; that of Pilita, his amoral, unsufferable consort, who spends most of her time making up; that of

D. Serafín Balduque, the chronic cesante; that of the intolerant Redondo, editor of El Clarín de la Patria; that of the innocent father of Pedro Sánchez. And who can forget the halo of humble poetry which envelops the sweet and self-sacrificing Carmen Balduque? Sketches of customs, too, are to be found in plenty in the novel. One must count among the best of these the description of Pedro Sánchez's emotion on hearing mass in Santander cathedral,⁽¹⁾ the unforgettable journey made by the protagonist from the Montaña to Madrid⁽²⁾ and the first visit paid by him to the Valenzuela family in the capital.⁽³⁾ Pedro Sánchez is one of Pereda's most beautifully written books: "je crois bien," wrote Boris de Tannenbergh, "que les cinquante premières pages restent ce que Pereda a écrit de plus ciselé comme langue."⁽⁴⁾ Clarín described Pedro Sánchez as "uno de los libros escritos con más naturalidad y más vigor dramático de cuantos han aparecido en España,"⁽⁵⁾ and, attempting to

(1) Cap. II., pp. 32-35.

(2) Vide supra, p. 137, N. (1).

(3) Cap. X., pp. 125-35.

(4) Vide L'Espagne littéraire (Paris-Toulouse, 1903), p. 243.

(5) Vide Sermón perdido, p. 84.

estimate its significance in the work of Pereda as a whole, the same critic is responsible for this excellent judgement on the book which is still true to-day: "no será éste el mejor libro montañés de Pereda; pero es con mucho su mejor novela."⁽¹⁾

(1) Article cit.

CHAPTER XI.SOTILEZA.

With the publication of Pedro Sánchez, Pereda, in addition to enhancing his now established reputation by one of his finest works, had effectively silenced those critics who accused his talent of being provincial. Menéndez y Pelayo, however, could not help considering the novelist's most recent venture as a desertion. The preference of the illustrious critic was for the sketches rather than the novels of Pereda, and of the sketches he preferred those dealing with maritime customs to those which depicted life in the country. Accordingly, after Pereda had triumphed with Pedro Sánchez and El Sabor de la Tierruca he counselled him to allow his natural genius to run its true course and to write the maritime epic of his native Santander: "Tú eres ante todo el autor de El Raquero, de La Leva y El Fin de una Raza. Si quieres elevar un verdadero monumento a tu nombre y a tu gente, cuenta la epopeya marítima de tu ciudad natal. Dios te hizo, aun más que para ser el cantor de las flores y de la primavera, para ser el cantor de las olas y las borrascas. Tú solo puedes traer a la literatura castellana ese mundo

nuevo de intensas melancolías y de rudos afectos. Hazte cada día más local para ser cada día más universal; ahonda en la contemplación del detalle; hazte cada día más íntima con la realidad, y tus creaciones engañarán los ojos y la mente hasta confundirse en las criaturas humanas."(1)

Menéndez y Pelayo knew at this time that Pereda was writing his novel of the life of the seafaring folk of Santander: Sotileza; and he had predicted that this work would be his masterpiece. All the sentanderinos, likewise, had a presentiment of the excellence of Sotileza and awaited its publication with impatience. The novel finally appeared towards February, 1885, and it, assuredly, did not defraud the hopes of the author's friends. Pereda had not only written his best novel but one of the best Spanish novels of the nineteenth century, capable of comparison with any other published in or outside Spain in that golden age of the novel in Europe.

Pereda's traditionalist instincts had discovered in the picturesque customs of the Santander fishing communities the right theme and the right atmosphere for his master-

(1) Vide op. cit., pp. LXXV-LXXVI.

piece, for a work in which his powerful creative faculties, his feelings, his tenacious social convictions and even his traditional prejudices could have full scope.

Sotileza is the epic of pre-1850 Santander, and the manner in which Pereda evokes that Santander and its most typical scenes and places proves his firm intention of abiding with strict accuracy to every available kind of information dealing with the topography, psychology and customs of that Santander which - as the novelist said - "yo tengo acá dentro, muy adentro, en lo más hondo de mi corazón, y esculpido en la memoria de tal suerte, que a ojos cerrados me atrevería a trazarle con todo su perímetro, y sus calles, y el color de sus piedras, y el número, y los nombres, y hasta las caras de sus habitantes..."(1) This intention is further ratified in the solemn declaration, to be found in the dedication of the book, ("A Mis Contemporáneos De Santander Que Aun Vivan"),(2) that he will only submit to the judgement of his Santander contemporaries and will only respect their verdict; and he adds in the same place: "Lo que en él (in Sotileza)

(1) Vide Sotileza (1931 ed.) p. 31.

(2) Op. cit., pp. 5-9.

acontece no es más que un pretexto para resucitar gentes, cosas y lugares que apenas existen ya, y reconstituir un pueblo, sepultado de la noche a la mañana, durante su patriarcal reposo, bajo la balumba de otras ideas, y otras costumbres arrastradas hasta aquí por el torrente de una nueva y extraña civilización."⁽¹⁾

We have already had occasion to observe that Pereda is seldom as successful in his analysis of the feminine character as he is in that of the masculine one. Sotileza, however, the character on whom the interest centres in this novel, constitutes a brilliant exception to this rule, and she can compare with the author's very finest portraits. Pereda is overfond of explaining his characters, of intervening personally in his novels, but he wisely refrains from doing so in the case of Sotileza, leaving unsolved the psychological enigma which this character presents.

The very first sketch of the little orphan fisher-girl gives us a hint of her reserved, farouche character. We learn that Sotileza is "una muchachuela pobre, ... delgadita, pálida, algo aguileña, el pelo tirando a rubio,

(1) p. 6.

dura de entrecejo y valiente de mirada. Iba descalza de pie y pierna, y no llevaba sobre sus carnes, blancas y limpias, en cuanto de ellas iba al descubierto, más que un corto refajo de estameña, ya viejo, ceñido a la flexible cintura sobre una camisita demasiado trabajada por el uso, pero no desgarrada ni pringosa, cualidades que se echaban de ver también en el refajo. Hay criaturas que son limpias necesariamente y sin darse cuenta de ello, lo mismo que les sucede a los gatos. Y no se tache de inadecuada la comparación, pues había algo de este animalejo en lo gracioso de las líneas, en el pisar blando y seguro, y en el continente receloso y arisco de la muchachuela."⁽¹⁾

Ill-treated by the Mocejón family with whom she lives, particularly by its female members, la Sargüeta and Carpia, drunken and foul-mouthed fisherwomen, Silda (for such is her real name) is glad to find a refuge with the kindly tío Mechelín and tía Sidora who inhabit the bodega of the tenement in the calle Alta where los de Mocejón live.⁽²⁾ The fishergirl now gives a wide berth

(1) Cap. I., pp. 20-21.

(2) Cap. V.

to the shore and to the "dock-rats" who had been her chief companions and reveals an extraordinary aptitude for home life, devoting most of the day to sewing. Nevertheless, in spite of the kindness of tío Mechelín and his wife, we note that Silda shows no spontaneous feelings of warmth and gratitude towards her protectors. Pereda has already compared her with the cat on account of her instinctive and natural tidiness; he adds now that "también, como el gato parecía sentir más apego a la casa que a sus habitantes."⁽¹⁾ Tío Mechelín, whose admiration for the refined nature and ability of the little orphan, knows no limits, bestows upon her the nickname of Sotileza: a name formed from sutil, which means slender, delicate, clean, the name given by the fisherfolk of Santander to the finest part of the fishing-tackle to which the hook is attached; and so Silda becomes known to all as Sotileza. No words could be found to describe Sotileza better than the picturesque language of tío Mechelín: "Oír, no se la oye palabra, si no es pa responder a lo que se la pregunta, u preguntar lo que ella buenamente no puede saber... ¿De vestir?... ¿Pus

(1) Cap. XI., p. 208.

no da gloria de Dios ver cómo le cae encima hasta un trapuco viejo que usté le ponga encima? Si vos digo que, a no saber quién fué su madre, por hija se la tomara de alguna enfanta de Inglaterra..., cuando no de una señora de comerciante del Muelle... Pos ¡y el arte pa el deletreo de salabario, en primeramente, y pa la letura en libro dimpués?... Y ¡qué me dices tú de los rezos que ha aprendió en un periquete, que hasta el pae Polinar se asombra de ello?... Na, hijos, que si la enseñan solfa, solfa aprende... ¡Uva!... Y a too y a esto, finuca ella; finuco el su andar; finuco el su vestir, aunque el vestío sea probe; la mesma seda cuanto hacen sus manos, y limpio como las platas el suelo por onde ella va y el rincón en que se meta... Que es asina de natural, vamos. Y lo que yo le digo a Sidora cuando me empondera la finura de cuerpo y la finura de obra del angeluco de Dios; 'esto, Sidora, no es mujer, es una pura sotileza...' ¡Toma!, y que así la llamamos ya en casa: Sotileza arriba y Sotileza abajo, y por Sotileza responde ella tan guapamente. Como que no hay agravio en ello, y sí mucha verdá... ¡Uva!⁽¹⁾

(1) Ibid., pp. 217-18.

Sotileza's attitude towards her male companions throws light on her character. Her chief friends are Andrés and Muergo. The former is the son of a wealthy sea captain, a refined and chivalrous youth; he is attracted by the unusual cleanliness of the fishergirl and, along with the Padre Apolinar, is instrumental in procuring a home for Sotileza with tío Mechelín. The curious thing is that Sotileza does not give evidence of greater inclination for the fine clothes and the polished manners of Andrés than she does for the squalor and barbarousness of the raqueros or dock-rats, whose society she still frequents, though not to the same degree as when she lived with los de Mocejón. On the contrary the object of her visible preferences seems to be the monstrous Muergo, the most stupid, the ugliest and the dirtiest of all her comrades. "¡Límpiate los mocos y lávate esa cara, cochino!" she would say to him; or "¿Por qué no te esquilan esa greña?... Dile a tu madre que te ponga una camisa."⁽¹⁾ And one of the first things which she asks of her protectors is a shirt for

(1) Cap. III., p. 69.

Muergo.⁽¹⁾ She also succeeds in persuading him to cut his hair once a month and to wash his face after a fashion once a week. As a result of all this the natural ugliness of Muergo is accentuated, a fact which does not dishearten the girl in the slightest degree, since, as the author tells us, "no trataba ella de hermosear al hijo de la Chumacera, sino de someterle un poco a la disciplina y al aseo; un empeño como otro cualquiera."⁽²⁾ On the contrary, Sotileza appears to revel in the monstrosity of Muergo. On one occasion, for example, on which the three young people, Muergo, Andrés and Sotileza, go fishing together, the latter, gazing fixedly at Muergo's ugliness, whispers to Andrés: "- ¡Nunca le he visto más feo que hoy! - ¡Muy feo está! - respondió Andrés coincidiendo con Sotileza en un mismo pensamiento. - ¡Da gusto mirarle! - añadió la muchacha, con expresión codiciosa, hundiendo al mismo tiempo toda la fuerza de su mirada en las tenebrosas escabrosidades de la cara de Muergo."⁽³⁾ Sotileza's interest in Muergo

(1) Cap. V., p. 108.

(2) Cap. IX., p. 207.

(3) Cap. XVI., p. 305.

is indeed that of the trainer in the wild beast which he has tamed.

Her nobility and chastity of character are evident in the rebuff which she gives Andrés when, dazzled by her charm, he cannot refrain from whispering a few compliments and encircling her with his arm. Sotileza removes it violently, withdraws herself from his side and warns him: "Desde ahí... todo lo que quieras..., no siendo hablarme como me has hablado... No digo de ti, que estás tan alto; pero ni de los de mi parigual debo de oír yo cosa que no pueda decirse delante de ese venturao (y señalaba a tío Mechelín)."(1)

Sotileza's dignified words wound Andrés to the quick, the more so, as only a few minutes before, she had allowed Muergo to carry her in his arms over the wet sand. Andrés cannot understand how what in Muergo, dirty and ugly, was not even a fault, was in him, a noble and cultured young man, a crime which might even cause the doors of Sotileza's home to be closed against him. And, accordingly, a few days later he pays a visit to the bodega in order to reconquer Sotileza's esteem which he

(1) Ibid., p. 315.

thinks he has lost. Sotileza, after listening to his excuses, remarks with dignity: "Yo no sé... que pueda haber disculpa para esas cosas, en hombres de tan arriba como tú, con mujeres de tan abajo como yo."⁽¹⁾ And when Andrés has the bad taste to insist, Sotileza expresses herself like a heroine from one of Calderón's plays: "- ¡Por la Virgen de los Dolores, Andrés, no me preguntes más de eso... y escúchame lo que me obligas a decirte! Tú sabes, tan bien como yo, que desde que me recogiste en la calle, me dan en esta casa, por caridá, mucho más de lo que yo merezco. Desvalida y sola me vi, y aquí tengo padres y amparo... Morirme puedo, como la más moza; pero ellos son ya viejos, y en ley está que yo vuelva a verme sola otra vez en el mundo. Para valerme en él, no tengo otro caudal que la honra... ¡Por el amor de Dios, Andrés!, tú que sabes lo que vale, tú que me amparaste de inocente, ¡mira por ella más que ninguno!

- ¡Robarte yo ese tesoro! - exclamó Andrés, sinceramente asombrado de la sospecha.

- Robármele, no - respondió al punto la callealtera,

(1) Cap. XVIII., p. 344.

con gallardo brío-; eso, ni tú ni naide. Pero la apariencia basta, porque bien sabes lo que son lenguas."⁽¹⁾
Such is Sotileza's dignified reply in which she proves herself to be a typical Spanish woman.

There is a third man who is fond of Sotileza: Cleto, brother of Carpia, the aforementioned mortal enemy of the fishergirl. Cleto is described as a man who is sombre and taciturn but hard-working, and we learn that his love for Sotileza dates back to the day when she sewed a button on to his trousers in the stair of the house in which they live.⁽²⁾ Of the three men it is Cleto who loves Sotileza with the greatest devotion and his love grows until he can no longer contain it. Unfortunately, however, Cleto lacks fluency, and so he has recourse to several persons whom he asks to speak for him, such as Andrés, who naturally receives his confession coldly, and the Padre Apolinar, who also disappoints him, as he has no desire to meddle in anything which concerns the family of Carpia and la Sargüeta, of whose filthy tongues the good man is afraid. In the end, poor Cleto

(1) Ibid., p. 353.

(2) Cap. XI., pp. 213-14.

decides to take his courage in both hands and tell Sotileza himself of his love. His proposal, though simple, is surely one of the most eloquent ever made: "¡Porque ya ves tú, Sotileza; una cosa es el sentir del hombre, y otra el relatarle, sin palabra, como yo! Dimpués, lo que tú eres..., lo que yo soy; ¡la misma barreúra, acompárao contigo!... Pero no podía más, Sotileza, y acudí a hombres que lo entienden, pa que hablaran por mí; pero como a ellos no les dolía, ¡pañó!, me dieron con la puerta en los bocicos. ¡Mira tú que falta de caridá! Porque en esto tampoco había mal pa naide, ni se injuriaba a denguno... ¿Te haces tú bien el cargo, Sotileza, de esto que te digo?... Pus porque naide ha querido decírtelo de mi parte, vengo a decírtelo yo, ¡pañó!"(1) Sotileza, well aware of his love, answers him somewhat coldly: "Yo no te quiero mal, y sé muy bien lo que vales; pero tengo acá mi modo de sentir y quiero guardarle por ahora."(2)

The most dramatic scene in the novel, apart from the famous storm scene, is that which occurs when Andrés

(1) Cap. XX., p. 387.

(2) Ibid., p. 389.

imprudently visits Sotileza alone in the bodega in order to warn her against Muergo who, he knows, looks at her with covetous eyes. In no other scene does the character of Sotileza stand out in stronger relief. Carpia, who for some time now has been talking ill of the fishergirl's reputation, is always on the lookout for what may happen in the bodega; and, as soon as she sees Andrés enter, she locks the door, imprisoning the two unfortunates. Then Carpia and her no less foul-mouthed and filthy mother use their tongues so well, accusing Sotileza of having illicit dealings with Andrés, that a crowd is not long in gathering. Carpia shouts: "¡solos, los probes de Dios, están en la bodega, a puerta cerrá!..."(1) Soon the street is full, and the scene is described by Pereda in language which has a Cervantine quality: "En menos de un cuarto de hora está toda la calle, como diría Don Quijote, lo mismo que si se hubiera trasladado a ella la discordia del campo de Agramante, pues 'allí se pelea por la espada, aquí por el jaez, acullá por el águila, acá por el yelmo, y todos pelean y todos no se entienden.' Se grita a gañote suelto, y se vomitan vocablos cuya crudeza no puede re-

(1) Cap. XXIII., p. 437.

presentarse por signos de ninguna especie, porque no los hay que pinten su deajo de carácter, aguardentoso, desgarrado y maloliente a la vez. Todas las reñidoras gritan a un tiempo, y ya no se trata de responder a una agresión asquerosa, con otra más desarrapada, sino de expeler, a toda fuerza de pulmón, cuantas injurias, cuantas torpezas, cuantas hediondeces se le vayan ocurriendo a cada furia de aquéllas. Para el buen éxito de estos propósitos no basta la voz humana, por recia que sea, en medio de la infernal baraúnda, y se acude al auxilio de la gimnástica, porque la simple mímica vulgar no alcanzaría tampoco. Por eso patea una mujer aquí, puesta en jarras; y allí se revuelve otra, y ata y desata diez veces seguidas el pañuelo de su cabeza; y otra se alza y se baja más allá, con los ojos encandilados y las venas del pescuezo reventando; quién se golpea desaforadamente las caderas con los puños cerrados, o se azota el trasero con las manos abiertas; otra echa el tronco fuera de la balaustrada, y con las greñas sobre los ojos y el jubón desatacado, esgrime los dos brazos al aire; y otras, en fin, como las hembras de Mocejón, lo hacen todo ello en un instante, y mucho más todavía, sin dar paz ni sosiego a sus gargantas, ni punto de reposo a sus lenguas

maldicientes."(1)

Meantime, inside the bodega Andrés and Sotileza are at their wits' end. Sotileza moans in despair: "-Pues todo esto se ha hecho para acabar con la honra mía. ¡Mira, mira, cómo me la pisotean en la calle! ¡Virgen de la Soledá!"(2) Andrés, no less desperate and full of pity for Sotileza, offers to wipe away the stains which are falling on her honour owing to his ill-considered conduct: an offer which is haughtily rejected by the orphan: "-¡Lavar tú las manchas de la mi honra!... ¡Harto harás con limpiar allá abajo las que ahora mismo están cayendo encima de la tuya!"(3) And when at last Carpia slips the key below the door and Sotileza can go out into the light of day to vindicate her honour she appears completely transformed: "Ya no era la mujer de aspecto frío, de serena razón y armoniosa palabra; no era la discreta muchacha, que apagaba fogosos y amañosos razonamientos con el hielo de una reflexión maciza; ni la provocadora belleza que levantaba tempestades en pechos

(1) Ibid., pp. 440-41.

(2) Ibid., p. 444.

(3) Ibid., p. 448.

endurecidos, con el centelleo de una sola mirada; ni la gallarda hermosura que para ser una dama distinguida, en opinión del ofuscado Andrés, sólo le faltaba cambiar de vestidura y de morada; ni, por último, la doncella pudorosa que lloraba, momentos antes, por los riesgos que corría su buena fama. Ya era la mujer bravía: ya enseñaba la veta de la vagabunda del Muelle-Anaos y de las playas de Baja-mar; ya en sus ojos había ramos sanguinolentos, y en su voz, tan armoniosa y grata de ordinario, dejos de sardinera, como los que a la sazón llenaban todos los ámbitos de la calle."⁽¹⁾ And then Sotileza steps into the street, and, with the courage of innocence, she is not long in convincing everyone that her honour is as pure as the daylight; but once again she succeeds in controlling herself and, facing Carpia, she addresses her raising her voice that all may hear: -"¿Veislo?... ¡Ni tan siquiera se atreve a negar la maldá que la echo en cara! ¿Estará la infame bien abandoná de Dios! Mira, ¡envidiosona y desalmada!, salí de la prisión en que me tuvistes, con ánimo de arrastrarte por los suelos: ¡tan ciega me tenía la ira! Pero

(1) Ibid., pp. 450-51.

ahora veo que para castigo tuyo, a más del que te está dando la conciencia, sobra con esto:

Y la escupió en la cara. En seguida, con un fuerte empujón, la apartó de sí."⁽¹⁾

It is probable that the scene just described was inspired by Fernán Caballero's sketch: Lucas García,⁽²⁾ where a very similar situation develops, Lucía being trapped by the daughter of la Leona and the over-attentive colonel. However, in Fernán Caballero there is no trace of the scandal that follows in Pereda's novel and which is the very essence of the episode.

The sequel to this scandal is that Andrés's parents believe him to be a victim of Sotileza; and after a bitter altercation between the captain and Andrés, the latter leaves home with the intention of not returning. His father then directs his steps to the bodega, where, to his astonishment, he hears these proud words uttered by the valiant fishergirl: "-Quiero que usted sepa, oído de mi misma boca, que nunca me dejé tentar de la cubicia, ni me marearon los humos de señorío; que estimo a Andrés

(1) Ibid., p. 453.

(2) Cf. Cuadros de costumbres (Leipzig ed. 1865), pp. 207-73.

por lo que vale, pero no por lo que él pueda valerme a mí; y que si para poner ahora a salvo la buena fama no hubiera otro remedio que el que me diera llevándome a ser señora a su lado, con la honra en pleito me quedara, antes que echarme encima una cruz de tanto peso."⁽¹⁾

Sotileza preserves her dignified, sphinx-like character to the end of the novel when she consents to marry Cleto. This she only does in answer to the pressing arguments of the Padre Apolinar and her protectors, Mechelín and Sidora. After listening to their arguments, she says stoically: "-No hay cruz que pese, con buena voluntad para llevarla."⁽²⁾

Upon the publication of Sotileza a number of critics protested at the way in which Pereda had ended the novel, leaving unsolved the psychological enigma of Sotileza. The criticism was justifiable and even Menéndez y Pelayo described Sotileza as "un enigma sorprendido valerosamente, y sin intención ulterior, en las profundidades de la naturaleza humana. El autor le ha planteado; pero en la conclusión le elude más bien que le resuelve."⁽³⁾ There

(1) Cap. XXV., p. 487.

(2) Cap. XXIX., p. 557.

(3) Vide op. cit., p. LXXIX.

is clearly something incomplete in such a character, possibly because the power which Pereda had to discover her failed him when he attempted to penetrate into the character. But was Pereda really wrong in not lifting the veil and disclosing the secrets of Sotileza's heart? We cannot but agree with the acute judgement of Menéndez y Pelayo when he hints that Pereda revealed himself as a consummate artist in the elaboration of this character. With reference to the enigma of Sotileza Pereda's fellow-countryman wrote: "En el arte agradan y dominan siempre aquellos personajes en quienes resta un fondo inaccesible a las miradas de la crítica. De este modo quedan como algo simbólico y misterioso, entrevisto en el crepúsculo de la poesía, que adivina tales naturalezas más bien que las penetra."⁽¹⁾

As we have seen, Sotileza remains indifferent to her various admirers. If she shows any inclination, it is by some strange physiological aberration towards Muergo, the semi-brute, whose innate coarseness seems to exercise some influence on her. Pereda was handling here an extremely delicate theme, but his sane and open genius, which

(1) Ibid.

never inclined him to the abnormal, restrained him from insisting on the slightly morbid element, and Sotileza preserves her chastity to the end. In the novel as a whole, and particularly in the treatment of the central character, Pereda had once again proved his profound españolismo. We should like to emphasize this, as Zola's Germinal⁽¹⁾ had appeared in the Paris bookshops about the same time as Sotileza did in those of Madrid, and those who delighted in comparing and affiliating Pereda to Zola returned to their favourite theme with renewed energy in spite of Pereda's disclaimers. Basset with clearer judgement has admirably defined Sotileza's place in Spanish literature: "With an enigmatic character both attractive and repellent, she is a lineal literary descendant of Cervantes' Esmeralda and Ilustre fregona, a modern embodiment of the most classical Spanish traditions in the field of feminine realism."⁽²⁾

We share the P. Blanco García's admiration for the beautiful and sympathetic way in which the author describes the evolution in the character of the picaresque Muergo.

(1) 1885.

(2) Vide R. E. Basset, Pedro Sánchez with Introduction, Notes and Vocabulary, Boston, 1907, Introduction, p. LVII.

In a novel by Zola, Muergo would merely have been a piece of human flesh, utterly abject, coarse and brutal; Pereda, on the other hand, by means of Sotileza's affection makes this character intensely interesting, bringing to the surface noble and human instincts, without in any way contradicting himself. As Blanco García says: "Este cariño (of Sotileza towards Muergo), que parece absurdo e incomprensible, es de lo más artístico y hermosamente ideado que ocurre en el libro, aunque no le faltan sus lunares, como el brutal atrevimiento de Muergo, que reprime Sotileza con la vara."⁽¹⁾

Another notable character in a different sphere is the Padre Apolinar, surely the most likeable of all Pereda's priests. He has the kindness of an overgrown child, and he is one of the principal sources of entertainment in the book, whether we see him walking about Santander trouserless, having given his breeches to the scantily-clad Muergo, or relinquishing his frugal evening meal to an ailing neighbour, just when his appetite is gargantuan, ¡Cuerno...!, or preaching a sermon on the occasion of the boat-race between the two Cabildos, the success of which,

(1) Vide op. cit., pp. 520-21.

in spite of three weeks of preparation, is only mediocre!

It may justly be said that Pereda's descriptive powers reach their culminating point in Sotileza and in the famous storm scene, admired by Azorín,⁽¹⁾ he reveals himself as the poet of the North. Andrés after the scandal in the bodega, in an effort to escape from the weight of his grief, decides to accompany some fishermen who are going out to sea. When the boats are far out to sea a North-West gale - of frequent occurrence on that coast - arises: "De pronto percibieron sus oídos un pavoroso rumor lejano, como si trenes gigantescos de batalla rodaran sobre suelos abovedados; sintió en su cara la impresión de una ráfaga húmeda y fría, y observó que el sol se oscurecía y que sobre la mar avanzaban, por el Noroeste, grandes manchas rizadas, de un verde casi negro. Al mismo tiempo gritaba Reñales:

¡Abajo esas mayores!... ¡El tallaviento solo!

Y Andrés, helado de espanto, vió a aquellos hombres tan valerosos abandonar los remos y largarse, descoloridos

(1) Cf. op. cit., p. 207: "¡No sabemos en nuestra literatura moderna, ni en la antigua, de superior a la formidable pintura de una galerna, en la misma novela! (Sotileza). Al furor enorme de los elementos, mézclase en estas páginas únicas la trágica angustia del espíritu humano aniquilado y zozobranete."

y acelerados, a cumplir los mandatos del patrón. Un solo instante de retardo en la maniobra hubiera ocasionado el temido desastre; porque apenas quedó izado el tallaviento, una racha furiosa, cargada de lluvia, se estrelló contra la vela, y con su empuje envolvió la lancha entre rugientes torbellinos. Una bruma densísima cubrió los horizontes, y la línea de la costa, mejor que verse, se adivinaba por el fragor de las mares que la batían, y el hervor de la espuma que la asaltaba por todas sus asperezas."⁽¹⁾

Very powerful is the description of the tremendous "galernazo," of the superhuman labours and cruel anxiety of the poor sailors during that frightful ordeal, of the sight of so many other boats, borne on the crests of the raging waves, smashed to pieces, of the discovery of Muergo's corpse in the sea, and of the state of mind of Andrés, now very repentent of his folly. This magnificent scene ends with an account of how Andrés, replacing the wounded skipper, brings the boat safely ashore by a miracle of God.⁽²⁾

The book ends on a sad note. The cruel, obligatory

(1) Cap. XXVIII., pp. 534-35.

(2) Ibid., pp. 546-47.

service "en barco de rey," already described in the magnificent cuadro entitled La leva, has fallen to the lot of the Santander fishermen. We witness the sad farewell of those affected by the levy as they embark on the service of their country. And the reader feels that Pereda has amply fulfilled his intention "de cantar en medio de estas generaciones descreídas e incoloras, las nobles virtudes, el mísero vivir, las grandes flaquezas, la fe incorruptible y los épicos trabajos del valeroso y pintoresco mareante santanderino."(1)

In Sotileza Pereda has exhausted the infinite wealth of the callealtero vocabulary, crude, picturesque, smacking of parrocha and rotten fish. In this masterpiece the grave Castilian tongue acquires a vigour and a flexibility, the equal of which is not to be found in any other modern Spanish novel. There is a glossary of nautical and local terms at the end of the book which is almost unnecessary, so naturally and spontaneously are the technical words and phrases introduced. They enhance the Spanish realism of the work without in any way serving as an obstacle to the general reader. "Esa lengua tan

(1) Cap. XXIX., p. 564.

palpitante y tan densa, que tan diversas matices adquiere... presenta tales variedades y se mueve con tal libertad en ondulaciones tan diversas, que nadie diría que por primera vez viene ahora al arte, y que ninguno ha antecedido a Pereda en trabajarla y domeñarla."(1)

The severe simplicity of the structure of the novel, the penetrating character studies, the realistic language and its poetic qualities, all combine to make Sotileza Pereda's masterpiece and, in our view, the finest modern Spanish novel. The Madrid critics praised the book unconditionally and in Catalonia enthusiasm was even greater. In Santander - where all could echo Menéndez y Pelayo's words: "¿Qué he de decir de un libro que es la epopeya de mi calle natal, libro que he visto nacer y que casi presentía y soñaba yo antes de que naciese?"(2) - the old Paredón was renamed the Rampa de Sotileza in honour of the novelist and the calle alta is still a place of pilgrimage for lovers of Pereda's art.

Boris de Tannenberg writes: "C'est que plus une oeuvre a un caractère local marqué, plus elle a de chance

(1) Vide Menéndez y Pelayo, op. cit., p. LXXVIII.

(2) Ibid., p. LXXXII.

de devenir universelle, à condition que l'écrivain, sous la particularité des mœurs et du langage, ait pénétré jusqu'au fond commun d'humanité."⁽¹⁾ And Pereda had done this. He had followed the counsels of his friends and those of his own heart; he had become more local in order to become more universal, since fisherfolk in the depths of their hearts are the same wherever they may live; and Pereda succeeded in penetrating so profoundly into the souls of the santanderinos that he raised a monument to his native city which can be read with as much interest by a madrileño as by a montañés, which can be appreciated as much by an Englishman as by a Spaniard.

CHAPTER XII.LA MONTÁLVEZ.

Once again the novelist approached Madrid full of his old prejudices. If in Los Hombres de Pro and in Don Gonzalo... he showed his irritation against the politicians, in La Montálvez⁽¹⁾ he attacked with an equally obvious bias the aristocracy of the capital. He had already satirized incidentally this aspect of Madrid life in Pedro Sánchez, but this type of novel, which was to culminate a few years later in La Espuma⁽²⁾ of Palacio Valdés and particularly in the P. Coloma's Pequeñeces,⁽³⁾ was an entirely new one for Pereda. And if the critics failed to see in Pedro Sánchez a denigratory picture of Madrid life, they felt to the quick the mordant satire of La Montálvez. Friendly critics such as "Pedro Sánchez"⁽⁴⁾ attempted to divert attention from the pungent

(1) 1888.

(2) 1891.

(3) 1890.

(4) The pseudonym of José María Quintanilla; vide supra, p. 108, N. (1).

satire of the novel. But Pereda was so determined that his real intention should not be misinterpreted that he wrote to Pedro Sánchez dotting his is: "Como latigazo fiero a esas gentes lo ha tomado el público, y eso es en rigor de verdad."⁽¹⁾

The setting is the gran mundo of Madrid and the marqués de Montálvez and his wife are said to be typical of those who inhabit this particular social sphere. The marquis's ambition is to shine in the political world, a rôle for which he has little aptitude, while his wife (whose lineage is not as aristocratic as that of her husband) is in her element presiding over banquets and receptions. Such is their standard of living that their large fortune is sadly depleted by the time their daughter Verónica attains to womanhood.

The latter is beautiful and intelligent and possessés, in short, the qualities which go towards the making of a good wife and mother. Her nature, however, is gradually perverted by the corrupt milieu in which she lives. Upon the death of her father, her hand is requested by don Mauricio Ibáñez, a rascally Madrid banker. Ibáñez

(1) 26-I-88: cf. Cossío, op. cit., p. 242.

is old, ugly and vice-ridden and, in a word, exercises no attraction whatever on Verónica. Her best friends, however, advise her to marry him, their argument being that marriage is a patente de corso for a woman. Married to Ibáñez, Verónica will have all the enjoyment she pleases.⁽¹⁾ Verónica is horrified at this theory and her surprise knows no limits when her mother speaks to her in the same vein, telling her that marriage with Ibáñez is advisable if the tottering family fortune is to be repaired.⁽²⁾ Verónica, it happens, is in love with one Pepe Guzmán, a handsome young aristocrat, who appears impervious to all feminine charm save that of Verónica. To him, therefore, she confides her conflict, and to her astonishment he, also, advises her to marry the banker. Pepe is not the marrying type and Verónica's proposed marriage suits his intentions admirably.⁽³⁾ The consequence is that the marriage takes place, but not before Verónica has satisfied her whim of being Pepe Guzmán's lover! It is of course a 'conditional' marriage, the

(1) Vide La Montálvez (1926 ed.), Parte Primera, cap. IX., p. 103.

(2) Ibid., cap. XV., p. 197.

(3) Ibid., cap. XVI., p. 221.

chief condition being that Verónica shall have as little of married life as social conditions permit. She gives birth to a child, Luz, whose likeness to Pepe Guzmán is striking, while her husband, as a result of some particularly fraudulent transactions, has to flee the country and dies abroad in a very short time.

Verónica, now a widow and legally free, continues her adventurous career in Madrid and in other Continental capitals, fashionable spas and watering-places. She becomes a Madrid celebrity and the madrileños with their gift for applying nicknames dub her, first, Nica Montálvez and, later la Montálvez. Verónica, however, now has another interest beyond that of cutting a dash in high society, and that interest is her little daughter, Luz. Luz is beautiful and good and must be sheltered from the corruption of her mother's world. Accordingly, she is brought up with the greatest care. Her schools are selected most carefully, first in Madrid and later in Paris. It is while Luz is in college at Paris that Verónica indulges in her wildest adventures. But there comes the day when Luz has to leave Paris and return home to Madrid, and with it the fear as to how the hot-house plant is going to react to the atmosphere of the

gran mundo. Accordingly, Verónica changes her habits completely, forsaking her rôle in high society and closing her house to all except a few intimate friends.

Her daughter and she are exceedingly happy together until they visit a certain coastal resort for a holiday.⁽¹⁾ There they make the acquaintance of one Angel Núñez who falls in love with the beauty and charm of Luz. The girl reciprocates and an idyllic love begins. From this point onwards, however, the novel assumes a tragic interest. Angel's father, Santiago Núñez, has had business dealings with Verónica, and he and his straight-laced wife are opposed to their son marrying into a family whose reputation is so bad. They tell Angel all they know of Verónica,⁽²⁾ and the broken-hearted young man in a fit of despair confides in Leticia,⁽³⁾ one of Verónica's closest friends, asking if all that he has been told about Luz's mother is true. Leticia, who is an artful rogue, gives an evasive reply and even attempts (in vain, however) to seduce Angel. Chagrined at her inability to subdue the young man, she seeks her revenge by sending an anonymous

(1) Parte Segunda, cap. IX., p. 390.

(2) Ibid., cap. XII., p. 435.

(3) Ibid., cap. XIV., p. 463.

letter to Luz in which she relates the whole story of Verónica's career.⁽¹⁾ Luz is prostrated by the news, especially when her mother is unable to deny the charges. The girl never recovers and, sinking into a decline, is not long in dying.

Sombre indeed is this picture of Madrid society life where everything appears to be rotten, vicious and sterile. Just as formerly the sins of liberalism had been blamed for the crimes of a Gonzalo de la Gonzalera, so now society is made responsible for the vices of La Montálvez. Exceptional beings are represented as the rule. Surely all mothers belonging to the Madrid aristocracy do not have the same attitude towards marriage as Verónica's mother! Warning her daughter not to marry for love, the old marchioness tells her that this is the surest way to disillusion. The sensible thing to do is to marry a rich man to whom she is completely indifferent, and then she can enjoy, con cierto derecho, certain privileges which are forbidden to single women. Referring to Pepe Guzmán, the marchioness says: "Por de pronto, los hombres

(1) Ibid., cap. XV., p. 477.

de cierta pasta..., como la de ése, son una calamidad para maridos de las mujeres a quienes han amado solteras: la razón es que los hábitos adquiridos en el mundo en que han vivido los hace incompatibles con lo que se llama, muy fundadamente, 'prosa de la vida conyugal.' Comienzan por desencantarse y por aburrirse, y acaban por desviarse... Es ley infalible: la cabra tira al monte... Y lo que digo del hombre de esas condiciones, es aplicable a la mujer... de las tuyas. ¿Amas a Pepe Guzmán? Pues ten por seguro que dejarías de amarle si te casaras con él."⁽¹⁾

Pepe Guzmán, Verónica's lover, talks to her in the same vein. If they were to take marriage seriously and respect its sacred laws, boredom would be the inevitable result. If, on the other hand, they agreed to live each as he and she pleased, then distrust and discord would be the consequence. In both cases the one would cease to esteem the other, which would lead to indifference and antipathy. And they, born in their high station, must not end by dying of that prosaica y terrena enfermedad.⁽²⁾

(1) Parte Primera, cap. XV., p. 215.

(2) Ibid., cap. XVI., p. 231.

As we know, Verónica follows this advice to the letter and, before agreeing to marry don Mauricio Ibáñez, she stipulates the following monstrous condition: "de que he de tener en usted la menor cantidad posible... de marido, con todos los privilegios e inmunidades que de este hecho se desprendan en beneficio de la libertad e independencia compatibles con el rango que ocupo en la sociedad, y con mis gustos e inclinaciones."⁽¹⁾

The reader feels that Verónica is simply an instrument used by Pereda to prove his thesis, just as his mouth-pieces are Verónica's disagreeable grandfather and doña Ramona.

Repeatedly in the author's spite at Madrid evident, there being an abundance of depreciatory phrases such as: ese Madrid que murmura y alborota; el Madrid que hace y deshace reputaciones; el Madrid que murmura y despelleja; ese Madrid que acaso tiene la culpa de que la marquesa de Montálvez no sea una mujer sin tacha, and so on.⁽²⁾ Angel, we are told, as a result of his travels,

(1) Ibid., cap. XVII., p. 240.

(2) Parte Segunda, cap. XII., pp. 446-47.

became convinced that "en el mundo hay algo más que Madrid y sus afueras (lo cual no quieren creer todavía algunos madrileños):"⁽¹⁾ a sentiment full of common-sense, but one which Pereda repeats to satiety.

La Montálvez received a mixed reception, both praise and censure being accorded to it. To Pereda's disgust the majority of critics accused him of immorality. No accusation could have hurt the novelist more, and he was more upset when he learned that not only insignificant writers, but even some of those whose judgement he valued highly shared this opinion. Among these was don Amos de Escalante, who years before had passed censure on the crudities contained in the sketch Fisiología del baile (Esbozos y Rasguños). This novel probably caused the author more worry and correspondence than any other which he had written. In order to justify the exemplary moral tone of the book, Pereda sought all kinds of learned and authoritative testimony. He elected as his chief advocate the Padre Coloma (who had not yet published Pequeñeces, so similar in intention to La Montálvez), and

(1) Ibid., cap. X., p. 409.

in a letter to the newspaper, El Atlántico⁽¹⁾ he quoted the P. Coloma's very favourable opinion of the book, particularly in its moral aspects - an opinion which the Padre had expressed in a private letter to Pereda.

Clarín praised the novel enthusiastically,⁽²⁾ while taking care to point out certain defects, such as the lack of descriptive value (Pereda's best weapon), the artificiality of the dialogues and the fact that the book is too short for the matter which it contains - the life of four generations. Menéndez y Pelayo did not publish any review of the novel but he confided to the author in a private letter that La Montálvez had made a mixed impression on him. He had found in it "cosas muy notables, a vueltas de otras que no me parecieron tan bien quizá porque la animadversión del autor contra el asunto ha hecho que no entre de lleno en él, mirándole más bien con ojos de moralista ceñudo que de pintor de costumbres desapasionado."⁽³⁾

(1) 22-I-88.

(2) Cf. La Justicia (13, 14 and 18-II-88).

(3) Quoted by Cossío, op. cit., p. 279.

In spite of the author's biased treatment, La Montálvez contains some excellent scenes and portraits. Beautifully told is the idyllic love of Angel and Luz. One feels from the beginning that it is something too delicate to survive the storms of this world. Intensely dramatic and full of pathos is the scene where Luz shows the anonymous and dream-shattering letter to her mother, when for once the marquesa is unable to summon a ready reply and her silence tells Luz all she wants to know.⁽¹⁾ There are few more powerful scenes in the book than that which immediately follows the one just mentioned, when Verónica with the courage of despair visits Angel's home to interview Santiago Núñez and his wife, doña Ramona, known as la Esfinge, on account of her cold, inscrutable manner.⁽²⁾ Verónica pleads with them not to kill Luz by denying Angel to her, her sole means of happiness. So sincere is her plea that it reaches the heights of eloquence and Santiago is visibly moved. Not so la Esfinge. "Quien la hizo, que la pague,"⁽³⁾ is her only comment. To which

(1) Parte Segunda, cap. XV., p. 477.

(2) Ibid., cap. XVI., p. 493.

(3) Ibid., p. 498.

Verónica replies that she is more than willing to suffer for her past sins, but she fails to see why her innocent daughter should suffer on account of them. She is ready to do anything to atone for her past misdeeds.

"¡Yo me arrastraré como penitente donde me han visto triunfar como pecadora!, ¡yo confesaré a voces mis pecados donde quiera que haya gentes honradas que me oigan!... ¿Qué más puedo hacer? Jesús no pidió tanta penitencia a la cortesana arrepentida, y había escandalizado más que yo."⁽¹⁾ Eloquent pleading which comes too late to save Luz who now feels herself unworthy of Angel.

Excellent is the portrait of la Esfinge: "era de una rigidez, de una tenacidad de pensamientos y propósitos, y de una casta de moral tan extremadas y enteras, que la iban llevando poco a poco toda la vida hacia adentro."⁽²⁾ Her chief occupation was knitting: "Para hacer media se sentaba junto a las cortinillas de las vidrieras del balcón, en una silla baja, tiesa, muy tiesa, y con la mirada fija en el tejemaneje de las manos, que parecían un argadillo.

(1) Ibid., pp. 501-02.

(2) Parte Segunda, cap. IV., pp. 310-11.

Así se pasaba horas enteras, si no tenía otra cosa más precisa en que ocuparse. Que la hablaran entonces, que la preguntaran por algo que estuviera cerca de ella; que entrara o que saliera alguien; una mirada rápida hacia el objeto o hacia la persona, y vuelta a clavarla en el incesante moverse de las agujas, y lo menos posible de palabras para responder."⁽¹⁾

A device adopted by Pereda in this novel, which was not new to him, is that of summarizing the events of the tale at a particular point in its action in order to enable the reader to see them in their true perspective. In the case of La Montálvez he does so in the following way.⁽²⁾ Angel recounts his career to the marquesa and her daughter and informs them that among other things he has essayed a literary career. He had written a novel which might have been entitled: De madre mala no puede nacer hija buena, for in it he had related how a light-hearted mother had a daughter who followed her example. The latter in her turn marries and has a daughter who is educated away from home

(1) Ibid., pp. 311-12.

(2) Ibid., cap. X., pp. 413-15.

and grows up good and beautiful. A stranger happens to fall in love with the girl, thereby presenting the novelist with the problem of deciding what type of dénouement he should give the novel. In short, Angel relates to mother and daughter a tale which the three of them are living and which is known only to Verónica. This device of Pereda's serves to focus exactly the events of the novel and, moreover, it adds to the dramatic intensity.

We cannot do better than end this study of La Montálvez with a quotation from an article by Pérez Galdós in which the character of the novel is well defined: "La Montálvez es una obra de tesis, de esas en que se quiere probar algo y se prueba, y tiene los inconvenientes y las ventajas de tales obras; el inconveniente de que no responden por completo a la realidad social, y la ventaja de que la idea que las informa produce en manos de un experto artista escenas conmovedoras y de seguro éxito."⁽¹⁾ Galdós adds that this is not said by way of censure as impartiality is not, and cannot be, an artistic quality, and he recognizes that La Montálvez is written not only with vigour but with

(1) Vide El Correo (1-IV-88).

the fire of anathema. An excellent criticism, for it is a fact that La Montálvez with all its defects is a powerful and impressive narrative, and the reader who approaches the novel, not to analyse the ideas contained therein, but to study its artistic qualities, will find himself amply repaid.

CHAPTER XIII.LA PUCHERA.

Generally speaking, it is true to say that there is a deeper and more fertile artistic vein in the picturesque life of the poor than in the world of the well-to-do. And Pereda, in spite of his aristocratic station, knew and sympathized with the lower classes better than any other Spanish writer save Cervantes. That explains the success of his local works and the comparative failure of those, like La Montálvez, in which the author attempts to paint the life of the so-called upper classes. The latter lead a conventional existence which forbids any attempt at free, picturesque expression, a restraint which was alien to the robust, virile art of Pereda. Upon the publication of La Puchera,⁽¹⁾ one of the author's local masterpieces, Menéndez y Pelayo once again defended Pereda's works of local character in forceful language: "Su carácter local le favorece mucho más que le perjudica,

(1) 1889.

en el momento presente. De su aparente limitación nace su fuerza positiva;"⁽¹⁾ and insisting on the fact that Pereda is in his element when depicting the life of the common people he goes on to say referring to La Montálvez: "Por eso, a mi juicio, erró en La Montálvez, no por culpa suya, sino por culpa del asunto. Por eso ha acertado plenamente en las dos grandes formas del idilio rústico y del idilio marítimo, que son los verdaderos títulos de su gloria. En ambos géneros, así como no ha tenido maestro, tampoco es fácil que llegue a tener rivales, a lo menos en nuestra lengua castellana."⁽²⁾

La Puchera, which, although it cannot rank with Sotileza or Peñas Arriba, is one of the most typical of the author's works, belongs to the little group of those which are entirely free from social or political aim. It serves admirably to illustrate the superiority of Pereda's local work, as it contains two tales, the one dealing with life among the upper classes, represented by el Berrugo and Inés, who inhabit the casona of Robleces,

(1) Vide op. cit., p. LXXXV.

(2) Ibid., p. LXXXVI.

and the other being the novel of el Lebrato and el Josco and the humble countryfolk. These two novels have a connecting thread in el Berrugo, who is el Lebrato's landlord and creditor.

El Berrugo, as don Baltasar Gómez de la Tejera was commonly called, is one of the vilest characters whom we have from the pen of Pereda. The reader learns that he had made a fortune in Sevilla by hook or by crook, but, unlike the typical jándalo, he had returned to his native Robleces pleading poverty.⁽¹⁾ However, by dint of lending money at a high rate of interest, el Berrugo is not long in owning three-quarters of the land of Robleces and, obtaining possession of the casona from the bankrupt mayorazgo, he marries one Cruz Hormiguera de la Llosa, a native of the neighbouring San Martín de la Barra, who dies, after giving birth to Inés, more from moral than from physical torture.

By this time it was common knowledge in Robleces that don Baltasar was extraordinarily rich and that he was a miser; moreover, that he was irreligious but fanatically

(1) Vide La Puchera (1930 ed.), cap. IV., pp. 59-79.

superstitious, and that his great weakness was his interest in hidden treasures. Summing up the character of D. Baltasar, Pereda writes: "Para entendernos mejor y más pronto: el jándalo Baltasar era un badulaque sin pizca de cultura moral ni intelectual; sin más necesidades en la cabeza ni en el corazón que el sacar todo el partido posible y en beneficio de sus nativas inclinaciones del mísero pedazo de costra del mundo en que había ejercitado sus artes de explotador insaciable. Era irreligioso, porque la ley de Dios le ataba las manos rapaces y le imponía deberes penosos; pero rezaba a Santa Bárbara porque le librara del rayo que le espantaba; y a San Antonio, para que le hiciera encontrar cuanto se le perdía; y a Santa Rita, para que no le escapara una deuda que le parecía de cobro imposible. Naturaleza inculta y vulgar, era irreconciliable con el buen sentido y esclavo de todas las supersticiones. Se burlaba del médico, y admiraba al curandero; rechazaba con asco los jarabes de la botica, y se envasaba en el estómago, lleno de fe, las azumbres de inmundicias que le preparara un mendigo piojoso en un caldero indecente. Creía en brujas a puño cerrado, y en la virtud contra ellas del azabache, de los dientes de ajo y de las matas de ruda, y lo llevaba

al cuello cosido en un trapajo. Creía también que la villería (comadreja) mataba el ganado de las personas que al topar con ella en un desván no la dijeran:

'Villería, Dios te bendiga de noche y de día,' y él nunca dejaba de decírselo cuando la encontrara; consultaba a las adivinas y creía en el zahorí que descubría tesoros, siempre que no se interpusiera paño azul... ¡Oh el tesoro oculto! Este era su manía."⁽¹⁾

El Berrugo has a housekeeper, la Galusa, a very devil in petticoats. Good-looking in her youth, she has acquired a certain ascendancy over her master, and her one ambition is to unearth his treasure. This she contrives to do by means of her nephew, Marcones. This Marcones, a man as evil and scheming as his aunt is a woman, had been studying in a seminary with a view to taking holy orders. The Church, however, was not Marcones's true vocation as he soon realized. He is much more interested in Inés, or rather in her father's fortune; and so one long vacation, taking advantage of his ecclesiastical garb, he penetrates into el Berrugo's house

(1) *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

on the plausible pretext of improving Inés's education.⁽¹⁾

Inés, we learn, is beautiful but somewhat listless and careless as a result of the neglect in which she has spent her childhood. La Galusa and Marcones seize upon this in order to achieve their object and, strangely enough, although el Berrugo does not altogether approve of Inés being given lessons, he suspects nothing. The lessons, however, do not have the desired effect. They stimulate Inés with a desire for knowledge, help her to develop and make her think for herself. The result is that she is not long in showing that she has opinions of her own. Moreover, when Marcones lets her have a glimpse of himself in his true colours, she promptly gives him his marching orders.⁽²⁾

As Menéndez y Pelayo has hinted,⁽³⁾ the account of the transformation in Inés is unconvincing. Pereda had an instinctive psychological sense which enabled him to create real, living characters, but as soon as he indulged in subtle and involved psychological analyses he

(1) Cap. V.

(2) Cap. XXIII.

(3) Cf. op. cit., p. LXXXIX.

found himself out of his depth.

Marcones, therefore, makes his exit and the deus ex machina of the novel, one D. Tomás Quicanes, an indiano, enters into Inés's life. This D. Tomás, who is the nephew of the mayorazgo whose house el Berrugo had acquired, returns to Spain with a relatively small fortune. On reaching Nuboso, his native place, he hears of Inés's beauty and her father's wealth, and determines to conquer her. To this end he dresses ostentatiously and visits Robleces on its saint's day.⁽¹⁾ El Berrugo is visibly impressed, particularly when the indiano informs him that he is desirous of buying the casona, his old home. In this way he is able to visit Inés whenever he wishes. The consequences are that Inés falls desperately in love with him, as does he with her, and, his conscience pricking him when he realizes how much Inés herself is worth, he confesses everything to her; whereupon, Inés willingly forgives him happy in the knowledge that she has obtained a real token of his love.⁽²⁾

(1) Cap. XIX.

(2) Cap. XXVII.

The ensuing scenes follow each other in quick succession. El Berrugo discovers the true state of affairs and at once dismisses D. Tomás. As for Inés she is entrusted to the gentle care of La Galusa who receives orders to keep her a prisoner. However, Inés succeeds in making her escape one night⁽¹⁾ and, taking refuge in el Lebrato's home, she eventually joins D. Tomás and is married to him.

The indiano in La Puchera seems to fall from the clouds and, an unconvincing, faintly-drawn character, only serves to disentangle the threads of the tale. It is interesting to compare with D. Tomás, who is sentimental, romantic and well-groomed, the cruel portraits of the type which appear in the author's earlier works. Pereda has evidently revised his opinion of the indiano.

The other novel of which La Puchera consists, and the one in which we see Pereda in his true element, deals with the life of Juan Pedro, el Lebrato, and his son, Pedro Juan, el Josco. These two men live in Las Pozas, a district adjoining the ría. The author describes them

(1) Cap. XXIX.

as anfíbios,⁽¹⁾ that is to say, they are half farmers, half fishers. The father is witty and intelligent and one of the most popular men in the district, while the son, although a fine type too, is sombre in appearance, quick-tempered and of few words. "Pedro Juan... era en estampa y en carácter todo lo contrario de su padre; es decir, medradote, sombrío de faz, corto de genio y seco y áspero de frase. Vivían y trabajaban juntos, y andaban en todo tan unidos, aunque eran entre sí tan diferentes, como la mar y el cielo o la noche y el día. El padre era el espíritu, la inteligencia y la palabra; el hijo, la fuerza, la máquina dócil y segura que rechina a ratos por lo mismo que se mueve, pero que no se para mientras la voluntad inteligente no se lo ordena."⁽²⁾

The two finest chapters in the novel are assuredly those entitled El agosto del Berrugo⁽³⁾ and La puchera del Lebrato.⁽⁴⁾ Praising the former, Menéndez y Pelayo wrote:

(1) Cap. I., p. 6.

(2) Ibid., p. 12.

(3) Cap. XVII., p. 287.

(4) Cap. XXVI., p. 465.

"El del agosto, que por la pureza clásica de sus líneas recuerda el famoso lienzo de Los Segadores de Leopoldo Robert, se aparta de él hondamente por el ardor del colorido y por la embriaguez naturalista que le convierte en acabadísimo tipo de geórgica moderna. Nunca ha sido tan intrépido el estilo de Pereda, tan grande la fuerza plástica de su lenguaje, y aquel raro poder de asimilación que Dios le concedió para que se hiciera íntimo de todo hilo de luz, de toda hebra de maíz, de todo zumbido de insecto, de todo rielar del agua. Hay que remontarse a Teócrito para encontrar idilio tan bello y humano como el rústico idilio de Pedro Juan y de su amada. El final del capítulo traspasa ya los lindes de lo bello, y empieza a rayar en los de lo sublime."⁽¹⁾

We can only endorse Menéndez y Pelayo's fine appreciation of this brilliant chapter. The love scene between the shy Pedro Juan and Pilara in the midst of the harvest field must be without a peer in any modern literature and we make no apology for quoting it in full:

"-¡Pedro Juan!

-¿Qué quieres? - respondió el mozo.

(1) Vide op. cit., p. LXXXIX.

- Ponte por este lao - le dijo Pilara.

Pedro Juan se puso donde Pilara quería: junto a la rueda derecha del carro. Allá arriba, enfrente de él, estaba Pilara recogiendo las faldas contra los tobillos y mirándole con los ojos llenos de travesuras inocentonas.

-¿Qué vas a hacer? - la preguntó Pedro Juan.

- Voy a bajar por aquí - respondió Pilara acurrucándose junto al borde de aquella montaña de hierba.

-¿Por qué no bajas por la rabera, como siempre?

- Porque me da la gana de abajar por aquí hoy...

- Güeno. ¿Y qué quieres que haga yo?

- Que me aguantes... si eres quién pa ello.

- ¡Eso sí, coles! - exclamó Pedro Juan largando a escape la aijada.

Temblaba por adentro de puro gusto y de sorpresa el hijo del Lebrato. Jamás habían tocado sus manos ni el pelo de la ropa de Pilara, y ahora se le iba a ir encima Pilara en carne y hueso, entera y verdadera. '¡Coles, qué barbaridá de suerte!' No se paró a considerar si sería o no capaz de resistir en el aire aquella mole. Se creía con fuerzas para mucho más... Esparrancóse y se afirmó bien sobre los pies, escupióse las manos, levantó los brazos y los ojos hacia Pilara, y la dijo,

pálido de entusiasmo:

-¡Echate sin miedo, recoles!

Pilara se reía como una boba, y no sabía de qué modo lanzarse por aquel precipicio abajo.

-¡Mira que peso mucho, Pedro Juan! - le decía.

-¡Aunque pesaras más de otro tanto, Pilara!...

Con tal de ser tú lo que me caiga encima, aquí hay aguante pa ello... Echate de cualisquier modo; ¡pero échate, recoles!

-¡Pos allá voy!

Y Pilara se lanzó... no sé cómo; pero sé que cayó en brazos de Pedro Juan, sin que los brazos se doblaran, ni los pies se movieran del sitio en que parecían clavados; que un moflete de Pilara resbaló por un carrillo del atleta; que éste cerró los ojos como si en aquel instante relampagueara; que el roce y el calorcillo y el olor de la moza le emborracharon, y que en medio de aquella borrachera fulminante, en los breves momentos en que estuvo su boca tan cerca del oído de Pilara, introdujo en él estas palabras, encanecidas ya en la punta de su lengua:

-¡Pilara!... ¡Dende aquí a la iglesia a que nos case el señor cura!... ¿Consentirás en ello?

Y Pilara, que se vino al suelo, pero a pie firme, en

el instante de recibir este disparo a la oreja, contestó a Pedro Juan, mientras con su dedo meñique mataba las cosquillas que le habían hecho las palabras en el oído:

-¡Cuánto hace ya, hijo de mi alma, que podíamos estar de gñelta, a no ser tú tan como eres!"⁽¹⁾

Had a passage on a similar theme come from the pen of Zola, the probability is that base, animal passions would have been stressed; whereas Pereda, as we have seen, extracts the utmost beauty from the simple love of Pilara and Pedro Juan. The two novels, that of the rich folk and that of the poor folk, are linked together by the hold which el Berrugo has on Juan Pedro and also by the friendship between Inés and Pilara. As we have already indicated, the novel of el Lebrato and el Josco is true to nature, while that of Inés is conventional. It is more of a literary device than the former and has no special relation to Pereda's native province.

Other interesting characters in La Puchera include Quilino, a not very formidable rival of Pedro Juan, don Alejo, the local priest, and the doctor, don Elías. The

(1) Cap. XVII., pp. 305-07.

latter provides the humorous element in the novel. The laughter which he provokes has a Cervantine quality in that it leaves a feeling of sadness at the back of the mind. Noteworthy among his weaknesses is that of believing that he once possessed a huge fortune of which adverse circumstances have deprived him. In addition, he is incurably curious and the greatest scandalmonger in Robleces. It is therefore amusing to find that he is among the last people in Robleces to hear of Inés's running away from home. This typically Spanish character is also a believer in hidden treasure, and he is really instrumental in sending el Berrugo to his death, for the latter loses his life while trying to scale the face of a steep rock where, according to don Elías (who has obtained the information from his dead sister's ghost!), some wonderful treasure is said to be hidden.⁽¹⁾ And thus does el Berrugo die "Por do más pecado había." El Berrugo is, in truth, a character who would not have shamed Balzac. It is a pity, however, that Pereda made the same mistake in the portrayal of el Berrugo as he had done in the case of don Sotero in that there are in-

(1) Cap. XXXI.

sufficient half-tones. The author's strongly marked likes and dislikes have once again got the better of him and he paints but with two colours: black and white. The ending of the novel is conventional, particularly don Baltasar's providential punishment.

The setting of La Puchera, which is at one and the same time a novel of rural and of coast life, is the picturesque valley of San Martín de la Arena, a valley dominated by the belfry of the church of Pereda's native Polanco. The reader who knows the Montaña can identify Robleces as Suances and the ría de la Arcillosa as that of Requejada.⁽¹⁾ In the opening chapter,⁽²⁾ where the setting is described, there are some beautiful descriptive passages typical of Pereda's art at its best and throughout the whole novel one feels the atmosphere of the Montaña with its kindly priests, its romerías and its superstitions. One cannot accord La Puchera higher praise than to say that it contains the same vigour, the same fresh joy, the same placid honesty,

(1) Cf. Apuntes cit., Obras Completas, vol. XVII., pp. 493-495.

(2) p. 5 et seq.

the same epic qualities as the cuadros. As Cossío has well said: "Las cosas viven en La Puchera con el mismo expresivo vigor que los caracteres y las pasiones."⁽¹⁾

(1) Vide op. cit., p. 298.

CHAPTER XIV.NUBES DE ESTÍO.

We have already had ample opportunity to indicate how inseparable the didactic element seems to be from Pereda's art. In Los Hombres de Pro he attacks ambitious villagers, in El Buey Suelto bachelors, in De tal palo... freethinkers, in Pedro Sánchez political corruption and the standards of the press, while in La Montálvez it is the Madrid aristocracy which is condemned. And now in Nubes de Estío,⁽¹⁾ the novel which followed La Puchera, Pereda satirizes the type who seeks worldly pomp and political fame by marrying his daughter to the scion of a noble family.

It goes without saying that D. Roque Brezales - the man who aims at enjoying the advantages of a higher station - is an idiot; and his powerful friend, a Madrid politician, is an arrant rogue. The latter's heir is rejected in the end by Irene Brezales and he returns to the capital as insolvent as he was when he reached Santander. Irene em-

(1) 1891.

bodies - or rather is made to embody - Pereda's own likings and he arms her with his own dialectic weapons. The girl not only feels utter repugnance at the idea of marrying Antonio Casa-Gutiérrez, but she breaks the engagement. Thanks to which, all her trials and troubles vanish and she pledges herself to a provincial like herself: Pancho Vila.

The subject on account of its brevity and simplicity, only required the dimensions of a short novel. Pereda inflated it with numerous and long chapters foreign to the subject-matter.⁽¹⁾ That is possibly why the principal actors on the stage lack character. Their actions and character vanish among discussions, explanations and circumstantial details. In consequence, we are never really sorry for Irene. Nor are we really interested in the conflict in which don Roque finds himself when he is obliged to put right the harm which his vanity has caused. The reader treats the character - and rightly so - as a caricature.

(1) Cf. Zeda (Francisco Villegas), La Libertad (9-IV-91) where he qualifies Nubes de estío as "un átomo de acción novelesca disuelto en un volumen de 500 páginas."

The satire in Nubes de Estío may be said to be threefold. The novel contains a satire against the business community of Santander, a satire against the Madrid society which frequented the capital of the Montaña during the summer season and, lastly, a satire - and a bitter one - against the press critics of Madrid.

The business community (consisting of wealthy merchants, ignorant bankers, scatter-brained arbitristas, etc.) was cruelly satirized in the persons of Brezales and his smug friend, Sancho Vargas. To us to-day such satirical portraits recall classical models such as the arbitristas of the Coloquio de los perros by Cervantes or of the Sueños by Quevedo, but to Pereda's Santander contemporaries they suggested persons who were alive at that time.⁽¹⁾ Fernán B. Zubeldía, in an article in El Aviso,⁽²⁾ was one of the first to draw attention to this aspect of the novel. Zubeldía was almost certainly wrong in supposing in Pereda the desire to hurt any particular individual, but he was probably right in guessing the disdain of Pereda for the business element in the city.

(1) Cf. Cossío, op. cit., p. 302.

(2) 3-III-91.

It is reported that Pereda once said that in Santander the only book to be read was the ledger and we learn in Nubes de Estío that in the capital of the Montaña the cult of arts and letters had neither sufficient temples nor devotees;⁽¹⁾ whence arose the name Catacumbas, applied to the meeting-place of the few intellectuals in Santander.

Pereda's intense traditionalism would not allow him to reconcile himself to the Madrid society which invaded Santander and altered its character during the summer season. In consequence, his treatment of the various Madrid types who play a rôle in the novel is harsh in the extreme. The Catalan critic, Francisco Miquel y Badía, in an excellent critical study of the book wrote: "El libro no se reduce a una simple narración entretenida, sino que además contiene capítulos y diálogos y pinturas que son a modo de vejamen o sátira a lo Jovellanos, contra vicios, hábitos y miserias de la actual corte de las Españas."⁽²⁾ At the same time as Miquel y Badía was

(1) Cf. Nubes de Estío (1921 ed.), cap. XXV., p. 523: "reunidos por el común entusiasmo de un culto para el cual no sobraban los templos ni los fieles en aquella ciudad."

(2) Vide Diario de Barcelona (11 and 18-III-91).

writing, Luis Alfonso termed Nubes de Estío "la novela del enfado" and accused Pereda of being biased and incompetent: "...me pasma y aflige que persona tan formal, sesuda y de conciencia como el ilustre literato santanderino, se arroje a hablar ;qué es hablar! a zaherir una vida y una sociedad que en absoluto desconoce."(1)

However, it was the satire contained in cap. XIII.(2) (Palique) against the Madrid periodistas which was destined to cause the greatest storm. Pereda himself made no effort to hide this aspect of his satire, as is proved by the following remark culled from a letter to Alfonso Ortiz de la Torre: "por lo tocante al Palique para que saliera se escribió, y ojalá duela."(3) Unkind references to the press are in fact a feature of the novel as a whole and the first of these is to be found in cap. VI. (Crema fina), where Pereda reproduces passages from the society column of the local paper, El Océano. Let us quote one announcing the imminent arrival at Santander of the family of the

(1) Vide La Epoca (20-II-91).

(2) pp. 276-307.

(3) 20-II-91.

duque de Cañaveral, marqués de Casa-Gutiérrez, which is a clever imitation of the languid, cloying style of the Madrid cronistas: "En el exprés de hoy se espera a la distinguidísima familia del egregio duque de Cañaveral, marqués de Casa-Gutiérrez. Es verdadera y hondamente lamentable para sus numerosos amigos de aquí y para la elegante colonia madrileña que nos honra este verano con su residencia en los hermosos hoteles de nuestra playa incomparable, que altísimos deberes políticos y particulares impidan a aquel insigne prócer acompañarla en el viaje y le obliguen a retrasar el suyo algunos días. Felizmente no serán muchos, porque también en este modesto y obscuro pedazo de la patria querida reclaman al gran estadista excepcionales asuntos, que, por ser de los que tocan al corazón y esparcen en el sagrado del hogar el ambiente de las bendiciones del cielo y la luz de las auroras de mayo, han de arrastrarle bien pronto, con fuerza poderosa e irresistible, al seno de su adorada y elegante familia. ¡Ah, si no temiéramos pecar de indiscretos! ¡Ah! si lo que está todavía oculto, aunque en transparentes cendales, en gasas sutiles, como ángeles entre arreboladas nubes, no lo estuviera, ¡qué grata, qué dulce, qué arrobadora noticia daríamos hoy a nuestras bellas y ele-

gantes lectoras! Pero nos está vedado, nos está prohibido, nos está... ¿cómo lo diremos?... défendu, añadir una palabra más, y no la añadiremos..."⁽¹⁾

Palique contains the following ingredients: a satire directed against the press of the capital; a censure of the notorious provincial weakness for imitating Madrid customs and manners; a diatribe against the exhibition of madrileñismo on the part of people born in any Spanish province; a condemnation of the disdain of the Madrid critics for books written in the provinces; a defence of the claim of provincial customs to be the theme of important novels; and, finally, an enthusiastic eulogy of the literature of Catalonia, which was severely ignored by the Madrid critics.

Those who engage in the palique are Juan Fernández and Casallena, two young intellectuals of Santander and a periodista from Madrid. The latter, we are told, is one of the three or four newspaper correspondents who leave Madrid every summer and divide up the Peninsula into as many portions for the benefit of their Madrid readers.

(1) pp. 128-29.

This particular one had already made a study of half the Cantabrian coast "bajo todos sus aspectos" although he had not been three weeks away from Madrid!⁽¹⁾

He is seldom able to conceal a certain contempt for the provincial aspect of Santander, and it is this which is the cause of the heated discussion which is reported in this chapter. Casallena accuses the Madrid critics of disdainning the books of the provincial author and Juan Fernández supports his friend vigorously. "¿Sabe usted que ha sido preciso que la reputación haya venido formada y dando la vuelta a medio mundo para que en Madrid se la haya concedido el pase?... Y es lo más donoso de todo esto que, en la mayor parte de los casos, el autor de la obra es un hombre que ha encanecido escribiéndolas, y el desdeñoso consejero un mozalbete casi imberbe y rapado en letras, que se ha metido a crítico por no servir para otra cosa... porque en España anda la crítica así, bien lo sabe usted."⁽²⁾ Juan Fernández proceeds to point out that Spanish works as a whole take second place to foreign ones in the eyes of the said critics, and in his remarks one

(1) p. 276.

(2) pp. 288-89.

can discern a clear and scornful reference to La cuestión palpitante: "Y aún sucede más, ¡y ésta es la más negra! Sucede que los padres graves de la crítica, los pocos, los muy contados críticos que poseemos, contagiados de ese soberbio desdén de la turbamulta de la clase, llevan la manía desdeñosa a los últimos extremos. Estos doctores del arte, en los contadísimos trabajos de crítica que dan a luz, a los de afuera y a los de adentro nos dejan igualitos; porque no citan un libro español aunque los asen. Tratan de "la Novela," por ejemplo, y recorren las literaturas de los dos mundos, y van enumerando nombre por nombre, género por género y obra por obra; y llegan a Francia, y allí se emborrachan pesando y midiendo autores, estilos y novelas, como que se lo saben de memoria, y bien sabido; pero de nuestros novelistas, de sus obras más notables, ni una palabra. Al final del trabajo, y porque no se diga, vierten en el papel una docena de nombres amontonados, grandes con chicos y blancos con negros, que braman de verse juntos; y hasta esta mención, a ciegas y por obra de misericordia, les parece una merced inmerecida a los rumbosos escritores..."⁽¹⁾

(1) p. 290.

Such is the madrileñismo of the chicos de la crítica menuda that they will suffer no outside pen to depict the vice which prevails among its aristocracy. In Madrid there are no marquesses of easy virtue, there are no fraudulent bankers, and if people do sometimes sin there, they do so elegantly and correctly in a way which is quite beyond the comprehension of the provincial mind. In short, "Madrid es para los madrileños; es decir, para ellos, para 'los chicos de la prensa' aguda y chispeante; para los gallegos trasplantados la antevíspera, que toman eso de 'ser de Madrid' con una formalidad que pasma..."(1) It is obvious that the adverse criticism accorded to La Montálvez still rankled with Pereda.

The periodista naturally finds it no easy matter answering Juan Fernández's charges; he tries, however, to explain the lack of interest on the part of the Madrilenians in provincial authors by a reference to the regional spirit with which their works are usually imbued. Juan Fernández's reply constitutes a spirited defence of regionalism in literature. "-Ahí le quería yo ver a usted y ahí le esperaba... porque ése es el despeñadero natural

(1) p. 293.

y lógico de la pendiente por donde van las inseguras ideas que tienen ustedes sobre el particular. ¿Cómo podrá usted convencerme de que el arte tiene una patria y un teatro determinados? ¿No hay en las provincias hombres y mujeres, como en Madrid? Pues ¿qué más da que el escenario en que se representa un pedazo de la comedia o del drama de la vida humana, tenga por fondos estos mares infinitos o aquellos montes abruptos, o los árboles y los coches en hileras de la Fuente Castellana? ¿Por ventura los hombres no son hombres, ni las mujeres mujeres, si no se acuñan y revalidan en el troquel del personaje madrileño? La levita de aquí o de otra capital cualquiera, ¿no vale tanto como la levita de ustedes? El corazón que late debajo de sus solapas, ¿no es el corazón de todos los hombres civilizados? El rústico patán de estas comarcas, o el modesto trabajador de estos talleres; el pescador de estos grandiosos mares, o la sencilla labradora de esos verdes campos, ¿no son barro tan digno de la mano del artista como los chulapos y las Menegildas de allá? Los provincialismos españoles que son el jugo, la savia de la lengua patria, al decir de un docto crítico... y del sentido común, ¿no valen siquiera tanto, dentro de los moldes del arte, como la jerga temporera

de la chusma de Madrid? Pues si todo esto es innegable, ¿qué hay, qué puede haber de extraño en la literatura provinciana para los paladares madrileños?"⁽¹⁾

Doña Emilia responded to the attack by publishing an article in El Imparcial,⁽²⁾ in which she defended the Madrid periodistas and attacked what she termed the three resquemores of Pereda. The first of these was that produced by the Madrid press which, according to Pereda, praises reverently the most insignificant works produced in Madrid and ignores completely the names and works of authors of merit in the provinces. The second - a very personal one - was caused by the adverse criticism passed on La Montálvez as a picture of Madrid society life by the critics of the capital; while the third one referred to the aptitude of the provinces in producing material for the novel - an aptitude denied by the critics who had been censured.

In spite of the elegance of tone of the article, the repeated references to the supposed grievances of Pereda

(1) pp. 296-97.

(2) Los Lunes de El Imparcial, 9-II-91.

produced a violent reaction in the novelist and doubtless one of his frequent nervous attacks induced him to reply in the indignant, discourteous tone which pervades his article: Las comezones de la señora Pardo Bazán, published in El Imparcial the following week.⁽¹⁾ Pereda neatly seizes hold of Pardo Bazán's question in regard to the third resquemor (the most interesting part of the polemic in that it has a literary interest): "¿quién ha negado seriamente que la provincia sea novelable? and answers it vigorously: "Así, en absoluto, nadie, que yo sepa; pero en el sentido que se expresa mi personaje, es decir, negando que la novela de asunto y fondo provinciales sea tan novela como la de Madrid, por ejemplo, muchos, señora Pardo, y usted entre ellos; y muy seria, y muy formal y hasta dogmáticamente. Usted ha dicho hablando de mí en La cuestión palpitante, que mi huerto aunque hermoso y bien cultivado, etc., etc., es 'de limitados horizontes' porque nunca traté 'de estudiar a fondo ... la vida moderna en las grandes capitales.' ¿No es esto posponer, en importancia y belleza, la novela regional a

(1) Ibid., 16-II-91.

la novela cortesana?" This was probably the only part of Pereda's reply where he was on sure ground.

In view of Pereda's very personal remarks, the Galician writer gave evidence of her good taste by not insisting on the wounds which she had unwittingly inflicted. Her only comment consisted of a few ironical remarks and a declaration of respect and veneration for the great novelist. It is probable that later both authors regretted the unfortunate clash which had occurred between them.⁽¹⁾

Pereda was destined never to lose his dislike of the periodista. One year later, he wrote an Esbozo,⁽²⁾ a sketch which is a cruel satire on the newspaper-man who is not a "producto castizamente español," but is brought into being by "la arbitraria ley de una necesidad de los tiempos que corren." In these words Pereda reveals the fundamental reason for his hatred of this type: his attitude is that of the traditionalist who finds the

(1) This polemic is preserved in detail in Pardo Bazán's Polémicas y estudios literarios. Both the article of Pardo Bazán and that of Pereda are quoted at great length by Montero, op. cit., pp. 143-65.

(2) Vide Obras Completas, vol XVII., (1922 ed.) p. 267.

liberty and easy manners of the journalist loathesome.

Nubes de Estío abounds in clever character sketches. Niño is typical of the dissolute young Madrid aristocrats: "muy marchito de cutis y excesivamente largo y correoso de pescuezo."⁽¹⁾ Well painted and of more interest to the lover of Pereda are the many Santander types. Juan Fernández and Casallena have already been mentioned. In addition to these, there linger long in the memory Fabio López, the blunt, irascible doyen of the intellectual society of Santander; the dandy, Pepe Gómez, to whom Petrilla, Irene's sister, would grant her hand if only his trousers were not always so well pressed! the unforgettable Sancho Vargas, don Roque's pompous friend, who devotes his days and his nights to the evolution of plans and schemes destined to improve conditions in his adopted town: "el pueblo que casi le vió nacer."⁽²⁾ Of the feminine characters one remembers, besides don Roque's family, las de Sotillo, the three vivacious and tale-bearing sisters, and doña Mónica, the beata.

(1) Cap. VI., p. 142.

(2) Cap. III., p. 61.

The society of these local types is rich compensation for the thin intrigue which holds the story together; while the scenes which are enacted in the club, La Alianza, in the Casino recreativo, in the street, and the tertulias in the café and in Fabio López's house recall some of the author's early cuadros. The book is rich in humour, much of which is provided by Sancho Vargas. The scene in the club when the latter expounds his three "proyectos" is a pure delight;⁽¹⁾ but perhaps the most comical episode in which Sancho Vargas figures is his visit to Brezales, when he offers to marry Irene with the laudable intention of removing a source of worry to don Roque!⁽²⁾

In short, Nubes de Estío as a novel is frequently soporific; but it contains excellent cuadros and some finely drawn types. Moreover, it is of great interest to the student of Pereda in that it sheds a very clear light on the novelist's opinions on regionalism in literature and throws into strong relief certain aspects of the author's character.

(1) Cap. III.

(2) Cap. XXIV.

CHAPTER XV.AL PRIMER VUELO.

Al primer vuelo was a novel written to order. José Ixart, the eminent and able Catalan critic who was very friendly with Pereda, asked him in the summer of 1889 to write a novel for the series which Herrich y Compañía of Barcelona were publishing under his direction. It is superfluous to state that Pereda was persona grata in Catalonia on account of his defence of the regional novel. Pereda promised a short novel and did not hurry unduly to execute the order. However, Ixart pressed him for it when he was least expecting it and, in order to let the publishers have it by September, 1890, he had to make a parenthesis in Nubes de Estío and force himself to compose another novel.

The writing of the novel coincided with a period of acute physical pain, as Pereda was suffering at the time from repeated attacks of colitis and acidity of the stomach. Yet, reading Al primer vuelo, one is aware of a frivolous, almost ingenuous atmosphere. One of the last works of Pereda, if it cannot compete with his best, it

possesses that juvenile lightness which is lacking in the others.

The thin tale of Al primer vuelo can be briefly told. D. Alejandro Bermúdez, a native of Peleches, Villavieja, an imaginary town in the Montaña, has spent the best of his life in business in Sevilla. He adores his beautiful daughter, Nieves, for whom he has made careful plans, to wit, that she should marry his sister's son, Nacho, who with his family is in America and with whom Nieves has corresponded and exchanged photographs ever since she was able to write. D. Alejandro is a firm believer in the ennobling influence of fresh country air. To use his own words - words which he repeats to the point of satiety - "No tiene escape. Denme ustedes un aire puro, y yo les daré una sangre rica; denme una sangre rica, y yo les daré una salud de bronce; denme, finalmente, una salud de bronce, y yo les daré el espíritu honrado, los pensamientos nobles y las costumbres ejemplares. In corpore sano, mens sana."⁽¹⁾ Acting upon this theory, as soon as Nieves attains to womanhood, he takes her away

(1) Vide Al primer vuelo (1921 ed.), cap. I., p. 5.

from the noise and bustle and the temptations of Sevilla to the peace and quiet of his native Peleches. There, however, in spite of his theory or perhaps because of it, his plans go astray. The fact is that Nieves has suspected the existence of such plans for quite a number of years and that Nacho's cloying epistolary style and dandified appearance (as revealed by his photos) have ended by prejudicing her against him. In Villavieja she meets a person more after her own heart in Leto, the son of D. Adrián Pérez, the local chemist and an old friend of D. Alejandro's. Leto and Nieves have much in common (too much, perhaps, to convince the reader that he is witnessing real life), love of the open air, of the sea, of music, of painting; it is not surprising, therefore, that thus thrown together by circumstances, the two young people should end by falling in love. D. Alejandro, disappointed at having his plans frustrated, shows his lack of perspicacity by placing obstacles in the path of Nieves and Leto. Eventually, however, his resistance is overcome and the tale ends happily.

There is no exact localization of this novel. Pereda was very familiar with Torrelavega, and Montero⁽¹⁾

(1) Cf. op. cit., p. 356.

suggests that he possibly had this town in mind when he depicted Villavieja, but, if that was so, he changed the details so such an extent that we entirely lose sight of the model. There is to be found in cap. IV.,⁽¹⁾ in a letter written to D. Alejandro by D. Claudio Fuertes y León, the administrator of the former's casa solariega in Pelechés, a detailed description of the town, its principal inhabitants and their customs. This letter constitutes a fine example of Pereda's power of painting an interesting picture by accumulating details; noteworthy, too, is this habit of the author's of resorting to a letter in order to provide the reader with the necessary background or to analyse the state of mind of certain of his characters, as he does in cap. XV.⁽²⁾ (Cartas cantan), where letters from Nieves and Leto to respective friends reveal how the two young people feel towards each other.

In Villavieja there is to be found the usual blending of the good and the bad. The good is represented by such

(1) p. 47.

(2) p. 245.

characters as D. Alejandro's administrator, D. Claudio Fuertes y León, whose horror of the sea can be excused as he was one of the "secanos de Astorga," his old friend, the apothecary, D. Adrián Pérez, and the latter's son, Leto. D. Adrián is one of those lovable upright, old men who so abound in the Peredan portrait-gallery: "Era de regular estatura, moreno, enjuto, de ojos pequeños, pero listos, risueño de expresión, y de voz lenta y sin timbre alguno. Parecía algo socarrón, pero en realidad no lo era. Lo parecía, porque así resultaba de la combinación de su flemática y natural sosera, con la malicia aparente de sus ojuelos de ratón y lo risueño de su boca."⁽¹⁾ As for his son, Leto, to judge from D. Claudio's description: "Es un bigardón de los demonios, que tan pronto le parece a usted blanco como negro, hábil como inepto, aquí listo y allá simple. Pica en muchas cosas, y aun no he podido averiguar hacia cuál de ellas le arrastran sus verdaderas aptitudes."⁽²⁾ Leto, the reader soon learns, is in fact a very sound young man. He has had a successful school and university career and is thoroughly competent in his father's business. Ex-

(1) Cap. IX., p. 144.

(2) Cap. IV., p. 61.

cessive modesty is his one grave defect, and Nieves, who seems much more alive than many of the author's feminine characters, helps him to lose it by enabling him to realize his worth. She is quick to recognize the value of his painting and his playing and is enthusiastic about his skill with his yacht.

One little incident may be cited in illustration of Leto's shyness. On one occasion the two are walking together, when Nieves drops a carnation which she had been carrying between her teeth. Leto bends down and picks it up. "-No sirve ya" - said Nieves - "puede usted tirarle, si quiere.- Y Leto, sin más ni más, le tiró, por pura obediencia."⁽¹⁾ Afterwards, he worries over the incident and returning alone to the spot, he picks up the flower and presses it between the pages of an album containing his paintings, where Nieves later discovers it, much to Leto's discomfiture.

Leto, however, is a very different man on his yacht, Flash; there he seems oblivious to everything, even Nieves. Among the finest pages in the novel are those which describe the occasion when, yielding to the en-

(1) Cap. XI., p. 178.

treaties of Nieves, he indulges in a manoeuvre too many and Nieves, losing her grip, falls into the sea to be rescued, of course, by her companion.⁽¹⁾ In the description of the yacht and its manoeuvres Pereda displays a wealth of technical knowledge. This was obtained not at regattas or similar excursions, as he was never very fond of nautical sports, but from the painter of seascapes, Fernando Pérez del Camino, who had painted the culminating moment in Sotileza.⁽²⁾ The fact is interesting as it throws light on the artistic temperament of the novelist and reveals his way of acquiring information.

Life in Villavieja flows on at a very even rhythm. What was tottering, when D. Alejandro was last there, has now fallen and what was then standing erect is now tottering in its turn and on the point of falling. The cause of the petrification of Villavieja is attributed to the rivalry between two important families: los Carreño de la Campada and los Vélez de la Costanilla. It is sufficient

(1) Cap. XVII.

(2) Cf. Cossío, op. cit., p. 334.

for the one family to suggest a project to improve Villavieja for the other to oppose it.⁽¹⁾ There are clever sketches of the host of talemongering spinsters who visit Peleches, the chief of whom are Rufita González, las Escribanas, las Pelagatas, las de Codillo and las Corbejonas. The most malicious of all is Rufita who is related to Nacho on the male side and is therefore trying to attract the indiano to her house. Rufita and the others are delighted to learn of Nieve's adventure on the yacht and the story, or rather, a highly coloured version thereof, is not long in circulating throughout the village. The consequence is a temporary alienation between D. Alejandro and the Pérez family and the realization on the part of Nieves and Leto that they love each other. Pathetic in the last degree is the visit paid by the apothecary to his friend in order to implore an explanation of his strange conduct and significant is D. Alejandro's remark when he takes leave of D. Adrián: - "¿Qué apostamos, ¡canástoles!, a que ese pobre boticario vale mucho más que yo?"⁽²⁾

(1) Cap. IV., pp. 49-52.

(2) Cap. XXIII., p. 394.

Two other characters are worthy of mention: Maravillas and Catana. Maravillas answers to the description of "un jovenzuelo chiquitín, paliducho y lacio, con gafas, pelo de ratón y patillitas transparentes."⁽¹⁾ A tavern-keeper's son, fresh from the University and a freethinker, he astonishes the villavejanos with his advanced ideas, hence his nickname. His greatest feat in the course of the novel is the publication of a newspaper, El Fénix Villavejano, in which he writes a travesty of the yacht incident; for this he pays the penalty, being so flogged by Leto and others that he flees from Villavieja.⁽²⁾ A comic touch is provided by Catana, D. Alejandro's Andalusian servant who refuses to find anything beautiful in the Montaña. It is a pity that she appears so seldom on the scene.

It must be said, however, that the characters in this novel do not stand out in strong relief. They are only faintly sketched and fade more quickly from the memory than do those in any other of the author's books. We have the impression, after reading the novel, that we

(1) Cap. IV., p. 69.

(2) Cap. XXIV.

have spent but a short time in the Montaña and have obtained merely a glimpse of provincial life with its virtues and its defects. We carry away too the sweet fragrance of the love of Nieves and Leto. If Al primer vuelo is Pereda's most superficial book, it is not the least agreeable to read, and it constitutes a pleasant, if forced, interlude in the series of his last works. ⁽¹⁾

(1) El P. Blanco García regretted that the clash between Pereda and Pardo Bazán prevented the latter from perceiving the "diáfanas claridades" of Al primer vuelo and from enjoying "el blando aroma del jazmín y madre-selva, confundido con el de plantas bravías y cáusticas, pero dominándolo, que flota por las páginas del último libro de Pereda." Vide op. cit., p. 525.

CHAPTER XVI.PEÑAS ARRIBA.

The early origins of Peñas Arriba⁽¹⁾ can be traced to the frequently mentioned election journey of Pereda through Liébana and the valleys of the Nansa in 1871. This journey filled Pereda with admiration for the traditionalist conception of patriarchal government in the villages of the Montaña (as portrayed in Don Gonzalo...) and reconciled him to the many village types, mayorazgos, cowherds, farm-labourers, and others so cruelly painted in the early cuadros de costumbres. In Peñas Arriba Pereda draws a picture of another montañés village, Tablanca, but one which is entirely free from political corruption and where the old patriarchal system works perfectly under the leadership of don Celso, one of the noblest and most lovable of the author's characters.

The success of this Peredan masterpiece is not to be found in the interest of the plot, which is a slight one; nor in psychological subtleties foreign to the author's

(1) 1895.

spontaneous, straight-forward genius; nor in any controversial moral thesis; nor, in short, in anything of an ephemeral nature. On the contrary, Peñas Arriba belongs to the realm of pure, disinterested art; it transports the reader to a higher plane than any of the novelist's other works; and we may safely say that it reveals the art of Pereda in its full maturity.

The plot, if such it may be termed, can be briefly outlined. Don Celso, the señor of the casona, is an old man stricken with a malady, the only salvation from which is death. He would like to be comforted during the last days of his life by the thought that he leaves a successor who will carry on his beneficent work at Tablanca. Unfortunately, his only living relative, apart from a couple of ne'er do weels, is one don Marcelo, his nephew, whose entire life has been spent so far in Madrid and other capitals, the last type of man whom one would seek to acclimatize in a little montañés village. Don Celso, however, knowing that his brother's son is a sound, reliable man, is bold enough to make the suggestion. His first letters evoke no response in Marcelo's heart; but, at length, when the latter receives a more appealing one than usual, in which he learns that his uncle's days

are numbered, he decides to visit Tablanca and do what he can to brighten the last days of his existence.

As was to be expected, Marcelo is very badly impressed by Tablanca on his arrival there. He feels completely shut off from the world by the towering mountains and at first he can only find monotony in the ancestral home. However, a variety of circumstances conspire to make him see things differently. He becomes genuinely fond of his uncle and he is more and more impressed by the modus vivendi of those montañeses who live under don Celso's patriarchal rule. He makes excellent friends too, notable among them being Neluco, the cultured, young village doctor, don Sabas, the priest, a rugged, simple soul, who is in his true element on the mountain tops, and the unforgettable Chisco, faithful servant of don Celso's family. Chisco - a typical montañés country type - is valiant, shrewd and stubbornly independent. It is the doctor, however, who becomes Marcelo's closest friend in Tablanca. Neluco is Pereda's chief mouthpiece and he is the principal defender of the tablanqueses and of their way of living. He makes Marcelo realize that Madrid is not the only place in Spain and that, should he decide to remain in the Montaña, he would play a much more important

rôle than he could ever hope to do in Madrid. Shortly before his uncle's death, Marcelo promises him that he will attempt to take his place and he is aided in his resolve by the company of Lita with whom he falls in love and is thus bound to the Montaña by the strongest of all human ties.

The theme was one dear to the author's heart and, in consequence, the novel has an epic note running through it. The reader is very conscious of being transported to the mountain heights, far removed from human miseries. The last part of Peñas Arriba is steeped in a strong religious unction which can be explained by a tragic happening which interrupted the composition of the work. Two-thirds of the novel had almost been completed when the novelist, working at Polanco with feverish activity, heard a shot ring out in the garden. A fit of madness had caused his eldest and favourite son, Juan Manuel, to take his life. That horror, which separated his present from his past, is commemorated on the autograph of the novel with a cross and a date: Septbr. 2-93.⁽¹⁾ Pereda was stricken with

(1) Vide Peñas Arriba (1924 ed.), p. 5.

grief, but a superhuman effort of will power induced him to seek consolation in the sphere of art and he finished the work.

As we have hinted, Peñas Arriba, rather than a novel, is a sociological thesis in which the author's intense traditional sense of life⁽¹⁾ attains its fullest expression. His traditionalism must have been profoundly impressed by his visit to Tudanca (the Tablanca of the novel), with whose casona he became acquainted in the course of his election journey in 1871, and by the details of the patriarchal existence of the village which he obtained from his cousin Domingo Cuevas, a relative of the owners of the casona.⁽²⁾

The social topography of the valley of Tudanca is exactly reproduced and interpreted in Peñas Arriba. It is a fact that Pereda's description of the patriarchal existence of Tudanca corresponded to reality. In the second half of the nineteenth century, in the most inaccessible part of the Montaña, in that mysterious region

(1) Cf. John Van Horne, The Influence of Conservatism on the Art of Pereda. Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, XXXIV. (1919).

(2) Cf. Cossío, op. cit., pp. 349-50.

where the Nansa storms and rages and where the highest peaks of the Cantabrian range cast their shadows, existed a little town impervious to any revolutionary influence, and where there was perfect harmony between the master of the casona and his neighbours, the former taking a paternal interest in their troubles and the latter responding to his favours with their affection and services which resembled "actos funcionales de todo el organismo."⁽¹⁾ Pereda thus had his model at hand, a model which he reproduced in its main lines without incurring the mistake of reproducing the details.

Don Celso was modelled on don Francisco de la Cuesta, the owner of the casona of Tudanca. Don Francisco was not quite the patriarch of the novel, as he had studied and graduated in law at Valladolid and frequently left Tudanca. According to Cossío, however, his character and his portrait are faithfully drawn in Peñas Arriba.⁽²⁾

It is not, however, don Celso, but the doctor, Neluco, who is the chief mouthpiece of Pereda's traditionalist

(1) Peñas Arriba, cap. IX., p. 134.

(2) Cf. op. cit., p. 360-61.

ideas in the novel. Marcelo is astonished to think that a cultured, travelled man like Neluco can be content to remain buried in Tablanca. He tells the doctor of his amazement, only to learn that his friend is a little of an artist and that Tablanca, the landscape and the people satisfy his artistic temperament. To quote Neluco: "en este valle mínimo, y en los montes que le circundan de cerca y de lejos, cuya visión continua le abrumba y le entristece a usted, y en el conjunto de todo ello, con la luz que lo envuelve, espléndida a ratos, mortecina a veces, tétrica muy a menudo, dulce y soledosa siempre, y con los ruidos de su lenguaje, desde el fiero de la tempestad hasta el rumoroso de las brisas de mayo, y su fragancia exquisita nunca igualada por los artificios orientales, encuentro yo cada día, cada hora, cada momento, el himno sublime, el poema, el cuadro, la armonía insuperables, que no se han escrito, ni pintado, ni compuesto, ni soñado todavía por los hombres, porque no alcanza ni alcanzará jamás a tanto la pequeñez del ingenio humano: el arte supremo, en una palabra..."(1)

(1) Cap. IX., pp. 127-28.

Marcelo insists that life in Tudanca must inevitably become monotonous for Neluco, as he lacks all the means of relaxation which are within the grasp of the dweller in the city. Neluco's reply is a spirited one. For him it is the city which spells monotony. The much-vaunted attractions of the city - the café, the promenading, the casino, the theatre - all these leave him cold. His spiritual nature is not satisfied by them. It does, however, find satisfaction and solace in the infinite variety of charms which Nature offers, as she does in the Montaña - charms which do not always strike the eye at first - "la infinita variedad de encantos y de aspectos que se encierra y se contiene en esto que, a las primeras ojeadas de un profano, sólo parece un hacinamiento enorme de peñascos y bardales."⁽¹⁾

Marcelo remarks that such theorizing is all very well, but that the everyday reality is another matter. How can Neluco derive any pleasure from frequenting the society of ignorant men, tainted with the defects of all those of low

(1) Ibid., p. 129.

estate? Once again, the doctor has his answer ready. Vices and weaknesses, he says, are to be found everywhere; but he prefers those of the village to those of the big city. The former sometimes amuse him, but the latter sadden. And why, continues Neluco, should the city dweller not condescend to lower himself to the level of the villager in order to establish mutual comprehension? Moreover, when the cultured man really takes the trouble to understand the country dweller, what an amount of things he finds to admire where another would only see monotony, sadness and solitude!(1)

According to the doctor, the present age is too exciting a one. Such mechanical progress has been made, such feats accomplished, that man's intelligence now braves anything, and his heart, become blasé, is losing its sensitiveness. This is leading to a paralysis in the spiritual life of mankind: "La fe en lo divino y el sentimiento de lo reputado siempre por lo más noble en lo humano, iban relegándose al montón de las cosas inútiles, cuando no perjudiciales; apenas se concebían los grandes

(1) Ibid., pp. 130-31.

héroes de otras épocas, cuanto más los sentimientos que los habían exaltado desde la masa común de los anónimos, hasta las páginas más esplendentes de la Historia. No era posible ya, ni siquiera de buen gusto, sentir entusiasmo por nada, ni de lo de tejas arriba ni de lo de tejas abajo. La verdadera agonía del espíritu social. De eso adolecían los tiempos actuales, y por ahí venía la muerte del cuerpo colectivo. Le corroía la gangrena por los grandes centros de su organismo atiborrado: por la ciudad, por el taller, por la Academia, por la política, por la Bolsa... por donde más caudal representa el torrente circulatorio de las insaciabiles ambiciones del hombre culto. Pero, por misericordia de Dios, le quedaban sanas todavía las extremidades, algunas de ellas por lo menos, y sólo con la sangre rica de estos miembros podía, con mucho tiempo y gran paciencia, purificarse y reconstituirse la parte corrompida de los centros."⁽¹⁾

The "sound limbs" are of course isolated mountain villages like Tablanca. Such a rural community obviously requires at its head an intelligent and loving father.

(1) Ibid., pp. 132-33.

The manorial house and the village form a single body whose head is the owner of the casona. All are for him, and he is for all. Thus, the constant services which the one renders the other are not considered as favours, but as functional actions of the whole organism. This unity is the best means of defence against the malodorous waves which penetrate as far as the Montaña from the political and administrative centres of the State. "Todo esto, como puede presumirse, da bastante que hacer a cada rueda inteligente de cuantas componen la máquina cuyo eje fundamental es hoy en este lugar el bien ganado prestigio de don Celso. Pues bien: trabajar de este modo donde ya exista la máquina, y donde no, trabajar para construirla, es algo de lo mucho que tienen que hacer en los pueblos rurales los hombres cultos de buena voluntad."⁽¹⁾ A traditional conception of life is present in all the pages of the novelist but it is particularly so, as we see, in Peñas Arriba.

We have already mentioned that Pereda, while faithful to the geography of his background, is not exact in details,

(1) *Ibid.*, p. 135.

either deliberately or through lack of exact information. He visited Tudanca only once in the course of his election journey of 1871 and it is probable that the chapter in Los Hombres de Pro dealing with the visit to don Recaredo, and that in Peñas Arriba describing Marcelo's arrival at the casona, were both memories of Pereda's own visit. In addition to the information which he obtained from don Domingo Cuevas, Pereda attempted to study the district at first hand. To this end he made several excursions: he attempted, for example, to climb from Soto to the Puerto de Sejos, accompanied by the Campurrian costumbrista, Demetrio Duque y Merino, to whose censureship he submitted Marcelo's journey; again, he travelled from Cabuérniga to Campóo over the heights of Palombera; and, in the summer of 1893, when the novel was half written, he paid another visit to Campóo, in the company of don Angel de los Ríos (el Sordo), and was shown the Puerto de Sejos and the Campóo valley, including Proaño.⁽¹⁾

Cossío observes that, after Marcelo leaves the Campóo hillsides, the landscape is a creation of Pereda's. It

(1) Cf. Cossío, op. cit., pp. 351-52.

would be impossible to find one's way with Pereda's description in one's head. These inaccuracies, however, are of little importance. Wrong as the details are, the general impression which the novelist gives of the valley is correct. "La topografía del puerto es totalmente inventada, pero ella aumenta, a mi ver, el valor y el mérito de este capítulo. Con elementos arbitrarios, con referencias caprichosas a un puerto creado por su imaginación, logra el artista comunicar la impresión del auténtico Sejos, y no sólo por las reacciones psicológicas que denuncia en Marcelo y su espolique, sino por el tono del paisaje, por la sensación de soledad y pequeñez de quien le arrostra, por el color del monte y de la tarde, por la interpretación de sus componentes creados, coincidente con la que una sensibilidad despierta puede dar de los reales. A cuantos nos es familiar el tránsito del puerto de Sejos, nos da la lectura de este capítulo cabal impresión de él, siendo enorme la sorpresa del análisis demorado al comprobar que ni un pico ni un barranco están en su lugar."(1)

The novelist's treatment of the valley of Tudanca is

(1) Ibid., pp. 353-54.

similar to that of the Puerto de Sejos. Here, however, Pereda's memory is more accurate and the sensation of narrowness, if exaggerated by Pereda, exists in reality as well as in the fiction. One example will illustrate the novelist's method. After his morning snack at Rozadío,⁽¹⁾ Marcelo walks along the road running parallel to the Nansa. He reaches the highroad and, being tempted to flee, continues to Pesués. The Ría de Tinamenor and the passage through which it flows into the sea are exactly photographed. "Esta pintoresca ría está separada del mar por una barrera muy alta: un monte negro y pedregoso, rajado de alto abajo, quedando así un boquete muy angosto por donde se cuelan las aguas y los barcos y se ve el Cantábrico, mirando desde adentro, como un pedazo de cielo a través de las rejas de una cárcel."⁽²⁾ This description is exact, but Marcelo could not have covered the thirty-eight kilometres between Tudanca and Pesués in such a short time - a matter of a few hours. Pereda thus sacrifices

(1) The place-names in the novel are slightly modified, e.g. Robacío = Rozadío; Tablanca = Tudanca; Promisiones = Polaciones; Zarzaleda = Sarceda; Provedaño = Proaño.

(2) Cap. XII., p. 174.

facts in order to achieve his artistic ends.

Pereda's power of natural description is one of his best artistic weapons and in Peñas Arriba it is seen at its zenith. To quote but one example, could this description of the desolation of the mountain-heights be excelled? "Toda aquella interminable superficie parecía un mar de lava cuajado de repente; un mar hasta con sus islotes y escollos; unos monolitos muy grandes que se destacaban, escuetos y descarnados, sobre la aridez del suelo entre matojos de escobinos, de árnica o de regaliz. Abundaban los manchones verdes de las brañas de jugosos pastos, y no era ingrato a la vista el color de otros detalles; pero, ¡lo demás!... Aquellos cantos pelados, tan grandes, tan secos, tan esparcidos en todas direcciones; aquella inmensa extensión calva, monda, rapada y desnuda de todo follaje; aquellas nieblas tenaces cerrando todas las salidas y surgiendo de todas las hoyadas; aquellos riscos inaccesibles y fantásticos elevándose sobre todo y por todos lados; aquel cierzo continuo y gemebundo que parecía el espíritu funerario de las grandes necrópolis, llevando consigo los jirones de la niebla como si fueran sudarios arrancados de las tumbas en los senos entenebrecidos de las barrancas; aquellos buitres que me señalaba Chisco,

revolando en las alturas; aquel cielo que iba encapotándose poco a poco... todo ello, que era lo más, visto a través de las lentes pesimistas de mis ojos, se imponía al resto, que era, relativamente, muy escaso, y me presentaba toda la superficie del Puerto bajo un aspecto feroz y repulsivo. Yo no veía más que una llanura infinita, plagada de costras y tumores; y los monolitos solitarios y dispersos, se me antojaban erupciones de verrugas asquerosas sobre una inmensa piel de leproso."⁽¹⁾ Very characteristic of the author is this description where, by means of a wonderfully exact accumulation of details, he succeeds in making the landscape real. Boris de Tannenbergh has pointed out that Pereda, when he attempts to evoke a natural scene, appeals not only to the eye but to all the senses. "Nul ne l'égale à rendre les mille impressions multiples qui nous assaillent à la fois en face de la nature: de là sa puissance d'évocation singulière. Il n'est pas un pur visuel: le toucher, l'ouïe, l'odorat ont pour lui une part presque égale dans la perception d'un paysage. Et par l'éveil simultané d'images de tous nos sens il nous plonge pour ainsi dire

(1) Cap. II., pp. 36-37.

dans la réalité même, au lieu de nous la présenter extérieure, comme sur un théâtre ou sur un tableau."(1)

One of the most interesting episodes in Peñas Arriba is Marcelo's visit to the señor de la Torre de Provedaño.⁽²⁾ This visit to Proaño gives Pereda the opportunity of skilfully interweaving into his tale a description of D. Angel de los Ríos and his mode of life.⁽³⁾ The novelist's introductory picture of this modern knight is admirable: "Representaba cincuenta años, bien corridos; tenía buen color, la cabeza muy poblada de pelo alborotado y recio, la cara pequeña y enjuta, y aun parecía más chica de lo que era, por lo espeso de la barba que le ocupaba la mitad; la barba y el pelo empezando a encanecer; la frente ancha, y destacado el entrecejo; la nariz curva, y la mirada de sus ojuelos verdes, firme y escrutadora; cara, en fin, cervantesca y un tanto aquijotada. Daba grandes pasos con sus largas piernas al dirigirse a nosotros, que le salimos al encuentro, y balanceaba el cuerpo, nervudo y cenceño y

(1) Vide op. cit., p. 278.

(2) Caps. XIV.-XV.

(3) Cf. Cossío, op. cit., pp. 363-64.

algo inclinado hacia adelante, al compás de las zancadas; vestía un traje modesto de paño oscuro, fuerte y barato, y calzaba abarcas de tarugos."⁽¹⁾

Proaño is one of the valleys of the three Campóos. This part of the Montaña adjoins Castilla and partakes of its characteristics. Likewise, the señor de Provedaño appears to us as the traditional Castilian gentleman, proud, dignified and independent, so honest that his rule over Proaño is not too happy a one as, unlike Tudanca, it has become tainted with modern political currents. As Neluco observes, the señor de Provedaño is a modern Don Quijote: "Con tales condiciones de carácter, este hombre hubiera sido en los siglos medios caballero andante o cruzado; pero le tocó nacer en estos tiempos descoloridos y prosaicos, y sus arremetidas andantescas le resultan muy a menudo quijotadas, hasta por los descalabros..."⁽²⁾

We experience no surprise when the señor de Provedaño declaims against the mal nuevo. While fully realizing the truth expressed in the Castilian proverb: "a otros tiempos, otras costumbres y otras leyes," he would like to see

(1) Cap. XIV., p. 199.

(2) Cap. XV., pp. 226-27.

modifications in customs and laws taking place in a natural way, as conditions demand such changes. He objects strongly to a centralized administrative system imposing its laws alike on all communities, irrespective of whether they are suitable or not. His theory of government (which, of course, is also Pereda's) is expressed in this advice which he would give the State: "Tómame, en el concepto que más te plazca, lo que en buena y estricta justicia te debemos de nuestra pobreza para levantar las cargas comunes de la Patria; pero déjanos lo demás para hacer de ello lo que mejor nos parezca; déjanos nuestros bienes comunales, nuestras sabias ordenanzas, nuestros tradicionales y libres concejos; en fin (y diciéndolo a la moda del día), nuestra autonomía municipal, y Cristo con todos."⁽¹⁾ Seldom in Pereda's work have regionalism and the patria chica found a better advocate. The semi-historical, semi-descriptive accounts of the Montaña, such as are to be found, for example, in p. 215, enchant and inspire the reader with enthusiasm for that corner of Spain. Pereda well says of the señor de Provedaño: "Tenía el suelo patrio embebido en la masa de

(1) Cap. XIV., p. 211.

la sangre."(1)

In the pages of Peñas Arriba we meet again with pleasure a number of other hidalgos of the Montaña whose acquaintance we have already made in other volumes of the author's. It is the solemn occasion of don Celso's funeral which brings them together.(2) There is the famous don Recaredo whom we saw don Simón de los Cerajos trying to impress in Los Hombres de Pro: "hidalgo de rancio solar, célibe impenitente, afamado cazador de fieras, y de grande y merecido influjo en toda su comarca; bien relacionado con los hombres del ajeteo político de la capital y sucursales de ella; muy solicitado de aspirantes a la representación en Cortes del distrito, en época de lides electorales."(3) D. Román Pérez de la Llosía is also present from Santander. We learn that Coteruco is missing him and that he is looking forward to the day when he can return to the casona. With singular pleasure, too, we greet don Román's close friend and neighbour, don Lope del Robledal. He makes his appearance in characteristic

(1) Cap. XV., p. 213.

(2) Cap. XXX.

(3) Ibid., p. 453.

fashion: "vimos aparecer de pronto, sobre la giba del pedregal, un hombre alto y fornido, de hermosa cabeza, envuelta entre un chambergo de anchas alas y una barba gris; venía a cuerpo con un chaquetón pardo, y los pantalones, del mismo color, arremangados sobre unos borceguíes de recia suela y muy embarrados. Traía las manos metidas en los bolsillos del chaquetón, un garrote pinto y nudoso debajo del brazo izquierdo, y en la boca una pipa ahumando."⁽¹⁾ The author describes in vivid and moving language the meeting of don Román and don Lope, the former anxious to obtain news of Coteruco from his friend. But for sheer realism the palm must be given to the meeting between don Lope and the señor de Provedaño, which Pereda paints with a few deft strokes. "Parecían dos leones. No les faltó más que olerse. Después se acercaron más y se estrecharon las diestras con recias sacudidas. Entonces me parecieron dos robles gemelos de la montaña estremecidos por el soplo de una misma ráfaga."⁽²⁾ Such a description does indeed seem a distant echo of many

(1) Ibid., p. 456.

(2) Ibid., pp. 456-57.

a passage in the old epics or the Romanceros.

The señor de Provedaño gives Marcelo a word of advice which recalls to mind the tragedy of Coteruco, the more so as don Román is present. Should Marcelo intend to serve old wine in new skins, a procedure of which he (the señor de Provedaño) did not disapprove, let him be careful to exercise the greatest care, because, he concluded, "hermosa es la luz, pero no deben abrirse de repente todas las ventanas a los que han vivido a oscuras por achaques de la vista, pues hay que temer las locuras que entran por los ojos deslumbrados."(1)

This scene where we find the cream of the Montaña reunited is one of the finest which we have from the novelist's pen, and it forms a magnificent tribute to the old hidalgos of Pereda's native province. But it is not only don Celso and his noble friends who are well depicted in Peñas Arriba. Every character tells. Unforgettable is the priest, don Sabas, who acts as guide to Marcelo on many a mountain excursion. The heights seem to intoxicate him and he acquires on the hill-tops an eloquence which he

(1) Ibid., p. 460.

lacks in the valley. How sincere is his grief when he administers communion to the dying don Celso!⁽¹⁾ The secondary characters are all well drawn: don Pedro Nolasco, Lita's father, a veritable giant with a gargantuan appetite; Chisco, who shows his sturdy independence by spurning Tanasia, persuaded that she seeks him only for the money which his master had bequeathed to him; his friend, Pito Salces; Facia, "la mujer gris," don Celso's sad-faced servant, the mystery of whose life is only fully revealed towards the end of the book; and, finally, el Tarumbo, whose mania is the repairing of other people's tumbledown property, the while his own is collapsing with neglect. All the popular types in the novel are, in fact, insuperable for colour and relief. A weaker character is Neluco who is lacking in individuality and serves merely as a medium whereby the author can give expression to his traditionalist ideas. Lituca, too, seems to us one of the least memorable of Pereda's feminine types.

The merits of Peñas Arriba are many. The characters, of both high and low estate, live in the memory, as do the

(1) Cap. XXVII., pp. 417-18.

scenes of great dramatic and poetic intensity in which the novel abounds. Let us select from a host of impressive scenes, the bear hunt,⁽¹⁾ the snowstorm⁽²⁾ and the death and funeral of don Celso.⁽³⁾ Noteworthy is the solemn, almost religious inspiration which transfigures the author's contemplation of Nature and which overflows in veritable hymns. Menéndez y Pelayo has written: "Como paisajista, nunca ha rayado a mayor altura que en las descripciones de los puertos altos de la cordillera cantábrica, que llenan en gran parte este libro, el cual, a la vez que como novela, puede considerarse como un relato de viajes semejante a los de Töppfer por Suiza, o al de Taine por los Pirineos; pero con una grandeza que no tiene el primero y con una sinceridad de emoción que a veces se echa de menos en el segundo."⁽⁴⁾ The vocabulary of the book is extraordinarily rich and is in perfect harmony with the grand landscape. A sober,

(1) Cap. XX.

(2) Cap. XXII.

(3) Caps. XXVIII. and XXX.

(4) Vide Estudios de crítica literaria, vol. V. (1908), p. 443.

classical quality is its salient characteristic. There are no unnecessary words and every character talks with the greatest naturalness in his own particular style. But the principal charm of Peñas Arriba is the serenity of outlook with which every page is stamped. One feels that there is no groping, no nervous tension, no axe-grinding behind the composition of this book.⁽¹⁾ It is in truth a poem, a veritable epic of the beauty of the remote corners of the Montaña and of their patriarchal existence. There is, moreover, in Peñas Arriba an indefinably intimate note which knits author and reader together more closely perhaps than any of the novelist's previous works had done. "Peñas Arriba en algunas cualidades cede el paso a otras obras del autor, pero en lo que es más propio de la perfecta madurez, en las condiciones más serias y profundas, es para mí el mejor libro

(1) Cf. Boris de Tannenberg, op. cit., pp. 211-12. "Mais si, dans ses premiers livres, et surtout dans ceux qui suivirent les scènes grotesques ou tragiques de la Révolution, on trouve, à côté d'une indignation légitime, un dogmatisme un peu étroit, un parti pris déplaisant contre les idées modernes, ses vues se sont élargies avec le temps et l'expérience, et son oeuvre s'achève sur une note réconfortante d'optimisme."

de Pereda."(1) So wrote Clarín and we endorse his judgment. If Peñas Arriba is less of a novel than Sotileza, it undoubtedly reveals the art of Pereda at its zenith. Reading Peñas Arriba we feel that Pereda in his earlier regional work, in the Escenas, in Los Hombres de Pro, in Don Gonzalo..., in El Sabor de la Tierruca and in La Puchera, had merely given us fragments of a picture, isolated aspects of regional life; in Peñas Arriba, on the other hand, we view the theme in its entirety, nobly and lovingly executed on a broad canvas where the deeply-rooted traditions of the past and the spirit of modern progress are reconciled and illuminated by the intense religious feeling of the author.

(1) Las Novedades (2-III-95).

CHAPTER XVII.PACHÍN GONZÁLEZ.

In the year 1893 there occurred in Santander one of the most appalling disasters on record. Fire broke out in the Cabo Machichaco, a vessel containing a secret load of dynamite which was moored to one of the quays of Santander; an explosion followed which wrecked half the city and killed and mutilated hundreds of the inhabitants. Such a calamity forms the subject of Pereda's last work, Pachín González, written in 1895.⁽¹⁾ Pachín González is scarcely a novel; rather is it one of the most magnificently painted cuadros of the novelist.⁽²⁾ No one was better qualified than the author of the Escenas Montañesas to give a sympathetic account of the calamity which had befallen his fellowcountrymen. At the time of the disaster, as we know, Pereda was still bowed down under the weight of his own misfortune.

(1) Published in 1896.

(2) Cf. Clarín, El Imparcial (11-V-96) where he stresses the excellence of the author's shorter works: "La Leva, por ejemplo, vale tanto como lo mejor de Pereda."

He was profoundly affected, however, by the unspeakable sorrow and suffering which followed the explosion, and such was its effect on him that it enabled him to look with philosophy on his own personal sorrow.

Pachín and his mother, the two chief characters in the book, are merely a pretext for the historic narration and the eloquent description of the catastrophe of the explosion of the Cabo Machichaco. Such a task was fraught with obvious dangers. In the first place, a lesser writer than Pereda would have produced a book of topical interest only. Secondly, events such as the disaster of the Cabo Machichaco do not always lend themselves to art. It happens frequently that a writer, owing to abuse of rhetoric, robs his narrative of real sincerity. Pereda, as one would expect, avoids both these pitfalls. He relates the experiences of one Pachín González, yet ever keeps in the foreground the common misfortune, the common sorrow. He does not envelop sorrow in rhetoric. A mere artist would have taken advantage of the terrible calamity for its aesthetic merits. Pereda's narrative, on the other hand, is never cold and objective; it breathes sincerity and poignancy throughout. As Clarín has well said: "a fuerza de arte, y sin dislocar el lenguaje, ni derrochar el color,

ni hinchar las metáforas, ni abusar del realismo impresionista, supo llegar a donde llegó Manzoni en su Peste de Milán, a donde llegó Zola en La Débâcle, en Germinal, a donde llegó Flaubert en Salambó."⁽¹⁾ The same critic also commends his good taste in refraining from describing the calamity as a heaven-sent punishment, as so many had done: "vicio feo que siempre muestran nuestros hipócritas reaccionarios, acostumbrados a convertir en sentencia firme del Todopoderoso cuantas calamidades públicas afligen a este país desdichado."⁽²⁾ Pereda likewise gave proof of his customary good judgement in devoting a minimum of space to the recriminations which naturally arose from the nature of the accident.

The narrative opens with an account of Pachín's struggles between his love for his native soil, for his home and his mother, and his desire to try his luck in las Indias - always a treasure-trove in the fancy of the poor montañeses, just as they were for Columbus in his first illusions. Eventually the voyage is decided upon; Pachín shall cross the seas; greed, the natural desire to live a

(1) Ibid.

(2) Ibid.

more comfortable life, decide the son and even the mother to undergo the terrible ordeal of bidding each other farewell. Some of the most interesting pages in the book are those which describe the wanderings of mother and son through Santander, a veritable Babylon in their eyes. Pathetic is their endeavour to lengthen the hours, to fill in their time, in order to keep their thoughts off lo otro, the now inevitable separation. All their business in Santander has already been transacted; Pachín's fare has been paid, and now all that remains to be done is for Pachín to go on board.

On the way to their boat they pass near the Cabo Machichaco, a vessel which is moored farther up the wharf. There is a huge crowd round it, and not without reason as the ship is on fire. It is not every day that one can witness the spectacle of a burning vessel moored alongside a city, and so, as is only natural, Pachín insists on stopping to watch the progress of the fire. Eventually his mother grows weary, and, ever clutching her big umbrella, keeps changing position in order to overcome her fatigue. She pleads with her son to come away and see his own boat, and at last the couple move on. An unusual commotion round about the boat, however, induces them to retrace their

steps. It is at this precise moment that the dynamite-laden vessel explodes, and mother and son, along with hundreds of others, are blown into the air. By a miracle they both escape with their lives; but, on recovering their senses, they look for each other in vain. When, after heartrending investigations on the part of the son - the most pathetic part of the book - the mother does at length appear, still clutching her big umbrella, both realize that the catastrophe has taught them a profound moral lesson - namely, that this temporal life, which can be lost so easily, is not worth the struggle, the sorrows, and the dangers which always accompany separation from those we love best.

Pachín does not take the risk; he does not cross the sea. As he tells us: "Desde ayer acá, soy muy otro de lo que fui en el ver y en el pensar de ciertas cosas:"(1) The terrible tragedy has taught him the truth of the popular rhyme:

"A las Indias van los hombres,
a las Indias por ganar,
las Indias aquí las tienen
si quisieran trabajar." (2)

(1) Vide Pachín González (1922 ed.), p. 106.

(2) Vide Escenas Montañesas (1924 ed.), p. 97.

The attention which the press paid to Pachín González was extraordinary and was due doubtless more to the author's fame than to the importance of the new work.⁽¹⁾ This was the last book to be published by Pereda. Since the super-human effort of will-power with which he had conquered his sorrow in order to finish Peñas Arriba, he seemed to have given up the idea of writing any more. The catastrophe of the Cabo Machichaco made him break his resolution and he was tempted to use his pen once again by a national catastrophe of greater magnitude, the loss of Spain's last colonies. Cossío has observed that only sorrow seemed powerful enough to inspire Pereda with a desire to write during the last few years of his life. "No parece sino que tras la desgracia familiar de su primogénito, tan sólo el dolor fuera bastante para mover su pluma, e iluminar su cerebro para concebir planes de novelas que por fuerza habían de salir empapadas de su propio dolor."⁽²⁾ Striking too is the predominance of the epic note in Pereda's last works, in Pachín González as in Sotileza and Peñas Arriba.

(1) Cf. in addition to Clarín's article: La Epoca (22-II-96); La Vanguardia (21-II-96); Heraldo de Madrid (Federico Urrecha) (23-II-96); Ibid., (Mariano de Cavia) (15-V-96); Las Provincias (Valencia) (28-II-96); El Correo (24-II-96); Diario de Barcelona (4-III-96); El Globo (26-II-96) etc.

(2) Vide op. cit., p. 384.

It is a fact that the events of 1898 made a very painful impression on Pereda and, as we know from the well-informed authors of the frequently quoted Apuntes, he conceived the idea of writing a novel of the disaster. However, the illness of one of his sons interrupted his chain of thought and he soon abandoned the idea. We obtain some little information about the projected novel from the authors of the Apuntes: "Hacia 1901, y de resultas de la paz de París, que le produjo verdadera fiebre, el gran novelista habló a algunos de escribir una novela, y una novela grande, que había proyectado y sentido en conjunto en el alto de Cotejón, cerca de su sepulcro; pero esa decisión, que trascendió a algún periódico, ni principio alcanzó siquiera, a causa de la enfermedad de uno de sus hijos, y al poco tiempo hasta se olvidó Pereda de haberla acariciado bastante, 'calentándole el horno.' Según se dijo por entonces, tratábase de algo parecido a La Débâcle, aunque de muy distintos procedimientos, contextura y lección, y sin ir hasta la manigua ni a la triste capitulación de Santiago de Cuba, lloraba y maldecía la podre de todo, llevando a un mozarrón de 'peñas arriba,' entre tísicos, calaveras, descreídos y ladrones de todas las castas y trajes, de vergüenza en vergüenza, y de ruina

en ruina, a la fosa de un lazareto. Y hasta hay quien afirma que en esta nunca empezada novela de los repatriados, en la que había de brillantarse aún más la gloriosa ejecutoria de los soldados montañeses, que ganaron en la heroica defensa del Caney nueva corbata de San Fernando al batallón de Cantabria, iban a figurar gran parte de los personajes más sonados de las otras novelas, recalcándose más y más las amargas filosofías de A las Indias."(1)

We also know that Pereda planned to write another novel, little bigger than Pachín González, of which there exists a fragment. Unfortunately, however, it gives no idea of what the projected work was to be. The montañés weekly Tiquis Miquis(2) published in photogravure the third page of a novel already entitled Hero y Leandro; Armonía,(3) the literary review of Gerona, published the first page again in photogravure; and the second page was reproduced in the Boletín de Comercio of Santander.(4) José Montero

(1) Vide op. cit., pp. 531-32.

(2) 4-V-04.

(3) 15-I-06.

(4) 5-III-06.

has reproduced this slight fragment in his book,⁽¹⁾ but it throws little light on the type of novel which the author had in mind. We do not know his reasons for abandoning the work nor why, contrary to his custom, he kept the manuscript of the few pages which he had written. According to the Apuntes: "Lo único que se conoce sobre el particular es que Hero y Leandro iba a ser una novelita idílico-trágica, más pequeña que Al primer vuelo, casi tan breve como Pachín González, y que todo lo que había visto para ello el glorioso escritor, eran unos ojos verdes de mujer bravía, medio marinera, medio montuna, siendo el "papel" principal el de un remanso becqueriano."⁽²⁾

We must mention, finally, Pereda's contribution to the Homenaje dedicated to Menéndez y Pelayo to mark the twentieth anniversary of the latter's teaching career. The Homenaje was to consist of a collection of erudite studies, a genre somewhat foreign to Pereda's genius; but the novelist cleverly surmounted the difficulty by contributing an excellent study of a certain aspect of montañés folklore

(1) Cf. op. cit., pp. 433-41.

(2) Vide op. cit., p. 533.

entitled: "De cómo se celebran todavía las bodas en cierta comarca montañesa enclavada en un repliegue de los más enriscados de la cordillera cantábrica."⁽¹⁾ This graceful little piece of work with its little collection of wedding songs is of real interest to the student of popular customs; it is a surprisingly exact and scholarly study to have come from the pen of a novelist.

Pereda, therefore, left little unedited. He disliked keeping his manuscripts and we learn from the authors of the Apuntes that about 1896 or 1897 he went through his study indiscriminately burning papers written in his hand.⁽²⁾ When the novelist was attacked by the cruel illness from which he died he had his "Memorias" mapped out in his head and it is to be regretted that he was never able to put them on paper.

(1) Vide Obras Completas, vol. XVII. (1922 ed.); also Homenaje a Menéndez y Pelayo en el vigésimo año de su profesorado. - Estudios de erudición española, con un prólogo de don Juan Valera. Madrid, 1899.

(2) Cf. Ibid., p. 534.

CHAPTER XVIII.THE ESSENCE OF PEREDA'S ART.

The publication of Pereda's last work, Pachín González, was a reminder that his entry into the Spanish Academy was long overdue. That body had long wanted to honour Pereda, but it was not until 1897 that Menéndez y Pelayo succeeded in persuading him to forsake Santander for the capital, residence in which was an essential condition of admission to the Academy. We do not mean by this that Pereda abandoned his beloved Montaña. Even had his health permitted it, he would never have entered the Academy at such a price. Tutored by his friends, he complied with the regulations of the Academy by renting a house in the capital during the requisite period preceding his admittance to the august body. After his reception he only lived occasionally in Madrid.

Menéndez y Pelayo had wished, being a fellow montañés and one of Pereda's dearest friends, to reply to his reception speech, but Pérez Galdós disputed his claim, alleging many reasons why the task should fall to his lot and pointing out that a public homage from the author of Gloria to the

novelist who was so opposed to him in questions political and religious, and whom the public generally considered as his rival, would add interest to the ceremony. Their respective discourses⁽¹⁾ on this auspicious occasion throw into strong relief the contrast in their thought and in their literary temperaments. In Pereda's speech there is manifest his aversion from the foreign customs and ideas which were gradually creeping into the social life of Spain at that time and which he abhors in the name of tradition, while Galdós defends as essential the transfusion into his country of the ideas and customs of other more advanced nations. Pereda ardently defends the regional novel, giving preference to it over the one which paints life in the great cities, full of anti-aesthetic sensations and immoral sentiments, while Galdós finds the study of life in the big city second to none in interest and picturesque-ness. Pereda inclines towards the study of Nature, and Galdós towards the study of Society. Pereda is conservative by tradition; Galdós is revolutionary by progress. The beliefs of the one and the opinions of the other accredit

(1) Pereda and Galdós, Discursos, Madrid, La Viuda e Hijos de Tello.

the truth of Galdós's assertion: "La sociedad presente es en todos los momentos y con acción simultánea revolucionaria y conservadora."

Pereda defines and defends the regional novel in Spain in the following words: "La novela a que yo me refiero aquí tiene más puntos de contacto con la Naturaleza que con la Sociedad; con lo perdurable que con lo efímero y pasajero; con la eternidad del arte que con el humano artificio de las circunstancias; y casi me atrevo a asegurar que en pocas naciones del mundo tiene esta importante rama de la literatura tan bien cimentada su razón de existencia como en España, cuya unidad moral es, por la firmeza de su cohesión, tan de notarse, como la falta de ella en sus precedentes históricos y etnográficos, y en sus costumbres, climas y temperaturas. Se impone, pues, aquí la novela regional como se impone el sentimiento que la engendra, y produce: el regionalismo, pasión acerca de la cual tiene el vulgo de los que discurren en los centros populosos y descoloridos muy equivocados conceptos."

Spirited as this defence of regionalism in literature was, it disappointed many of the novelist's adherents, particularly his Catalan friends, who had expected more substance and reference to politics in his speech. His

first contradictor was Galdós himself who defined his own regionalism thus: "Paréceme a mí que la metrópoli es región y de las más características, con su vida mixta, entreverada de extranjerismos elegantes y de las rancias más españolas, juntando los vicios de la raza a los vicios exóticos, y las marrullerías castizas a los desenfadados adquiridos en el teatro abierto y francote de las sociedades modernas. Creo que Madrid no es la capital espiritual, compendio del sentir y pensar de un pueblo, como no es capital geográfica, por carácter de condiciones físicas; veo aquí un intenso regionalismo, que podríamos llamar urbano, cual ninguno interesante y pintoresco, grande y riquísimo venero para el artista."

Salvador Canals' attack on Pereda's definition of the regional novel is typical of the attitude of the critics. "Tan no acierta Pereda - he asserts - con la definición de la novela regional, que dice que la urbe no la inspira, y esto no parece admisible, pues si la ciudad está en la región, y en región está hecha la novela, ¿por qué no ha de ser regional, aunque sea urbana? Eso será en todo caso la novela campestre, al estilo de muchas de Jorge Sand, y no pocas de Fernán Caballero." (1)

(1) Vide El Nacional (22-II-97).

Cossío, who quotes this passage,⁽¹⁾ suggests that Canals was attempting to clear up a certain confusion that was prevalent in the criticism of Pereda's work. It had become customary to oppose the two terms of localidad and universalidad; whereas, Cossío indicates, cosmopolitanism is the only logical opposite of regionalism. Universality resides in the human depths of conflicts and characters, no matter to what social class they belong, and it was Pereda's good fortune to find that human depth in rural types, while many had failed to find it in more cosmopolitan atmospheres. Pereda's least universal works are probably those of life in the capital, for the simple reason that he regarded the villa y corte and its inhabitants from the provincial point of view. His provincialism is probably more evident in La Montálvez than in any other of his novels: "Todas las preocupaciones, - writes Cossío - todos los prejuicios y todos los recelos anticortesanos propios de una visión provinciana de la gran ciudad se dan en esa novela, y así no es paradoja afirmar que la novela de ambiente más cortesano entre todas las de

(1) Cf. op. cit., pp. 404-5.

Pereda es la más provinciana y local, y en el sentido que querían los detractores de su limitación regional, la más regionalista o localista de todas."(1)

If Trueba's prologue to the Escenas Montañesas contributed to a misconception of Pereda's art and prevented his merits being recognized when they ought to have been, Pardo Bazán's famous reference to the "huerto hermoso... pero de limitados horizontes" was equally unfortunate, as it was instrumental in causing the regionalist writer to deviate from his proper course and it has tended to influence criticism of Pereda to the present day. When Pereda leaves the Montaña he is only intermittently himself, although the vigorous, flexible language always reveals the hand of the master. His regionalism is his great strength. It is true that he depicts scenes and types which now belong to a past age; but it is equally true that he describes with a thoroughly Castilian serenity of outlook human emotions and traits of human character which find an echo in every heart. If he has his so-called

(1) Ibid., p. 406.

limitations, his deep-rooted prejudices, a paucity of ideas, a somewhat elementary technique and a lack of erudition, is he any less an artist on that account? We may not agree with his theories, but we must respect his sincerity. We may hanker after a little more intellectual ballast, but we are richly compensated by the human contact which this most unprofessional of writers establishes with his readers. For Pereda 'the proper study of mankind is man,' not the man in books, but the living, breathing man. In this Pereda is thoroughly Spanish and in the genuine tradition of Cervantes. Don Quixote has his feet firmly planted in Castilian soil but his voice reaches the ends of the earth. Pereda's work contains the very soul of the Montaña but it is at the same time thoroughly Spanish and universal.⁽¹⁾

(1) Menéndez y Pelayo has realized better than anyone the universal qualities of Pereda's work. Vide e.g. his speech pronounced at the inauguration of the monument raised in honour of Pereda's memory by the montañeses at Santander (23-I-1911) (Quoted by Montero, op. cit., pp. 417-18): "Lo que parece limitación es la raíz de su energía: pocas ideas, pero claras y dominadoras, sentimientos primordiales, técnica elemental, grandes efectos logrados con medios sencillísimos. Sus libros tan locales que para los montañeses mismos necesitan glosario, tan español como lo más español que se haya escrito después de Cervantes y Quevedo, son profundamente humanos por la intensa vida que en ellos late y la tranquila majestad con que se desenvuelve."

Criticism of Pereda has perhaps been too prone to attempt an estimation of his merits purely as a novelist and, judged by this criterion, the author of Don Gonzalo..., El Sabor de la Tierruca and Sotileza has of course been found wanting. Indeed, few of the Spanish regional novelists of the last third of the nineteenth century would be able to withstand such criticism. With reference to this question Andrés González-Blanco wrote: "Es verdad, que, como en sus comienzos literarios había sido costumbrista y paisajista, siempre le quedó un poco la huella. Nunca fué novelista integral en el sentido de dramaturgo; nunca supo enlazar bien fabulaciones y desenrollar argumentos... Lo que descollaba en él era el conocimiento de los caracteres, la descripción de los paisajes y los momentos culminantes de la vida regional..."⁽¹⁾ Much of what was finest in Pereda's art manifested itself in the Escenas Montañesas and Menéndez y Pelayo was probably right in preferring a cuadro such as La leva to any of the author's later novels. These novels, as we have seen, break up into a series of cuadros; the weakness of their plot is obvious, as it is

(1) Vide Andrés González-Blanco: Historia De La Novela En España Desde El Romanticismo A Nuestros Días. (Madrid, 1909) p. 318.

in La Gaviota and in Clemencia of Fernán Caballero. Pereda, in short, is not great as a novelist, but as the author of cuadros de costumbres more or less skilfully pieced together.⁽¹⁾ In this he is thoroughly Spanish for his countrymen's dislike of system and method is notorious, and few literary forms are better suited to the Spaniard's genius than the sketch or the short story. Spanish literature abounds in little masterpieces based on romantic episodes and popular traditions such as Pereda's La leva and Alarcón's El sombrero de tres picos. A study of that literature reveals that narrative is usually episodic and dependent on character rather than on incident, or on incident as revelatory of character. This is evident in the Golden Age in the Quijote and in Lazarillo de Tormes and to-day in the works of Baroja and Azorín. Pereda, therefore, was conforming unconsciously to a genuine Spanish literary tradition. The situations in his novels are often dramatic, but they serve rather to illustrate the character of the actors than to build up a

(1) Cf. Boris de Tannenberg, op. cit., p. 236: "Pereda ne devint pas maître, du premier coup, de la forme du roman, et on sentira toujours chez lui, même dans ses livres les mieux venus, quelque gaucherie d'exécution. Dans le romancier on retrouvera le costumbrista."

story. It is the characters and the atmosphere that we remember and it is as a creator of characters and as a painter of atmosphere that we must judge Pereda.

When Menéndez y Pelayo unveiled in 1911 the monument to Pereda which dominates the sea at Santander he spoke in these words of the novelist's characters in a voice which was broken with emotion: "Sotileza y Muergo, el Padre Apolinar, los marineros de La Leva y de El fin de una raza, don Gonzalo y Patricio Rigüelta, el hidalgo don Lope sobre su potro de piedra, el espolique Macabeo, el Lebrato y el Josco, el supersticioso avaro de La Puchera y el visionario descubridor del tesoro, no son leves sombras que desaparecen con alado pie por las puertas del sueño, sino figuras de tal pujanza y relieve, tan sólidamente construídas como si las hubiese tocado el pincel de Velásquez."⁽¹⁾ The illustrious montañés was not exaggerating. Pereda's characters are complete and living, so alive that the plot is usually of secondary importance only. Sotileza has an absorbing plot, but it is not the tale that one remembers, it is Sotileza and a handful of fisherfolk. La Puchera

(1) Quoted by Montero, op. cit., p. 418.

has a weak, melodramatic plot, but the delicious conversation of Juan Pedro and Pedro Juan causes the novel to live. Pereda like Cervantes was blessed in a supreme degree with the faculty of giving his characters an independent existence and a living soul. (1)

We have already had occasion to point out that with the striking exception of *Sotileza*, Pereda was not so successful in his feminine creations. (2) His fishwives and his country lasses convince, but his heroines of higher rank, his *Aguedas* and his *Litas*, do not linger long in the memory. Nor has he *Palacio Valdés's* almost English gift of painting a tender love scene. His Castilian intensity of feeling and the essentially masculine qualities of his

(1) Cf. A. González-Blanco, *op. cit.*, p. 312: "La creación de caracteres es lo único que hace al gran novelista; y en esto ha descollado Pereda como ninguno de los novelistas españoles. Tremontorio, D. Valentín, Simón de los Peñascales, etc. son figuras inmortalizadas y eternizadas."

(2) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 318: "Sólo le faltó a Pereda alguna más ternura, mayor comprensión de la sensibilidad femenina; mas no extrañaremos que sea seco y flaquee en los diálogos de amor quien, como castellano viejo que siente mucho y calla todo por ser enemigo de almíbares y ternezas derretidas, rehuía toda conversación amorosa y le enfadaba, según confesión de Menéndez y Pelayo, habérselas con heroínas. Era su temple de sobra recio para amamarse ni en fantasía..."

art may perhaps explain his inability or his reluctance to analyse the feminine heart. Pereda was, however, wholly successful in his portrayal of love scenes between simple country or seafaring people; we long remember the simple sincerity of Cleto's confession of love to Sotileza, nor can we ever forget the humour and the rugged beauty of the love scene between el Josco and Pilara.

The essentially democratic spirit of Pereda reveals itself fully in his characters. The real heroes of his books are the peasants of the mountain and the fisherfolk and the raqueros of Santander. It is the voice of the people that speaks in Pereda as it does also in the works of Cervantes and in the novels of Sir Walter Scott. The hidalgos of the Montaña are as democratic as the humbler types. What admirably simple, straightforward men they are! What a wealth of humanity is to be found beneath their rugged exterior! In Peñas Arriba the hidalgo and the priest are merged in the people. Pereda's middle-class or aristocratic types like the marquesa of La Montálvez seem pale and lifeless compared with the living, colourful creations to be found among his humbler types. The lives, the actions and the words of Juan Pedro and Pedro Juan are the very essence of La Puchera; in De tal palo... the

conversation of Macabeo is infinitely more entertaining than the battle of wits between Agueda and Fernando; while, without the little fishergirl, Sotileza, the epic of that name would cease to have a raison d'être. Thus the vitally human spirit of Cervantes is present in Pereda in a supreme degree.

Of the humour and satire in Pereda, Pérez Galdós has written thus: "Eso sí, hombre que tenga en grado más alto la facultad de ver lo cómico y todos los grados de la ridiculez de sus semejantes, no creo que exista, ni aun que haya existido. Posee perspicacia genial, vista milagrosa y olfato sutil, que le permiten penetrar hasta donde no puede hacerlo la grosera observación de la mayoría. Y luego que descubre la pobre víctima, allí donde menos se pensaba, la coge en la poderosa zarpa, juega con ella cruel, la destroza, la arroja al fin hecha pedazos."⁽¹⁾ This criticism is exact. Pereda's satire can be merciless; yet it is equally true to say that we can usually detect in his work a certain sympathy between the author and his characters, no matter how great their frailties may be.

(1) Vide prologue cit., pp. 13-14.

It is this sympathy which links him to the great Spanish humorists of the Middle Ages and of the seventeenth century. In Pereda, as in the Archpriest of Hita and in Cervantes, there is ever shining through his work a geniality of outlook, a deep humanity, which enables him to condone human failings and to sympathize with and rejoice in all the creations of his fancy.

Pereda's keen satirical eye is not that of an external observer, but of one who has the spirit of the Montaña in the very marrow of his bones, and thus he was able to reproduce the atmosphere of his native region with perfect accuracy. He loved the peasants and the soil and he describes them from within, not from without. As we have had occasion to observe, the details of his landscapes are not always exact, but he never fails to give expression to the soul of the Montaña. It was this aspect of Pereda's art which Menéndez y Pelayo appreciated so much. He regarded Pereda as the poet of Cantabria.⁽¹⁾ No feature of the Montaña has escaped the novelist's eye as González-Blanco has noted: "La Montaña toda está plasmada con in-

(1) Cf. prologue cit., p. LXX: "Por todo eso amo yo a Pereda; pero le amo además como escritor de raza, como el poeta más original que el Norte de España ha producido."

delebles caracteres en las obras de Pereda. Los puebluchos ruines, como el que forma el escenario de La Puchera; las aldeúcas, como la de El sabor de la tierra; las villas, a las que profesaba Pereda execración infinita, como la de Los Hombres de Pro; la parte vieja de Santander, como en Sotileza; todos los aspectos de aquella región cantábrica, de vegetación a la vez bravía y mimosa, con riscos ásperos y con prados de terciopelo, revive en las obras del inmortal señor de Polanco."⁽¹⁾ The few times that the novelist was imprudent enough to cross the limits of the Montaña and describe types and places which he only knew superficially, his work is wanting in something, the genial inspiration is only partially present. Thus, La Montálvez was for this reason a comparative failure. Pedro Sánchez was more successful.

In the novels of Pereda the appreciation of mountains and sea receives its sublimest expression and rarely in literature have their grandeur and majesty been more intimately described. Unlike Pardo Bazán who regarded Nature objectively like the naturalists, Pereda and Nature live in

(1) Vide op. cit., p. 317.

constant, perfect communion. The varying aspects of the landscape affect the mood of his characters (we remember Marcelo's journey to Tudanca and his first impressions of the landscape) and his language abounds in images inspired by Nature. In the novels of his first period, Los Hombres de Pro, El buey suelto, Don Gonzalo... and De tal palo..., the didactic predominates over the regional element; but the landscapes are the best of these novels. They live on while the theses have ceased to interest. It is interesting to observe the increasing importance of the rôle played by Nature in Pereda's work. It receives more prominence in Don Gonzalo... and in De tal palo... than in the previous works. In El Sabor de la Tierruca Nature is the chief theme; while Peñas Arriba, where the characters are subordinated to the natural scene, may be considered as the culminating point of Pereda's interest in Nature.

It is important to note, however, that Pereda was not interested in Nature to the exclusion of mankind. The human element is always present in the novelist's work. Pereda's great merit as a painter of landscape is that he has caused the Montaña to enter familiarly into the life of everyday and to become human. He has instilled into the

landscape the energy and dynamism with which he invests his characters.⁽¹⁾ Trees, for example, in the work of Fernán Caballero, are usually depicted as calm and dignified, whereas Pereda delights in painting them as writhing and groaning in the storm.⁽²⁾ He has a description of a mountain oak in El Sabor de la Tierruca which might well be that of a human being: "Ordinariamente la cajiga (roble) es el personaje bravío de la selva montañesa, indómito y desaliñado. ...Crece con mucha lentitud; y como si la inacción le aburriera, estira y retuerce los brazos, bosteza y se esparranca, y llega a viejo dislocado y con jorobas; y entonces se echa el ropaje a un lado y deja el otro medio desnudo. Jamás se acicala ni se peina; y sólo se muda el vestido viejo, cuando la primavera se lo arranca en harapos para adornarle con el nuevo."⁽³⁾ The trees in Pereda's works bear a striking resemblance to his ragged old hidalgos and we may aptly recall here the passage in Peñas Arriba, already quoted,⁽⁴⁾ where don Lope and the señor de Provedaño,

(1) Cf. Gerda Outzen, El dinamismo en la obra de Pereda, trans., 1936.

(2) Cf. César Barja, Libros y autores modernos (Madrid, 1925), p. 365: "toda esta naturaleza parece animada por fuerzas salvajes; es una epopeya de gigantes."

(3) Vide op. cit., pp. 21-22.

(4) Vide supra, p. 254.

embracing each other, are graphically compared to two mountain oaks driven together by the force of a storm. As is to be expected too, there are numerous images suggested by the sea. Don Juan de Prezanes, for instance, after one of his habitual fits of irascibility, is compared to a quiet sea after a storm: "Quien haya visto el mar, después de un temporal deshecho, tenderse en la playa, rumoroso y ondulante, lamiendo manso lo que antes azotó iracundo, y trocados en arrullos sus bramidos, tendrá una idea del estado de don Juan de Prezanes, horas después de la borrasca que el lector presenció."⁽¹⁾ We shall recall, finally, the magnificent storm scene which forms the climax to Sotileza where the frenzied elements are in perfect harmony with the agitated minds of the principal actors in the scene. Speaking of Sotileza Boris de Tannenberg wrote: "la mer est elle-même un personnage du drame, toujours présente comme le chœur antique, tantôt souriante et calme, tantôt déchaînée et furieuse, et communiquant à tout ce qui l'approche quelque chose de sa majesté."⁽²⁾ There is a

(1) Vide El Sabor de la Tierruca, p. 113.

(2) Vide op. cit., p. 255.

tendency at the present day to regard Pereda's lengthy descriptions of natural scenery as tedious. This we have difficulty in understanding, as his landscapes are always imbued with life and are intimately bound up with his characters.⁽¹⁾

Menéndez y Pelayo, better than anyone, has defined the qualities of Pereda's language. "Y fué también incontestable maestro de la lengua, tan distante del arcaísmo como del neologismo, bebida en la fuente popular más que en los libros, admirable en la descripción y en el diálogo, rico de sabrosos elementos dialectales: lengua de mil inflexiones diversas, unas veces acre y salina como las emanaciones de la resaca, otras alborozada y jubilosa como los prados después de la lluvia."⁽²⁾ We may say that no modern writer is more thoroughly Castilian than Pereda. A book like Peñas Arriba is a perfect treasure-trove of proverbs and pithy sayings of the type to be found in the Quijote. His literary temperament naturally made him turn towards the writers of the Golden Age; yet, as Menéndez y Pelayo suggests, there is no deliberate imitation in his

(1) An important study of the rôle played by the landscape in the work of Pereda is that of Kurt Siebert, Die Naturschilderungen in Peredas Romanen (Hamburg, 1932).

(2) Discurso cit. Vide Montero, op. cit., pp. 418-19.

work, no artificial straining after a certain effect.⁽¹⁾ Compare the styles of Ricardo León and Pereda, both of whom are influenced by the writers of the seventeenth century. That of the former, being a deliberate imitation, is somewhat cloying and tedious (and much more deserving of the epithet seco so often applied to Pereda), while that of Pereda has a natural freshness and vigour. It is the spirit of Spain's great classical writers which is present in the work of Pereda, and it is not so much the word which is classical in him as the turn of the phrase, as González-Blanco has pointed out.⁽²⁾ We must note too the admirable sobriety of Pereda's style. There is no extravagant flow of empty, if fine-sounding, words such as is to be found in an Alarcón. Every word tells. It would be hard to find another modern writer whose language bears so unmistakably the imprint of its creator as Pereda's. As Galdós has

(1) Cf. *ibid.* and Montero, *op. cit.*, p. 417: "Todo lo encontré en su propio fondo, hasta los procedimientos de lengua y estilo. Fué clásico sin intención deliberada de serlo y sin proponerse ningún modelo."

(2) Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 314: "No es precisamente la palabra lo que es clásico en Pereda; es la frase."

justly remarked, he is inimitable,⁽¹⁾ and how very few have attempted to translate his works!

Pereda's principal source of inspiration was not books but the common people, and his great merit lies in the ability with which he introduced the popular language into literary style, fusing them together skilfully and artistically into a beautiful harmony. One of the chief difficulties of the novelist in Spain, as we have already had occasion to indicate, had been the rigidity of the literary language. The latter was badly adapted for reproducing the nuances of everyday conversation. The press, on the other hand, apart from some outstanding exceptions, did not attempt to impart a literary flavour into current language. In consequence, there existed a wide gap between written and spoken speech. It fell to Pereda's lot to bridge that gap and he did so in masterly fashion: "Cualquiera hace hablar al vulgo," writes Pérez Galdós, "pero ¡cuán difícil es esto sin incurrir en pedestres bajezas! Hay escritores que al reproducir una

(1) Cf. prologue cit., pp. 7-8: "Es que las obras más perfectas son las que más incitan, por su aparente facilidad, a la imitación. Luego viene, como diploma más alto de su mérito, la inutilidad del esfuerzo de los que quieren igualarlas, y tratándose de aquélla (Blasones y talegas) y otras obras de Pereda, hay que darles a boca llena, y sin género alguno de salvedad, el dictado de desesperantes. Son de privilegio exclusivo, y... ¡ay del infeliz que ponga la mano en ellas! No le quedarán ganas de volverlo a hacer."

conversación de duques, resultan ordinarios: Pereda, haciendo hablar a marineros y campesinos, es siempre castizo, noble y elegante, y tiene atractivos, finuras y matices de estilo que a nada son comparables. Por esto, por sus felicísimos atrevimientos en la pintura de lo natural, es preciso declararle portaestandarte del realismo literario en España."⁽¹⁾

French naturalism influenced to a certain extent the work of Pereda's contemporary, the Condesa de Pardo Bazán, but it never really took root in Spain for the simple reason that it had been forestalled by a much saner Spanish realism. The Spanish genius rejected the rigid determinism of the French school, and even the most naturalistic of the Spanish regional novels have a depth of humanity which is usually absent in their French counterparts. Pereda's realism is of the genuine Spanish variety; it is that of Cervantes and of the authors of the picaresque tales. Yet, as we have already indicated, owing to certain crudities in the Escenas and Trueba's unfortunate insistence upon them, it was his misfortune that critic after critic attempted to

(1) Ibid., pp. 10-11.

affiliate him to the French naturalists. Pereda, who was proud to be known as a realist, has complained bitterly in several of his prologues about this insistence in allying him to the French naturalist school. In the prologue to Sotileza, for example, he writes: "déjese, por Dios, de invocar nombres de extranjis para ver a qué obras y de quién de ellos y por dónde arrima mejor la estructura de la mía."⁽¹⁾ When Pereda began to contribute his sketches of local customs to La Abeja Montañesa (about 1859), he had not even heard of Flaubert, and Zola probably had not yet written a single line at that time. Naturalism did not yet exist as a literary school, for the works of Balzac and Stendhal can hardly be termed naturalist in the real sense of the word. Menéndez y Pelayo, who was always a staunch defender of the genuine Spanish realism of Pereda, wrote with admirable critical judgement: "La verdad es que Pereda, ni entonces ni ahora, hizo otra cosa que seguir los impulsos de su peculiarísima complexión literaria, ni se mostró jamás ansioso de teorías y novedades, ni reconoció nunca otros maestros que la hermosa naturaleza que tenía

(1) Vide op. cit., p. 5.

enfrente, y el estudio de nuestros clásicos, de quienes heredó, sin afectación de arcaísmo, el buen sabor de su prosa, tan castiza y tan serrana."⁽¹⁾ He asserts categorically that it is quite impossible to affiliate Pereda to any literary school: "Pierden el tiempo los que quieren emparentarle con escuelas y autores que apenas conoció más que de nombre. En rigor no tuvo maestros ni ha dejado verdaderos discípulos. Lo que había de característico en su estructura mental era in- comunicable, y él mismo no hubiera podido definirlo."⁽²⁾

González-Blanco asserts that the realism of Pereda is fragmentary in that his strong religious sense prevents him from reproducing reality in its vilest aspects, except when he transports the scene of his novels to Madrid. "Pudiera decirse que el realismo de Pereda es un realismo fragmentario. Ve toda la realidad, pero no la reproduce toda. Separa ciertas partes que a él le parecen dañadas, como un cirujano que va a practicar una operación. Ve el mundo claro y desnudo, pero no quiere reproducirlo en toda

(1) Vide prologue cit., p. XXVI.

(2) Discurso cit., and Montero, op. cit., p. 417.

su ofensiva claridad y desnudez. En esto se distingue de los naturalistas franceses que no retroceden ante nada. Pereda no fué naturalista, por timidez literaria, procedente de su cortedad religiosa. Creyó que no se podía ser católico ortodoxo y reproducir en obras del Arte todas las fealdades visibles del mundo fenomenal."⁽¹⁾ We feel emphatically that this criticism is misguided. Pereda was always proud to be known as a realist,⁽²⁾ and in the Escenas there are crudities and scatological details of a type which had been largely absent from Spanish literature since the seventeenth century and which can vie with anything similar in the work of the French naturalists. But - and this is the essential difference between Pereda's realism and French naturalism - Pereda's work has always that grave religious character which is so characteristic of the Spaniard and of the Castilian in particular.⁽³⁾ The

(1) Vide op. cit., p. 294.

(2) Cf. El Sabor de la Tierruca, p. 94: "tengo para mí que, en esto de pintar con verdad, y, por ende, con arte, no debe omitirse detalle que no huelgue."

(3) Cf. Boris de Tannenbergh, op. cit., p. 232: "Et ce réalisme, qu'illumine toujours un rayon d'idéal, respecte l'homme, en le peignant même dans ses vulgarités ou ses laideurs."

author of Sotileza does not describe the sordid in a cruel, objective manner. On the contrary he seeks a soul in everything, in his fishermen, in his peasants, even in the bestial Muergo. Menéndez y Pelayo wrote: "Es cierto que Pereda no rehuye jamás la expresión valiente y pintoresca, por áspera y disonante que en un salón parezca, ni se asusta de la miseria material, ni teme penetrar en la taberna y palpar los andrajos y las llagas; pero basta abrir cualquiera de sus libros para convencerse de que corre por su alma una vena inagotable de pasión fresca, espontánea y humana, y que sabe y siente como pocos todo género de delicadezas morales y literarias, y que acierta a encontrar tesoros de poesía hasta en lo que parece más miserable y abyecto."⁽¹⁾ And indeed Pereda's art is always personal, the material picture is always tinged with a glow of humanity. In this intensity of religious feeling Pereda once again proves himself to be a true descendent of Juan Ruiz, Cervantes, Quevedo, Velásquez and Goya.

Unlike his fellowcountryman, Amos de Escalante, for

(1) Vide prologue cit., p. XL.

whom Menéndez y Pelayo had such a high regard,⁽¹⁾ Pereda never essayed the historical novel. He was not concerned with history or old traditions. He goes back but one generation, a lapse of time sufficient to impart an epic flavour to his work. This epic spirit can be detected throughout all Spanish literature, in the primitive epics, in the early chronicles, in the drama of the sixteenth century, in the novel in the seventeenth, in the poetry of the Romantics and in the modern regional novel. It penetrates all the work of Pereda, but we can detect it particularly in the Escenas, in El Sabor de la Tierruca, in Sotileza, in Peñas Arriba and in Pachín González. Galdós and Baroja deal preferably with contemporary political themes; but Pereda has left us a picture, and one on a grand scale, of an age which is no more.

We have spoken of his debt to his immediate predecessors but we must not exaggerate it. Pereda was not really a disciple of Mesonero Romanos, Trueba and Fernán Caballero.

(1) Ibid., p. LXXII: "Amos de Escalante, autor de Costas y Montañas y de Ave Maris Stella; dos libros que pasarán por clásicos cuando los españoles volvamos a aprender el castellano."

As Blanco García has remarked,⁽¹⁾ Pereda was too prone to express his gratitude to writers who did not influence him in any fundamental way. Pereda's only masters, if he had any, were the writers of the Golden Age. But his real inspiration was the people of his native Montaña whose virtues and failings he knew so intimately. He towers above all the other literary figures of his age, including Galdós himself, even if he is inferior to certain of them in particular qualities. "As a novelist," writes Aubrey Bell, "he may be technically inferior to Galdós, in charm inferior to Valera and Azorín; in racy humour less rich than Alarcón, author of The Three-Cornered Hat, as a creator of delightful heroines not to be compared to Palacio Valdés. He is less versatile than Emilia Pardo Bazán, less

(1) Cf. op. cit., p. 510: "El es hijo y educador de sí propio, y el sello de individualidad omnímada que admiramos en sus obras basta para desvanecer cualquiera sospecha en contrario, muy explicable además por las circunstancias en que hizo su primera presentación al público, y por el sentimiento de gratitud que con razón manifiesta a sus encomiadores, bautizándoles con el dictado de maestros."

picturesque than Blasco Ibáñez; in psychology he falls short of Clarín and Baroja; his splendid prose has not the rounded cadence of that of Ricardo León nor the delicate elaboration of that of Valle-Inclán. In one or other respects he may be inferior to those fascinating and excellent writers; but one does not describe a soaring mountain peak by recording in a series of negations that it has no orchards or deep lanes or pots of hydrangea or acres of Parma violets."⁽¹⁾

In Pereda the soul of the Montaña found its sublimest expression, while Spanish literature was enriched and ennobled by the work of an author whose universal humanity and power to create men of real flesh and blood have no equal save in Cervantes. The essence of Pereda's art is to be found in the Escenas, in the regional sections of Los Hombres de Pro, Don Gonzalo... and De tal palo..., in El Sabor de la Tierra, in Sotileza, in the rural part of

(1) Vide Aubrey F. G. Bell, Castilian Literature (Oxford, 1938), p. 233.

La Puchera and in Peñas Arriba; while Sotileza and Peñas Arriba will be counted for all time among the masterpieces of Spanish literature.

CHAPTER XIX.A BRIEF SURVEY OF OTHER MODERN SPANISH
REGIONAL NOVELISTS.

The latter half of the nineteenth century saw the development all over Europe of the regional novel. As the Iberian provinces are more isolated and have more individual feeling and pronounced special characteristics than the provinces of most European countries, the regional novel is most prominent in the Peninsula. The chief cause of the growth of the regional novel was the literary vogue of realism. The realists of the second half of the nineteenth century derived their inspiration from their own day and from the observation and study of things about them, so that if the novelist lived in the country the study of things immediately around him made him ipso facto a regional novelist, and as the Spanish nature has always been intensely realistic, and the Spanish provinces markedly different one from another, the regional novel has flourished and finer specimens of it have been produced in the Peninsula than elsewhere.

Here we can only briefly survey this rich field.

Illustrious contemporaries of Pereda whose work is wholly or partially regional in character were Alarcón, Valera, Pardo Bazán, Palacio Valdés and Clarín. The first two of these were Andalusians and their work is full of the malicious wit and delicate charm of Andalucía.

Pedro Antonio de Alarcón⁽¹⁾ was born at Guadix in the most Moorish part of the Peninsula and was one of the leading novelists of the moderately realistic period from about 1855 to 1880. This period intervened between the romantic movement brought from Europe and the naturalistic craze introduced from France. Alarcón is usually termed a realist - in the Spanish sense of the word (for he regarded French naturalism as a detestable thing) - but it seems to us that his work, which depicts the colourful, romantic aspect of Andalusian life, reveals him as more of a romantic than a realist. In his books the Andalusian landscape is described in smooth, fluent language; but his descriptions, though outwardly brilliant, lack detail and intimate understanding. Like the work of the typical romantics they are all for effect and are in reality empty

(1) 1833-1891

and hollow. In this respect Alarcón may be said to be typical of writers of southern temperament who as a rule are more distinguished for a facile flow of rhetoric than for depth of thought.

Alarcón's masterpiece is El sombrero de tres picos.⁽¹⁾ This little tale, based on a popular local legend, is thoroughly Spanish and Andalusian on account of its intense dramatic force, its exuberant gaiety and its realism. One must not seek delicate character studies in El sombrero de tres picos; but it abounds in interesting dramatic situations of the type to be found in the comedia de capa y espada of the Golden Age. The descriptions are slight, but there is sufficient realistic detail to give the reader a vivid picture of Andalusian life and manners. This colourful cuadro suggests both the picaresque novels and Goya's well-known picnic scenes such as La Vendimia. Thoroughly national too is the author's moral code as revealed in El sombrero... where chastity is extolled and vice ridiculed. Other works illustrative of the regionalism

(1) 1874.

of Alarcón are his Viajes por España,⁽¹⁾ El niño de la bola⁽²⁾ and La pródiga.⁽³⁾ The last two works illustrate Alarcón's great defect, his weakness in character construction. It escapes notice in El sombrero... owing to the other merits of the tale but it is apt to render his longer novels tedious. After the cloying, ampulous style of Alarcón one turns with pleasure to the descriptive passages in Pereda with their strong, well-defined flavour and one realizes anew their permanent literary value.

Aristocratic Juan Valera⁽⁴⁾ is scarcely a regional novelist, yet all his books are fragrant with the subtle charm of Andalucía. Pepita Jiménez⁽⁵⁾ and Doña Luz⁽⁶⁾ are idealistic rather than realistic works. There are no descriptions of scenery or of places, the author being simply concerned with the states of mind of ideal people. There is no vigour, no violent stirring action in these

(1) 1883.

(2) 1880.

(3) 1881.

(4) 1824-1905.

(5) 1874.

(6) 1879.

books. The natural charm of Valera's style clings to all his characters and tends to make them artificial, but the atmosphere of Andalucía in Pepita Jiménez, in Las ilusiones del Doctor Faustino,⁽¹⁾ in Doña Luz and in Juanita la larga⁽²⁾ redeems them and makes them natural.

The plaintive lyricism of Galicia finds expression in the work of the Condesa de Pardo Bazán.⁽³⁾ We have had occasion to mention this writer in her rôle as literary critic, but it was as a novelist that she acquired fame. Born near Coruña, she depicted life in her native Galicia with such success that she is second only to Pereda as a regional novelist. Alike in that both portray their respective regions in an intensely realistic manner, they show a wide divergence in literary treatment, for if, as we have seen, Pereda's realism is subjective, that of Pardo Bazán is objective. In short, the Galician writer introduced French naturalistic methods into Spain. She

(1) 1875.

(2) 1895.

(3) 1851-1921.

spent her childhood and girlhood in Galicia during the time of the liberal revolution; but in the early 'eighties she was in Madrid and Paris soaking herself in the naturalism which was so fashionable at the time.

We have seen how it incensed Pereda to be affiliated to the school of Zola when his realism was none other than that which has always characterized Spanish art at its best. The contrast between Pereda and Pardo Bazán is striking. We may say that doña Emilia stands half-way between Zola and Pereda; but she depicts her native province without any of the semi-scientific labour of the Frenchman. If Pereda views the Montaña from the inside, Pardo Bazán views Galicia from the outside. Her aim is to study life in her native region in an impartial, detached way; to give detailed, objective studies and descriptions of people, places and events as they really are; to show them gloomy, ugly and vicious, if they are so; not to cast over them a glamour of illusion, fantasy and optimism. The novels of Pardo Bazán are photographs which show only the surface of things; the novels of Pereda are portraits which reveal the inner soul.

Yet it would be doing the Galician writer much less

than justice to say that she is only a photographer, nothing more than a naturalistic novelist. Were that so, the illustrious writer would probably be neglected to-day by both critics and readers. Pardo Bazán knew Galicia intimately and her artistic instinct enabled her to convey perfectly the melancholy of that soft, yet wild country which forms the background of her masterpiece, Los Pazos de Ulloa,⁽¹⁾ and which harmonizes superbly with the mournful, tragic atmosphere of the book. The sombre beauty of Galicia, its wild, primitive inhabitants, its indolent, careless society, its political caciquismo, all these elements combine to make of Los Pazos de Ulloa a consummate picture of Galician life and one of the best regional novels of the nineteenth century.

Like Pereda, Pardo Bazán is at her best in her regional work. She is not so successful in her conventional novels of Madrid society like Insolación⁽²⁾ and Morriña⁽³⁾ nor in a thesis novel like La piedra angular⁽⁴⁾ whose subject is

(1) 1886.

(2) 1888.

(3) 1889.

(4) 1891.

capital punishment. In addition to Los Pazos de Ulloa her regional work includes La Madre Naturaleza⁽¹⁾ (a continuation of the former), De mi tierra,⁽²⁾ El tesoro de Gastón⁽³⁾ and Pascual López.⁽⁴⁾ More modern in her outlook than Pereda, she probably commands a wider reading public to-day.

Asturias is well represented by two illustrious exponents of the regional novel, Armando Palacio Valdés and Clarín (Leopoldo Alas). Palacio Valdés⁽⁵⁾ was the doyen of Spanish letters at the time of his death and he is the most widely read and translated of modern Spanish novelists. He has essayed various manners passing from realism in the Spanish vein through French naturalism to idealism. Equally at home in Asturias and in Andalucía most of his novels are set in one or other of these regions. We should hesitate to say, however, that Palacio Valdés is particularly notable as a regional writer; he does not

(1) 1887.

(2) 1888.

(3) 1897.

(4) 1879.

(5) 1853-1938.

stamp his country upon you as do Pereda in Peñas Arriba and Pardo Bazán in Los Pazos de Ulloa. This is owing to the fact that his realism, although of the Spanish type, is considerably diluted. Vitality and lack of balance are dominating characteristics of Spanish literature. These qualities are not to be found in the work of Palacio Valdés. His work shows a moderation and balance and a tendency not to probe below the surface of things which is more French than Spanish. There are present too in his novels a sentimentality and a sense of humour which, although essentially Asturian, are more often associated with England than Spain. These characteristics explain perhaps why Palacio Valdés delights the generality of foreign readers and sometimes disappoints the minority who know Spain and the powerful and colourful local paintings of Pereda and Pardo Bazán.

Among Valdés's works with an Asturian setting are Marta y María,⁽¹⁾ perhaps his masterpiece, La aldea

(1) 1883.

perdida,⁽¹⁾ Sinfonía pastoral,⁽²⁾ and José.⁽³⁾ In La aldea perdida - sweet with the fragrance of the Asturian valleys - the havoc caused by the encroachment into the country of modern industry and its attendant evils is deplored; while in Sinfonía pastoral life in the country and in Madrid are compared and contrasted to the advantage of the former; the plot is extremely slight and merely a pretext for a series of colourful, fragrant eclogues in which all the picturesque aspects of rural life are depicted. José, a novel of life among the Asturian fisherfolk, is one of the finest of the author's works and one of those which is richest in local colour. It was eclipsed in interest at the time of its publication by Pereda's Sotileza which had appeared in the previous year, and it is a commonplace of criticism to compare the two books and indicate aspects of the Asturian novel which probably owe their inspiration to that of the Montaña; for example, in José there is a dispute between seña Isabel and

(1) 1903.

(2) 1931.

(3) 1885.

Teresa which recalls that between Carpia and la Sargueta and their neighbours; in both works a storm forms the climax to the action of the novel and, moreover, the sailors in José's boat, like those in Reñales's one, in Sotileza, promise during the storm to go bare-footed and carrying their oars to hear mass the following day, should God lead them to safety. José is a masterly novel of the sea, at one and the same time of local and universal interest, and if it has not quite the roughness and tang and strong flavour of Sotileza, it is at any rate worthy of comparison with Pereda's masterpiece.

Valdés's most popular novel, La hermana San Sulpicio,⁽¹⁾ is a study of Andalusian life. The cheerful, optimistic tone, the verve and the humour of this world-famous novel captivate the reader from the very first page. One must keep in mind, however, reading the novel, that Valdés merely gives his impressions, and they are at times very superficial ones, of what life is like in Marmolejo and Sevilla. The novel cannot in any sense be described as a profound study of the spirit of the region. Superior from the point of

(1) 1889.

view of character study is the author's second Andalusian novel, Los majos de Cádiz.⁽¹⁾ Like Valera, Palacio Valdés is less successful in drawing the characters of men than in his excellent studies of the feminine character.

The outstanding qualities of Clarín,⁽²⁾ more famous as a literary critic than as a novelist, are characteristically Asturian ones, namely, keen observation, sharp wit and a highly developed power of analysis. These qualities are all conspicuous in La Regenta,⁽³⁾ one of the finest Spanish regional novels and one of the great novels of the nineteenth century. Clarín's art is more akin to the old Spanish realism than to French naturalism; nevertheless, he was influenced to a certain extent by the latter. But he has this advantage over many of the naturalists that, like Paul Bourget, he did not content himself with merely studying the outside of man and things; he penetrated to the inside of things, to the mind of man. The result is that La Regenta is a complete study of the upper social life

(1) 1896.

(2) 1852-1901.

(3) 1884.

of the cathedral town of Oviedo. The book is a long one, of eleven hundred pages, but so accurate is the observation, so pungent the wit, so skilful the analysis that the interest is always sustained.

The main theme of the book is the fortune and destiny of the heroine, La Regenta, who vacillates between the Church, as represented by don Fermín de Pas on one side and the World, as represented by don Alvaro on the other. La Regenta is a beautiful woman, about thirty years of age, the wife of an elderly lawyer who takes her very much for granted. The consequence is that the poor woman, without children or intellectual interests with which to occupy herself, is utterly bored, nor does she find the society of dull, rainy Oviedo stimulating. She has, therefore, to find some escape from boredom and there are but two remedies, religion or a lover. Her vacillation and wavering between the Church and the World, between don Fermín de Pas and don Alvaro last throughout the book and are most skilfully portrayed; in the end, D^a Ana makes up her mind to follow the way of the flesh and she succumbs to don Alvaro.

Don Fermín de Pas must be one of the finest portraits of a priest in all Spanish literature. Tall, stately,

handsome, energetic and virile, a born leader, he is the worldly type of clergyman and yet he is an honour to the Church. A man of strong passions, he falls deeply in love with La Regenta, but ever succeeds in keeping his passions in check and he suffers acutely when she strays back to don Alvaro, the professional Don Juan, who is also minutely studied.

The theme is set against a rich, decorative background of minor characters. There are excellent descriptions of the cathedral chapter with its sly, malicious gossip, of the club with its gambling and of the parties at the local marquis's house. Gossip, gambling and sex mania seem to pervade the entire atmosphere of Oviedo. In writing of sexual obsession Clarín preserves an impassive attitude; yet immorality is never presented as an agreeable thing as is so frequently the case in French novels. On the contrary, the weaknesses of the society which Clarín depicts are lashed with the whip of his scathing satire and sarcasm. With his sharp wit, however, Clarín combines an abundance of humour, a humour which is akin to English humour and which is regarded as a special Asturian characteristic.

The passion and colour of Valencia is revealed in the

work of Vicente Blasco Ibáñez,⁽¹⁾ a novelist who belongs to a later generation than those with whom we have been dealing. If any of Blasco Ibáñez's vast output of work is destined to survive it will assuredly be the Valencian novels which he wrote at the beginning of his literary career. Valencia has nothing of the sternness, the grandeur, and the sobriety of Castile, nor of the melancholy dreaminess of Galicia. Situated half-way between the commercial activity of Catalonia and the indolence of Murcia, its people partake of the qualities of both these regions and in consequence the Levantine is a violent, passionate type, crude, shallow and with a love of the gaudy, of outward pomp. Such are the characteristics of Blasco Ibáñez and of the people whom he paints in regional novels such as Flor de Mayo,⁽²⁾ Arroz y Tartara,⁽³⁾ La Barraca,⁽⁴⁾ Cañas y Barro⁽⁵⁾ and Entre Naranjos.⁽⁶⁾

(1) 1867-1928.

(2) 1895.

(3) 1894.

(4) 1898.

(5) 1902.

(6) 1900.

The influence of Zola is obvious throughout most of Ibáñez's work. Like Zola he crowds his descriptions with long enumerations of ugly things and this lengthy cataloguing of hideous details is apt to try the reader's patience severely. Like Zola also he shows great skill in manipulating broad canvases and he is at his best in his descriptions of noisy, tumultuous crowds. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that there is a close literary affinity between the Spanish and the French writer, for, apart from their common tendency towards naturalism - which was fashionable everywhere in the 'nineties - the two men are entirely different in temperament. Zola is a cold intellectual, whereas Ibáñez is a fiery, impetuous Southerner. As a rule, the Spaniard has not the patience to go about jotting down details in a note-book from which to build up a novel. It is obvious that those of Ibáñez are written hurriedly and impetuously and, in consequence, they are unpolished, powerful and full of life, bubbling over with vitality. The dynamic energy of the man has entered into his books and there is no thought whatever for language or style.

Ibáñez's first novel Arroz y Tartara is a study of the

commercial life of Valencia and it reveals the author in his most naturalistic vein. In it the Valencians appear as a crude, primitive people, intensely passionate and quite unintellectual. Ibáñez wrote for the masses and his work will please popular taste but the more intellectual reader will weary of such simple stories of elementary facts and passions, will demand the character study which one associates with the latter-day novel and which is entirely lacking in Ibáñez. On the other hand, how powerfully impressive are the descriptions with which Arroz y Tartara teems! We do not merely see the market in Valencia but we hear it and smell it! Similarly, in Flor de Mayo, a vivid picture of Valencian fishing life, the fishmarket positively stinks! Cañas y Barro deals with life in the marshes of Albafuera and is again a powerful study of a primitive people. The life of three generations is described: the grandfather who has spent all his life fishing and deplores the invasion of modern, scientific ideas and methods; the father, an upright, industrious man who after thirty years of steady labour has succeeded in turning a watery district into a fertile rice-field; and the son, a classical Spanish type, who abhors work but has bouts of violent,

frenzied activity. He is in his true element when he can take part in the Cuban war and can allow his strong individualism full scope. His affair with a young woman, Neleta, provides the brilliant colouring and the tragic desenlace of which Ibáñez is so fond and which is so typical of the Levantine temperament. In the novels of Ibáñez love is a purely physical passion. Entre Naranjos is more idyllic in tone with its setting of orange-groves. Throughout all his work, regional and sociological, the descriptions are equally powerful, but excess of detail may cause the reader to tire of descriptions of places and scenes with which he is unfamiliar.

Ibáñez was not so successful with his later costumbrista novels placed in settings with which he was not so well-acquainted such as La catedral⁽¹⁾ (Toledo), La bodega⁽²⁾ (Jérez de la Frontera) and La horda⁽³⁾ (Madrid).

With the modernistic writer, Ramón María del Valle-Inclán,⁽⁴⁾ we return again to Galicia. Nothing could be

(1) 1903.

(2) 1905.

(3) 1905.

(4) 1869-1935.

more unlike than the powerful, robust style of Pardo Bazán and the delicate, artificial style of Valle-Inclán. Pardo Bazán is naturalistic and describes Galicia objectively; Valle-Inclán, on the other hand, is a modernist; his writing contains no long, detailed descriptions, his descriptions select and suggest.

He describes the landscape of Galicia, its aristocrats and its peasants in Flor de Santidad⁽¹⁾ and partially in his four Sonatas, particularly in the Sonata de Primavera⁽²⁾ and the Sonata de Otoño.⁽³⁾ His aim is to give the feeling and sensation of the province and its people and with his mannered style he succeeds admirably. In his four Sonatas he describes the sensations made on the nerves by the impact of the four seasons. An aristocrat himself, he describes preferably the life of the aristocrat and the world he depicts is one which is characterized by voluptuous love, gloomy religion and a sense of decline and death. Sonata de Otoño is particularly illustrative of

(1) 1904.

(2) 1904.

(3) 1902.

this with its background of green, dreamy, rainy Galicia. Valle-Inclán regards manner as more important than matter and a superficial, ornamental beauty as the highest of achievements. In the unnatural atmosphere of his novels, the men are well-defined while the women are usually pale and colourless; but both scenes and characters are presented to us through a veil of symbolism.

Azorín (Martínez Ruiz) and Gabriel Miró, both from Valencia, also write in the naturalistic vein. In his descriptive writing, and most of it is descriptive, Azorín⁽¹⁾ gives us luminous vignettes of the Castilian landscape in a highly original, un-Spanish style. The sentences are short, most of the verbs are in the present, relative clauses have been abolished as have comparisons and metaphors. No superfluous words are allowed. The result is that Azorín does succeed in bringing a landscape vividly before one. But everything is fragmentary and disjointed. It is the art of the magic lantern rather than of the cinema. The picture is static. There is no ability to co-ordinate his impressions in Azorín and we learn little

(1) n. 1874.

of the soul of the Castilian people from him. This dilettante delights in painting out-of-the-way Castilian towns where life seems to have stopped three or four centuries ago, but he tends to lay on the gloom and desolation too much in his pictures and the reader is apt to carry away a false impression of Spain. The style of Gabriel Miró⁽¹⁾ is modelled on that of Azorín. Pictorial descriptions of the East Coast are given in light, delicate tones. There is no sonorous pomp, merely an endeavour to give an aesthetic impression of fine, sharp, subtle sensations.

Ricardo León⁽²⁾ is a conservative who believes in the Catholic Church and in sixteenth century Spain. He holds the leading ideas of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to be evil and pernicious, and his writings are dominated by this outlook.

His style too is full of the flavour of old Spain. He has closely studied sixteenth-century authors and the resemblance of his language to that of Cervantes is marked.

(1) 1879-1930.

(2) n. 1877.

It has been criticized as archaic, as having been pieced together artificially. The abundance of phrase, the extravagance of vocabulary tend to degenerate into rhetoric, but his style is saved by the splendour of the sound, the flavour of the speech, and the concrete vividness and picturesqueness of the expression.

A native of Málaga, one of his first works, Los Centauros,⁽¹⁾ has its setting there. It is a modern picaresque novel, where a Christian life of charity is set up against the pagan life of selfishness and debauchery. He is not so convincing perhaps in Casta de Hidalgos⁽²⁾ whose background is the Montaña and whose theme is the contrast and the struggle between the old and the new, the struggle taking place in the mind of a hidalgo of ancient descent. León wrote this novel under the shadow of Pereda and Peñas Arriba and he could not hope to approach the master on his own soil. León's sympathies are those of Pereda, but he was not part of the Montaña as was the author of Peñas Arriba.

(1) 1912.

(2) 1908.

León is not a notable realist; his descriptions of Málaga are not remarkable, they are not detailed but keep to the general. His is a splendour of sound more than of sight, and he has a far finer acoustic sense than a visual one.

The vigour of the Basque country is firmly imprinted in the work of two illustrious members of the Generation of 1898, Miguel de Unamuno and Pío Baroja. The descriptions of landscape in Unamuno⁽¹⁾ are very powerful. In his quest for Truth, he wanders preferably to high places, to rocky wildernesses and bare, empty deserts, always animating the landscape with his own sturdy, powerful spirit. He sympathizes intensely with twisted and gnarled, grey trees, such as the olive, and with contorted rocks. He feels that they, like man, are struggling for life on their rocky soil. Unamuno succeeds in presenting land and people as one great organic growth.

Baroja⁽²⁾ has the trenchant directness and the energy of the typical Basque, and he captivates us by these qual-

(1) 1864-1937.

(2) n. 1872.

ities despite his style. He detests empty rhetoric, saying what he has to say with emphasis and compelling attention by his sober realism. There are no elaborate plots in Baroja's books, but they are packed with plain, little descriptions of types and places which he has seen during his wanderings through the Basque country and Castile. Every page of his work breathes bitter disillusion and he chooses the stern and the gloomy in preference to the smiling and the gay.

Two of the most eminent contemporary regional writers are also from the North of Spain, Ramón Pérez de Ayala and Concha Espina. Ayala,⁽¹⁾ a native of Oviedo and a well-informed, travelled man, is one of the leading writers of the day. Difficult to define in a few words, he has, in addition to the vivid Peredan realism and the almost English humour of the Asturian, the post-naturalistic manner of describing things in short, broken, impressionistic sketches and with a taste for introspective analysis which suggests Clarín. His intellectualized art finds expression in a strong, convincing style and it is softened by his devotion

(1) n. 1881.

to his native region of Asturias. Ayala's outstanding qualities can be studied in Belarmino y Apolonio⁽¹⁾ which gives a vivid impression of life in Oviedo.

Concha Espina,⁽²⁾ who was born in Santander, represents a rejuvenation of Pereda's art. Her work is regional but it is also psychological and modernistic. The landscape is an organic part of her books, and no one blends better states of mind and appearance of landscape. She makes them act and react upon one another. La esfinge maragata⁽³⁾ deals with the sad life of the women of Castile while La rosa de los vientos⁽⁴⁾ describes the life of an Asturian middle-class family. Concha Espina has the vigour and shrewdness of the Asturian combined with the lyric qualities of the Galician and La rosa de los vientos is an acute analysis, written in the first person, of the soul of a sensitive, civilized girl. She has Marcel Proust's gift of calling up the impressions and feelings of childhood.

(1) 1921.

(2) n. 1877.

(3) 1913.

(4) 1915.

Hanging over this book there is an air of mysterious, impending calamity, reminiscent of Valle-Inclán. There is, however, no unpleasantness in the aesthetic sensibility of Concha Espina. Deep feeling and pathos and an almost picaresque wit are admirably blended in her work.

Recent Galician regional novelists include Pérez Lugín, Wenceslao Fernández Flórez, Francisco Cambo and Jaime Solá. Pérez Lugín⁽¹⁾ acquired celebrity principally owing to one book La casa de la Troya.⁽²⁾ Its merits are the charm of the heroine and the sweetness of the love passages. The descriptions are pleasant but lacking in vividness. Fernández Flórez is a promising literary figure. A sarcastic, cynical writer, in Volvoreta⁽³⁾ he has given able expression to Galicia, depicting the greyness and melancholy of the land.

Such are, in brief outline, the principal exponents of a literary form of which Pereda is the acknowledged master. Of the future it is difficult to speak, for if when Pereda

(1) 1870-1926.

(2) 1915.

(3) 1917.

was writing he warned the reader that he would not easily find types like tío Juan de la Llosa and the mayorazgo Seturas, such rapid inroads was el espíritu moderno making into the Montaña, with how much more truth can we say that of Spain to-day! In the last thirty years the European spirit has penetrated to the most out-of-the-way parts, levelling distinctions and threatening to rob the regions of their local character, producing the monotony of a uniform civilization. And now the fire of war is ravaging the length and breadth of the Peninsula, destroying both the city and the village, as if to ensure that not only the spirit but the very face of the old Spain shall go.

However, Spain's mountains are high and her gorges are deep, and neither railways nor war are likely to succeed in effacing the well-defined and sharply divergent character of her various regions. The probability is that in the literature of the future, the regional element, if less pronounced, will nevertheless continue to be an important factor.

A P P E N D I C E S.

(I.)

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE WORKS OFJOSÉ MARÍA DE PEREDA.

Escenas Montañesas	1864.
Tipos y Paisajes	1871.
Bocetos al temple...	1876.
Tipos Trashumantes	1877.
El Buey Suelto	1878.
Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera	1879.
De tal palo, tal astilla	1880.
Esbozos y Rasguños	1881.
El Sabor de la Tierrauca	1882.
Pedro Sánchez...	1883.
Sotileza	1885.
La Montálvez	1888.
La Puchera	1889.
Nubes de Estío	1891.
Al primer vuelo	1891.
Peñas Arriba	1895.
Pachín González	1896.

(II.)

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