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The position of Echegaray in Spanish drama

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THE POSITION OF ECHEGARAY IN SPANISH DRAMA

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THE POSITION OF ECHEGARAY IN SPANISH DRAMA.

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THE POSITION OF ECHEGARAY IN SPANISH DRAMA.

Versatility is what first attracts us to Jose' Echegaray. The author of "El Gran Galeoto" was also Spain's greatest mathematician, and a statesman of renown--a Spanish Beaumarchais. That a man who had devoted his life to the study of mathematics and engineering, and to instructing the youth in these branches, should after he is forty write a play presented throughout Europe and finding its way to New York and Boston in 1900; and should subsequently write sixty plays, all actable, and many marked successes, at once stirs the imagination. What is the source of his genius or inspiration? We hear that he came under the influence of Ibsen; but that can not explain it to our complete satisfaction.

Consulting the authorities we are baffled. Fitzmaurice-Kelly undisputed in matters Spanish dismisses Echegaray as delightfully middle class, "His appreciation by middle class audiences speaks for itself". Were he writing to-day--he might style Echegaray a Potterite. We are unwilling to accept this summary dismissal when we recall Molière's famous dictum: "I accept easily enough the decisions of the multitude, and I hold it as difficult to assail a work which the public approves as to defend one which it condemns".

If we seek Spanish sources for illumination we fail to find unanimity. Apparently the theatres overflowed, and audiences were enthusiastic as were the papers and the reviewers on

the morning after, but in the midst of the popular acclaim those who set themselves up as thinkers were divided and felt that the popularity, the whole hearted enthusiasm should be permeated with more critical judgment.

Manuel Bueno presents the conflicting estimates thus in his introduction to Echegaray in "Teatro Español Contemporaneo":

"The name of Echegaray is waved aloft by some like a banner of glory, by others like the spoils of an unwholesome literature which has done much harm."

The old, conservative and reactionary Spain and also a certain portion of the youth who frequented the universities and centers of official culture sustained the first view. A group of independent writers strove to demonstrate the second view.

Bueno though he does not disguise his own attitude indicates Echegaray's popular appeal.

"It is that dramatist who sets himself to talk with the public, who listens for the beats of the popular heart, who sees his work generously remunerated. It is not Valera, nor Galdós, nor Palacio Valdés, nor Valle Inclan nor Baroja who quickens the sensibilities of the masses, who fixes the aesthetic tastes of the public, or influences its customs: it is Echegaray."

But he can not refrain from adding:

"We do not owe Echegaray an emotion, he has not revealed to us an interesting aspect of the life of the spirit; he has not dissipated a single one of our doubts on the destiny of humanity, nor brought a trace of calm to our troubled souls.

"In vain we recall the remembrance of our readings, in vain we wish to review the vision of our spiritual pleasures. Echegaray does not even appear.

"In the garden of our souls Echegaray has not sown a single flower.

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"When we think of his theatre there surges before our eyes a tumult of hysterical women and of epileptic gentlemen who express themselves in empty and sonorous verse." We may style him the Edgar Lee Masters of Spain in this respect.

"Yet no one dares to deny to Señor Echegaray a vigorous talent and a more than fertile genius in dramatic fables, the gift of shaking our sensibilities rudely."

But a man who has moved two generations in the theatre must have some hidden power which Bueno has not sensed. This strength or ability to arouse such keen feeling of approval or disapproval is indicated by José Yxart writing in "El Arte Escénico de España".

"Echegaray is admired by some with frenzy and opposed by others with fury."

It is evident then that his critics are too partisan to be taken as authorities. It is necessary to consider the events of his busy life, his dramatic creations, and his theories of drama as revealed in his autobiography, for these sources give more concerning the man and the influences which shaped him as a dramatist.

Jose' Echegaray was born in Madrid on April 4, 1833, the son of a remarkable Greek scholar and professor of botany. His father was a self-made man who had left his family at the age of fifteen, because they insisted on making him a priest, and had unaided earned his degree in medicine and surgery. José had the usual training of the Spanish youth at the institute where he prepared for the University of Murcia. On returning to Madrid he went to the School for Engineers and became a distinguished engineer. At twenty-five years of age he was professor at the School of Roads and Bridges of his natal city.

In 1865 he published "Las Problemas de Geometria Analitica", followed by a treatise on "Physics and the Unity of Material Forces" and "Modern Theories in Physics". Soon in 1866 the Academy of Sciences gave his a position and especially deigned to recognize him as the leading mathematician of Spain. He remained a professor of Mathematical Physics in the Central University of Madrid until his death.

However, politics offering as much interest to his activity this savant was elected deputy to the Cortes in 1869 and was not long in taking divers government offices. He had talent as a statesman and was a brilliant orator. His speech in favor of religious freedom procured for him the portfolio of Public Works and Commerce in the Cabinet. Under Amadeus of Savoy he was made Minister of Public Works and of Finance in 1872, but was obliged to abandon this post when the Republic was proclaimed in April, 1873 and retired to Paris. He was very promptly recalled, under the Bourbons and became Minister of Finance.

While holding this office in 1874 he entered without hesitation into the dramatic lists. Under the quickly pierced veil

of a pseudonym--"Jorge Hayaseca"--he gave to the Apolo Theatre of Madrid on February 18, 1874 a comedy of one act, and in verse--"El Libro Talonario" which was a success. It was with the huge romantic melodrama "En el puño de la espada" ("With Sword in Hand") that he first made complete conquest of the general public, arousing everywhere what one critic called an "unworthy enthusiasm".

He had been thinking for several years of the theatre; but once he had affronted the public and decidedly affirmed his vocation of dramatic author one saw drama after drama either prose or verse without relaxing, three or even four pieces a year. With an extraordinary enthusiasm and an absolute disregard of public taste, he gave thus to the theatre in thirty-one years, that is, up to the year 1905 when he seems to have made his retreat, sixty dramas, plus an opera taken from one of his own dramas, a new version of a dramatic history of Calderon and three translations of the celebrated work of the Catalan--Angel Guimera'. His last piece written at the age of seventy years is a comedy and not of the least.

He was a member of the Royal Spanish Academy in 1882, and in 1905 gained the Nobel prize for literature. On this occasion Alphonso XIII dubbed him a chevalier of the Fleece of Gold and there was a great public demonstration in his honor at Madrid. His death at the age of eighty-three occurred September 14, 1916.

Echegaray's dramatic creations may be summarized as follows:

Twenty-five dramas in verse of which ten are modern and fifteen historical or set in the past.

Five comedies in verse.

Seven comedies in prose.

The apparent relation of prose and verse, and of modern or historical setting to the success of his plays is not conclusive from a careful examination of his great successes and his mediocre plays, or partial failures.

Of his twenty-three marked successes fourteen are modern, and nine set in the past; thirteen in prose, ten in verse.

Of his thirty fair or partial successes twenty-four are in the present, six set in the past, and the latter are equally divided as to prose or verse.

Apparently he was rather more successful with dramas of contemporary life and problems than with those set in the past. For contemporary drama he showed a slight preference for prose. For romantic plays he invariably chose verse.

It is but natural to inquire as to what makes Echegaray turn to the past for so many themes, and to verse when prose seems to be the vehicle of nineteenth century drama. We must find our explanation in his life-long preparation for his dramatic career. He was not the spontaneous artist, nor the man of a single book, Shakespeare or the Bible. His mind was stored with the riches of the literature of the past of Spain, France and every nation of Europe. He tells us in his autobiography:

"I had read much; almost all the works of Cervantes, including the 'Persiles Y Sigismunda' twice the Quixote and a multitude of classical works from my father's library. With his aid I had translated Virgil and with his aid had translated some of the Greek.

"My readings of ancient and modern poets extended from the Romancero to Zorilla.

"During my residence in Almeria, as the only engineer of the province, I read the 'Iliad' and the "Odyssey', and besides Goethe's 'Faust', the second part inclusive.

"I remember the arguments or plots of the greater part of the dramas that I have seen, and the hundreds and almost I should dare to say of the thousands of novels that I have read."

We can not then be surprised that a man so steeped in the literature and lore of the past should turn so often to the treasury of former ages for his themes. But as we begin to comprehend his extensive reading and absorption of plot and theme we naturally wonder why the muse did not demand recognition years earlier; why Echegaray did not write at least one of his sixty plays before he reached the age of forty; and we have his own words to confirm his belated entrance into the theatrical field.

"I did not make a single verse until I was thirty or forty years of age."

But the dramatic instinct had been dormant all those forty years as he makes plain in his "Recuerdos".

"Recalling ancient memories, the earliest that I meet of all in my existence has to do with the theatre."

Before he was three years old in Madrid, he had had a lasting impression thus sketched:

"I saw before me a little distance away, a railing, farther away a stage and at the back of the stage an actress dressed in black was crossing. Who knows but that first impression may have been able to inspire my attachment for the theatre?"

A few years later, but still in the roseate period of childhood we find the dramatic instinct cfopping out unmistakably, as he delightfully describes his dramatization of the novels he enjoyed reading.

"By a somewhat strange proceeding I converted the novels into actable dramas.

"Then in many parts of Spain the fever for mining was rampant; and there was not a house in which one did not see samples and specimens of the rich ore.

"In my house, as in all, there was a multitude of these specimens; and of these bits of mineral I made the principal personages for my dramatized novels. The rest of the supernumeraries and armies I represented by paper figures of different shapes and colors.

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"By this device I converted my favorite novel which was the 'Numa Pompilio' into the most interesting drama that I have ever seen acted.

"A piece of lead represented Rómulo; and its dark and metallic reflections simbolized to my mind, the darkness and brilliance of the king of Rome.

"A piece of copper ore also represented Numa Pompilio himself, with armor of gold, because I gave all the characters their respective armor, just as was customary in the Middle Ages.

"Hersilia, which it seems to me was the name of the daughter of the king, was symbolized by a group of crystals, and the determined and formidable Leonte by an enormous chunk of cinnabar or gum tree.

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"Whenever there had to be some battle I put the two armies of paper figures face to face with their respective kings and captains, represented by as many other pieces of marble in the manner of Homeric heroes; and made myself a bow of reed, strung with a piece of hemp and many arrows of the same material. I surrounded my plantations with trenches and fired with perfect regularity and scrupulous equity over one or the other position. Almost all the soldiers would fall, the chiefs remained valorous on the battlefield and were surrounded by dead bodies; but at this point I made them dash against each other with my own hands and with such frenzy that whole pieces of the metal armor flew off reduced to dust at the impact of the heroic onset."

This glimpse into his boyhood's pastimes plainly indicates that the dramatic urge was even then demanding expression. Application for years to the pursuit of the exact sciences stifled the poignancy of the impulse, but it was receiving stimulation by constant attendance at the theatre,--merely biding its time. That he had always felt the dramatic instinct is found in his own writings:

"One of the manifestations of my passion for the theatre has been and continues to be the interest with which I have always studied all the characters that I meet in the course of my life.

"I can state that I composed small dramas all my life, almost from the earliest years of my infancy. I mean that I always had an irresistible tendency to combine imaginary happenings or events, with a certain dramatic finality."

It is a relief to us as students of the drama to know that this genius did not burst suddenly into the dramatic world-a proceeding which would undermine completely our faith in Aristotle's Consistency of Character. Still we marvel at the facility and rapidity with which Echegaray writes his dramas in verse. Nor is it sufficient to say that all Spaniards are lyrical and readily compose in verse. There must have been more cultivation and nurture of this inherent gift or the years spent in pursuit of engineering would have killed the first spontaneous lyricism. Echegaray has anticipated our queries, and gives us this incident from his University career regarding his first sally into verse:

"While studying the notes given by a professor in Mineralogy a student noticed two or three lines which could be recited to sound like verse. At once all the versifiers of my year decided, and all to whom the idea was communicated that they must put the entire lesson into verse and that whoever had the luck to be called on must recite in verse. Very soon they had the lesson beautifully rhymed from beginning to end."

We begin to see that the lyrical gift had been stimulated, even though the theme was hardly what we might conceive of as poetical. Surely he who could feel poetry and measured beats in mineralogy would have no hesitation about putting the emotions of the heart into rhyme when the time came for his play making career.

During the long period of preparation filled as it was with play going and play reading slowly certain types, and certain authors were gaining for themselves chief place in our author's favor. Of types the Romantic came to make the greatest appeal; of authors, Calderon.

Yxart in 1891 in "El Arte Escenico en Espana", after seeing a first performance of "El Prologo de un Drama", writes to this effect:

"Hardly does the curtain rise, before the spectator notices the entire effect of the stage. A contemporary of Calderon would believe that nothing had changed since then, save the scenography; a romanticist of the thirties would think himself transplanted to that time; all that is pure theatrical play, copy of copies, combination of stagecraft, without the least intervention of a creative power."

Echegaray's heritage from Calderon is noted also by Manuel Bueno, commenting in this fashion in his work on the Spanish theatre.

"Echegaray is not, as has been supposed either a direct observer of life, nor a philosopher, nor a sociologist of the type which strives to guide us, like Ibsen; he creates a land of promise. He is a poet of unrestrained fantasy, heir of the fertility of Calderon, like him, genial and expressive, and without the discipline which checks his imagination.

"He is a rhetorician who not withstanding his apparent passionate color, idolizes what Frederick Nietzsche called 'the coldness of the romanticists before the table of work'. His affiliation as a poet it is necessary to seek in Calderon. He is like him, ornate, opulent at times, chaotic and always genial."

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Echegaray is a continuer of the Spanish romanticists, rebelling as they did, against submitting rhetoric to facts. The temperament of the race, thoughtful, dreamy, fatalistic, impassioned, and daring moves the whole structure of theatre of Echegaray. It is a theatre which does not lend itself readily to plain and matter of fact prose. It demands verse, the lyric of passion, and the splendor of conception which we notice in Calderon.

Leaving to critics the task of pointing out other general resemblances between Calderon and Echegaray in the matter of style and theme, and searching for the concrete vestiges of Calderon's methods we notice most conspicuously Echegaray's constant employment of involved relationships similar to Calderon's device in "Life is a Dream" in the case of Clotaldo and Rosaura. In Calderon, however, the relationship or recognition of that relationship usually brings about a happy solution; in Echegaray the relationship when revealed often makes the tragedy more intense. Two illustrations will suffice--the old nurse in "O Locura o' Santidad" who turns out to be the mother of Lorenzo when he had imagined himself the son of a wealthy and high born lady; and Walter in "La Muerte en los Labios" who proves to be the father of the hero, Conrado, and the hero's greatest enemy.

Besides his marked similarity to Calderon his critics oftenest point out Echegaray's indebtedness to Ibsen. If one reads no play of his but "El Hijo de Don Juan" and that but once--he might accept easily the general opinion of Ibsen's influence. But only in this play is it shown and a close and faithful examination of this play and Ibsen's "Ghosts" on which "El Hijo de Don Juan" is modeled,

will show more points of contrast than comparison.

Don Juan like Captain Alving also had been a licentious man; he has a son who is a writer and a genius, like Oswald, and who like Oswald becomes insane--Lázaro. Lázaro who was to be married very soon, has to renounce glory, his passionate love, and the idolizing affection of his parents, and ~~dies~~ loses his reason in an access of frenzy clamoring also for the sun. Nothing in "El Hijo de Don Juan" has any relation with the formidable struggle between duty and moral liberty, nothing which even remotely resembles the radical individualism of Ibsen, or brings to mind the question of the divorce of the husband and wife, or any other problem of education and social regeneration as in "Ghosts".

Regina, Mrs. Alving's maid, has disappeared from the Spanish play, although she is remotely recalled in a single scene at the country villa when Paca, an old Andalusian servant, suggests her intimacies in youth with Don Juan and his cronies.

Lázaro is the only one who makes us think of Ibsen, as he does resemble Oswald; but his ideas are not at all Oswald's nor does he seem destined for so great a career as Oswald's. While heredity is the supposedly important resolving force we feel that Lázaro might reach mental weakening anyhow through his line of endeavor--reading and assimilating so many philosophical treatises. In Oswald, heredity is unmistakably the vital factor--we do not for a minute think that it is merely mental strain.

But it is at the final moment that we find a phrase which is directly inspired by Ibsen. "Madre, dame el sol!" ("Mother, give the sun!") In Echegaray's play the connection and

application of this phrase is not so organically planned for as in Ibsen. It means merely, "Give me the unattainable". It could be as easily the moon. In "Ghosts" Oswald is further oppressed as him mental gloom settles upon him by the rain and perpetual dreariness of the Norwegian climate, and when at the end, he expresses his longing--it is for warmth, sympathy, understanding, and the healing of the sun. In a country of perpetual sunshine as is Spain some other phrase would be fully as effective. The passions which are stirred in drama are more appropriate to those countries of the North, than to southern climes.

For theatrical effectiveness when seen on the stage, perhaps Echegaray's play would leave the audience at a higher pitch,--but Ibsen leaves his reader in profound doubt. The depth of gloom and loneliness seems far greater because Mrs. Alving must bear it alone. She has no Don Juan to suffer with her and to watch with her the disintegration of her child.

This is the only play in which we can see Ibsen's influence and it distinctly shown in its treatment/are the essential differences in the men. It indicates what Echegaray is not. As pointed out before, Echegaray is not a moralist nor a sociologist; he presents to us the theatrically effective play--sometimes we feel it is true to life;--often we hope it is not, just as we hope "Main Street" is not in all details a true portrait of American civilization. Sometimes we wish, that like Ibsen, Echegaray were a moralist, but being merely an observer of life and in a sense standing apart he does not feel the

urge to step in and reform his contemporaries. He is the Romanticist par excellence, glad to accept the present, but happier when glorifying the past and never feeling responsibility for the future.

Echegaray lived long enough to be aware of what his critics thought. He did not shut himself in with "six keys" to avoid hearing adverse criticism;—but met with arguments or justifications the chief points of attack made by his reviewers. During his playwriting career when he wrote three or four plays annually, he occasionally found time for critical essays and occasionally for battles with the critics; but he set about the expounding of critical views in detail when he took up the leisurely and delightful occupation of writing his autobiography —"Recuerdos". This work stretches out into three volumes of some four hundred pages each, but repays a perusal when one is in a relaxed and unhurried state of mind. In an easy and informal style he gives in full,—interspersed with comments on his early school experiences, his college days, his first position, political movements, dreams and "pesadillos" that have annoyed him, books he has loved, and plays he has enjoyed,—his theories of dramatic art.

Critics have always assailed the essentially tragic tone of his drama, Edward Bustillo in his review of "Mariana" thus presents the question:

"Is fatality to-day as legitimate a means of action, a resource of strength so new and pure in art as to merit a double

use or employment in a work so magnificently clothed, and in its first half so masterly sketched?"

To answer and refute this and similar criticism of his excessive use of tragedy and to account for his penchant for tragic, he designed the treatment of the tragic in his "Recuerdos".

"Who knows if the sombre tragic effects of my works may be due to the atmosphere in which my youth developed?"

He refers here to the various revolutions and forms of civil strife prevalent in Spain the first half of the Nineteenth Century.

"I was a very small child; but I remember having seen pass in a civil religious function, the funeral carriage, I don't know whether real or symbolic, of those noble victims of the liberal ideal, and of that fratricidal war, whose wounds open time and again, our poor Spain bears on her body."

Later in the book he enlarges on the tragic element, and develops almost a philosophy of the tragic which we should be conversant with before we attempt to appreciate his plays.

"In that infantile epoch of the smile what pleased me was weeping; and there must be for souls, as for light, complementary colors; when we are happy, the weeping of imaginary beings pleases us more than laughter; when we are sad, laughter or smiling is the optical complement, if the expression may be so employed, in the rainbow of aesthetic emotion.

"It is my nature and I can not dominate myself,--I like the dramas which end sadly.

"Nevertheless, I am neither sanguinary nor cruel by nature. Perhaps I err to the other extreme.* * * If the theory of the transmigration of souls is authentic, I must have been, an oyster and one of the most timid of oysters, because I adhere to the rock I am on and look with terror at the open sea which spreads out before me; the rock always seems secure; the sea, always fearful. New experiences come to me and I am glad to receive them; but I need great impetus in order to go in search of them.

"The dramatic tone of my works does not correspond to my manner of being and feeling; and does not agree with the critical judgment that Max Nordau makes of certain literary men. He supposes that certain naturalistic writers are possessed of licentious instincts; that other writers are of sanguinary instincts; but that not having energy or incentive, either to put the vice into execution or to consummate the crime, seek in the novel, and in the drama, something thus as a relief or derivative for their torpid or vicious instincts.

"False, completely false is the pretended law of the celebrated critic.

"I, for example, am in the theatre more sanguinary than anyone; and in real life, I am the most pacific of men.

"The sublime of art is in weeping, in grief, and in death. Because happiness has limits, it is mixed with the prosaic, it hobnobs with the commonplace. In a word: happiness is something finite, and well restricted in its scope; sadness, tears, and

grief presuppose a lost happiness as great; as sublime as one desires.

"A happiness of any kind is a happiness circumscribed and finite, as I said before; grief, through happiness lost or not realized can represent an infinite happiness.

"In any earthly happiness, the boundaries are marked without any vacilation, it is what it is, illusion is impossible; on the contrary, in great sadnesses or sorrows and in great griefs the illusion has distances and horizons which never end.

"The sublime in art is in sadness, in trouble, in tears, in death. Death must alwys be the most sublime moment of life, with its sombre grandeur, with its profound mysteries, with its immense problems, with its unrealized hopes.

"At mid-day with the sky cloudless, we see clearly whatever surrounds us; the objects have their contours, their form and color; however beautiful they may be, they are what they are, and no more.

"On the other hand, looking at the black entrance of the sepulchre, one sees nothing, but one can imagine everything; it is an infinite abyss of shadows; but the human soul protests with tragic despair saying; 'Why must there be an abyss without bottom, of black obscurity, and not above it an infinite abyss of light? What privilege has the blackness over the luminous, so that the blackness has no barriers but extends without limit through space and time; and why are there narrow, petty and cruel barriers for everything which glows or shines, for

all that thinks, and for all that loves?'

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"It is evident, such being my likes, that I returned home more tranquil and satisfied when I left the stage covered with corpses than when I left it with a wedding in progress between two happy lovers."

With this treatment of the tragic, particularly the thought that grief presupposes a lost happiness as great, as sublime as one desires, we can understand the appeal tragedies make to our author. This is the keynote of Echegaray's power in several of his moving tragedies--in simple words--the happiness that might have been--left to the imagination of the individual playgoer or play reader. Mariana might have been so happy with her young lover, Daniel; Lázaro, we are led to suspect, was on the verge of a brilliant career and an ideal marriage. In "El Gran Galeoto" a rising young playwright loses his facility and a husband who seemingly had prospects of a life long happiness loses all at its very beginning.

As a corollary to the tragic Echegaray believes most implicitly in fatality, in the importance and relation of surroundings to the individual--not man superior to environment. At leisure in his "Recuerdos" he comments on heredity and the natural laws which he recognizes when writing plays.

"In the physical world each phenomenon obeys two laws, that of anterior power, that we might call heredity, and that of present force, which we might call the influence of the

surrounding medium or environment.

"We, however, add a third factor, to wit: the volition of the free being illuminated by the idea, and the idea will modify more or less the fatalistic trend. We see that in the life of a man it may modify it notably, and that in the life of a village, or of a race, inspired by noble ideals, may transform it almost completely, giving to the descendents more and more free volition of spirit.

"All this which I have said has no other object than the explanation of my tendencies toward the dramatic genre; my leaning toward the tragic outcomes, the sombre tone which sometimes, though not always dominates my works."

His fatalistic philosophy or his firm belief in an ordered universe is further brought out in an observation in "Recuerdos":

"At times disorder, or at least apparent disorder, is the true order of nature; as well of inanimate nature as of the life which moves and breathes.

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"It is clear that in nature all disorder is apparent, and that the most disorderly incident is subject to law. Even if a bird flies toward the right, and another to the left, there is some motive for their taking the opposite directions."

Other theories relative to the dramatic art our dramaturge sets forth in his "Estudio sobre el realismo". His definition of realism makes us see why realism is foreign to his nature and to his whole conception of art.

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"We understand by realism that method which seeks art in the servile reproduction of loathsome trifles; in the tiny speck left on a white wall by a flying insect; or in the number of nails in a bench, or in the offensive odor of a basket of clothes that is being taken to the nearest laundry, or in whatever other more of less filthy trifle which bespatters the gross of life.

"Art ought neither to lose itself in emptiness simply because it seeks loftiness, nor ought it to wallow in the mud, alone, because that is low and offends the senses or disgusts the sight.

"Science seeks truth, and truth is the internal armor in the background of our existence."

The province of art as Echegaray conceives it, is stated also in this essay on Realism.

"The end of art is solely and exclusively beauty; now created by means of the human faculties; now described by the various descriptive methods, which the exterior world offers us when it paints beauty, description which in a certain sense is creation also. If the matter of art is beauty, where must one seek it? I believe in all places where it exists."

But we can not linger too long on a dramatist's theories. In the final analysis we seek a knowledge of his plays and the manner in which the plays expound, clarify or justify the theories. We must know something of the qualities and features of the plays themselves.

The first characteristic and the one most commonly stressed is that the plays of Echegaray are strictly romantic. They resemble those of Calderon and Victor Hugo. The enthusiasm of the Spaniards for heroic drama has been likened to their passion for bull fighting, and Yxart remarks that there is nothing more profoundly national throughout the peninsula.

Echegaray in referring to his preference for the romantic says of his countrymen:

"The public, and especially the Spanish public, loves life and movement in the theatre more than anything else. Description of character worries them. They do not wish to see figures no matter how well drawn. What they want is to have something happen; to have the figures move; to have life circulating about the stage. For this reason, our public has been eminently romantic and still is."

Echegaray through his worship of Calderon and through his training was always happiest when idealizing the scene and departing from too close an adherence to the facts. Then when the popular demand confirmed his choice of the romantic type, it was but logical to continue writing those plays for which the public clamored.

Among the features of his plays characteristically romantic one has already been treated,--that of involved relationships--a device employed occasionally by Calderon but with noticeable frequency by Echegaray.

Another heritage from Calderon is the conflict between two duties; usually between honor and love, or love and duty. A conflict

of this nature is frequent in the old classical Spanish drama; but with Echegaray it has come to be almost a passion and occurs with greater and greater frequency the longer he writes. These involved reasonings are put into the mouths of the characters, but we do not feel that living and breathing people could so detach themselves from their feelings as to reason to such extreme lengths during the great crises of their lives. Typical of this conflict is Lorenzo's in "O Locura o Santidad" (Madness or Holiness). We can not conceive of a father in real life who could for so-called scruples of conscience let his daughter pine away before his very eyes, when he professed so great a love for her and her happiness, and had the power of making her happy.

We have another illustration of this conflict in Mariana when she gives up her real love, Daniel Montoya, for reasons which we feel are not sufficient, yet which the author explains, and in a sense, justifies at great length. One more illustration may be cited, from "La Muerte en los Labios"--the bedside scene where the characters involved may or may not give the healing fluid to Walter when he reaches the crisis.

Other features peculiar to Echegaray have already received treatment; i.e. his very marked preference for tragic endings and the part that heredity plays in his dramas. This principle is conspicuously present in "El Hijo de Don Juan", but features to a greater or less degree in several other dramas.

If we consider Echegaray's plays alone we miss several characteristics of style which are found only in his non-dramatic works. In the latter two features are conspicuous: prolixity and

humor. One must frequently read pages of what he calls "parentheses" to follow the thread of the narrative. Often one finds illuminating ideas and profound philosophy in these excursions by-the-way; but as often one feels a slight annoyance at having to read several pages before getting back to the main theme. This quality occasionally appears in the unnecessarily long speeches and reasonings of the characters in his plays.

But we can pardon his occasional wanderings from the subject in hand because of his dry humor. He is never tired of introducing humorous incidents and especially if they make him appear in a ridiculous plight. Among such anecdotes is one which might be entitled "The Vanishing Cheese". In this tale he tells of spending a fortnight with a boyhood companion. He had by nature a very delicate appetite, which is rendered more so by the strangeness of his surroundings. At the table his hostess presses upon him vast quantities of all sorts of edibles. He is overcome by the amount and can not eat a morsel. Finally the well intentioned lady gives him a huge piece of cheese. A bright thought comes to him, and during the conversation he secretes the cheese in his pocket. The lady thinks he has eaten it and gives him another. The same drama ensues until at the conclusion of the meal he has all his pockets and even his sleeves bursting with cheese.

Another anecdote which illustrates his humorous gift is the one in which he describes his first trip from Almeria to Malaga, Cadiz and Seville. He takes the trip by boat, unaccompanied. His extreme diffidence and his dislike for asking questions is sketched in the frankest manner, and made even more effective by his description of a fellow traveler infinitely more timid than

himself.

But his most amusing sketch is that describing his ride to Madrid on a humble mule. He had paid the stable keeper for a horse, and thus he pictures the mount that was brought to him:

"There never was such a horse! What it was, was an enormous mule, with numerous harness wounds and a round harness covered with oil spots, because that cursed muleteer used the beast for carrying skins filled with olive oil. It had a leather halter instead of a bridle. I made an energetic decision, and closing my eyes I said:--

'Bring out the mule!!

And he brought out the mule, and I climbed on to that broad, greasy, hard, and disgusting saddle, and we took the high road. I was mounted on the ignoble beast, and he went behind poking the mule with a stick in order to make it go faster, although without success."

Finally the muleteer also mounts and rides behind our fastidious author who tells us:

"I was resigned to drink even to the dregs my cup of bitterness, bitterness which under the circumstances was principally composed of greasy oil. I have never experienced such humiliation. My vanity was never so hurt. * * * * * *

"I was wearing a special uniform cap, a very attractive cap, which was my pride, with the insignia of my Engineering Order in its center, a bridge and an anchor on a field of azure blue, with little buttons on which also was the insignia, with its patent leather straps and gold cord.

"Every few minutes the mule stumbled so that my companion behind was little by little invading my territory and pushing me forward.

"Each time that the broad brim of his dirty, faded hat touched my delicate and clean cap I felt a shudder of repugnance and of indignation throughout my whole body. At last I took off my cap and rode for a long distance bareheaded.

"I believe from that tragi-comic day I began to lose my hair".

Other incidents equally delightful may be found scattered through the pages of his Recuerdos but this paper concerns Echegaray chiefly as the dramatist.

A list of his plays accompanies this essay. It is necessary here to indicate merely those which have had the greatest success and those which are best known outside of Spain.

His first play which, however, was not eminently successful, is "El Libro Talonario". It appeared in 1874. "En el puno de la espada", 1875, was a great and prolonged triumph. This really brought him his recognition as Spain's leading dramatist of the romantic order.

Three years later in '77 came "O Locura o Santidad", which produced a grand effect. This was his first attempt at a prose play. In this drama we find the hero, Lorenzo, in perpetual conflict regarding his duties to his family and to his conscience. We are convinced that his affliction is not holiness. The plot hinges on an involved relationship--the old nurse, Juana, reveals just as she breathes her last in Lorenzo's arms that she is Lorenzo's real mother; that the titled lady whom he had assumed to be his mother had merely adopted him. The play is simple in structure and involves but few characters.

"La Muerte en los labios" is another marked success. It is set in 1553 and deals with the persecutions of the Calvinists. Walter, the Calvinist, oppresses and executes many who differ with him in religious faith. Toward the end of the play the old nurse, Berta, reveals that he is the father of Conrado whom he has long harassed. The stage effects possible in this play are incomparable. We have Walter almost at the portal of another world,--we have an anxious group about him waiting through the night for the crisis. Then at early dawn the hazy light heightens the gloom and anxiety because the watchers know that if he wakes he will pronounce the sentence affecting all in the room. Death waits on his lips. Those people can withhold the precious vial and his life will ebb. They can admister it and he will awake revivified, with death for them on his lips. Yet they give him the healing fluid, and with morning comes the death sentence. But we have the sense of retribution and of pathos even, when Walter attempts to kiss his dead son and realizes he is too guilty even to caress that lifeless form.

The next year after this moving tragedy, 1881, saw Echegaray's most frank and universal success--"El Gran Galeoto"-- a play of three acts in verse. This play has been translated as "The World and his Wife". "El Gran Galeoto" is, as accurately as we can explain it, malicious, gossip, misplaced slander, starting without foundation, but being the cause of many domestic tragedies. Its most malicious result is that it often makes the people involved conscious of guilt where no guilt existed. The play has a theme based on the eternal triangle. A man and his wife, happily mated and just embarking on the most propitious of marital careers, take under their tutelage a young dramatist of great promise, to

whose father they owed much for past services. There is not a trace of jealousy, nor anything but the most innocent of relations among the three until the false suspicions of their neighbors drive the wife and young dramatist into culpable amour. This play has been called worthy of Shakespeare in that it is not a theme peculiar to Spain alone, but is a phase of human nature found in all climes, and in all classes and conditions of men.

The next play to take the theatrical public by storm was a production of 1886--"De Mala Raza". That was a success when first presented and has often been repeated with success.

In 1888 came "El hijo de Hierro y el Hijo de Carne". This is romantic in theme, a work dealing with the period of the Renaissance. As in "La Muerte en los Labios", we have religious dissentions. While this play has had long and notable success, critics assure us that it can not last.

"El Hijo de Don Juan", '92, to which reference has been made, was a failure on the stage in Spain, though it is a play that has been the subject of much controversy and is better known than some of Echegaray's brilliant triumphs.

The year '92 was a year of inspiration for it saw two other plays which were eminently successful; "Sic vos, non nobis" and "Mariana". The latter is typical of Echegaray in all respects; having a tragic ending, involved relationships, and complicated reasonings, with happiness thrown away for a scruple too highly valued.

1895 witnessed another successful tragedy, "Mancha que Limpia". This is indicative in title and theme of the balance or contrast that Echegaray always sought in arrangement and

phrasing. The same year marked the production of still another remarkable conquest,--"El Estigma". That was a success at first and many affirm that it will always be.

Five years later, in 1900, "El Loco Dios" produced another sensation. And in 1905, as a fitting close to his dramatic endeavor came "A Fuerza de Arrastrarse", which received merited applause.

Outside of Spain his best known works are: "Mariana", "El Hijo de Don Juan", and "El Gran Galeoto".

"Mariana" makes general appeal, because she is a type of woman almost unknown in Spain, but more the type we find in other parts of Europe and in America.

"The Son of Don Juan" gains its repute through its similarity to Ibsen's "Ghosts".

"El Gran Galeoto" has been translated into seven languages and played throughout Europe and Latin America. It was produced in this country, in New York, by William Faversham about 1900. It makes appeal through its powerful and tragic study of psychology.

In addition to his own dramas we also have access through Echegaray, to three dramas of Angel Guimera', the Catalan-- "Marie Rose", "Sea and Sky", and "Marta of the Lowlands".

This resume' of his reception by Spanish audiences and his universal appeal in several plays in as authentic as anything the critics can say of him.

To his critics he says:

"The critics are accustomed to accuse me of exaggeration and artificiality; they frequently censure my dramatic combinations for lack of verisimilitude. But my respected censors do not

realize that the greater part of these combinations which they criticize have been taken from real life, at least in essence. I have lived long; I have seen much, and I have stored my memory with numerous incidents and details which I have made use of from time to time as the occasion demanded."

While we may accept this defense of certain dramatic material, we feel that Echegaray has disregarded the law of dramatic probability. All events which may have happened in real life may not seem probable in the theatre.

The effect of his work on the Spanish public is apparent from the list of his popular triumphs. This success is due to his continuance of the romantic type which is more in harmony with the Spanish temperament than with any other in Europe. Spain has, in a sense, been an eddy in the current of European progress, both in material affairs and in literature.

It is not as easy to judge what is the sum total of his effect on Spanish drama as a whole. He stayed the progress of drama by reverting to the Romantic type; while contemporary dramatists were advancing and were not profoundly influenced by him.

But his influence is not negligible; for we feel that Spain has today as his heir and direct successor in popular esteem the famous Jacinto Benavente. Benavente is following closely in the steps of Echegaray and has already exceeded by a score of plays the sixty of his predecessor; and he too has been awarded the Nobel prize. "La Malquerida" of Benavente is, in type, not so essentially different from "El Gran Galeoto". Both excite recognition of the great and elemental truths of human nature; and both show the operation of the universal passions--great love which is never without its corresponding jealousy. Both strike a deep emotional note. Benavente has risen, perhaps,

to greater heights, but he has profited by adhering to the strongest qualities in Echegaray's lasting successes. He has built on foundations laid by his predecessor. How much farther Benavente will advance the Spanish theatre we have yet to learn, but what he has done we must attribute in some measure to principles formulated by Echegaray and to the methods he employed.

We are still too near Echegaray to be more than contemporaries and "criticism of contemporaries is merely conversation". We can, however, accept this tentative estimate of his permanency as given us by Miguel de Toro Gisbert in "Larousse Mensuel":

"Echegaray will remain in the history of Spanish letters as the gifted continuer, in an epoch of transition, even of decadence, perhaps, of the great tradition of the golden age of the nation. And if a part of his productions, too ornate, like that of all the great Spanish dramaturges, falls into a just oblivion, it must be recognized that every time such pieces as "El Gran Galeoto", "Madness or Holiness", and "With Sword in Hand" are revived, the Spanish public, the same throughout the centuries, is taken captive by these verses so beautiful, though frequently a trifle hollow."

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LIST OF ECHEGARAY'S WORKS.

El Libro Talonario	1874	Verse
La Esposa del vengador	1874	Verse
La Ultima Noche	1875	Verse
En el puño de la espada	1875	Verse
Un sol que nace, y un sol que muere	1875	Verse
Como empieza y como acaba	1876	Verse
El gladiator de Ravena	1876	Verse
Ó locura ó santidad	1877	Prose
Iris de paz	1877	Verse
Para tal culpa tal pena	1877	Verse
Lo que no puede decirse	1877	Prose
En el pilar y en la cruz	1878	Verse
Correr en pos de un ideal	1878	Verse
Algunas veces aquí	1878	Prose
Morir por no despertar	1879	Verse
En el seno de la muerte	1879	Prose
Bodas tragicas	1879	Verse
Mar sin orillas	1879	Verse
La Muerte en los labios	1880	Prose
El gran Galeoto	1881	Verse
Haroldo el Normando	1881	Verse
Los dos curiosos impertinentes	1882	Verse
Conflicto entre dos deberes	1882	Verse

Un Milagro en Egipto	1883	Verse
Piensa mal y acertarás	1884	Verse
La peste de Otranto	1884	Verse
Vida alegre y muerte triste	1885	Verse
El bandido Lisandro	1886	Prose
De mala raza	1886	Prose
El conde Lotario	1887	Verse
Dos fanatismos	1887	Prose
La realidad y el delirio	1887	Prose
El hijo de hierro y el hijo de carne	1888	Prose
Lo sublime en lo vulgar	1888	Verse
Manantial que no se agota	1889	Verse
Los rigidos	1889	Prose
Siempre en ridículo	1890	Prose
El prólogo de un drama	1891	Verse
Irene de Otranto	1891	Opera
Un crítico incipiente	1891	Prose
Comedia sin desenlace	1891	Prose
El hijo de Don Juan	1892	Prose
Sic vos, non nobis	1892	Prose
Mariana	1892	Prose
El poder de la impotencia	1893	Prose
A la orilla del war	1893	Prose
La rencorasa	1894	Prose

Mancha que limpia	1895	Prose
El primer acto de un drama	1895	Prose
El estigma	1895	Prose
La cantante Calligera	1896	Prose
Amor salvage	1896	Prose
La calumnia por castigo	1897	Prose
La duda	1898	Prose
El hombre negro	1898	Prose
Silencio de muerte	1898	Prose
El loco Dios	1900	Prose
Malas herencias	1902	Prose
La escalinata de un trono	1903	Verse
La desequilibrada	1903	Prose
A fuerza de arrastrarse	1905	Prose

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Some of Echegaray's plays are still in manuscript form and are not readily accessible in this country. I have read in the original all I could secure. Of the plays I could not obtain, I have read the synopses in De Curzon's "Le Theatre de Jose' Echegaray".

I have read Echegaray's translations of Guimera's

La Pecadora or Daniella

Tierra Baja or Marta of the Lowlands.

In a course under supervision I read thirty Spanish plays comprising representative works of Calderon, Lope de Vega and the modernistas, Galdós, Quintero Hermanos and Silverio Manco. These plays furnished basis for comparison.

Of Benavente I have read:

The Smile of the Mona Lisa

His Widow's Husband

The Bonds of Interest

The Passion Flower.

Other sources are: courses I have taken in European drama, and in Twentieth Century Spanish Literature, and general reading.

The quotations which I have employed are free translations that I have made from the works indicated.

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