

Doña Clarines y Mañana de Sol

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DOÑA CLARINES Y MAÑANA DE SOL
por
SERAFÍN Y JOAQUÍN ÁLVAREZ QUINTERO
Edited with Introduction, Notes and Vocabulary by

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PREFACE

At present writing it seems to be a fact that no Spanish comedy written within the last thirty years, perhaps fifty, and making any pretense to literary worth, is available for use as a text in the United States. With the intention of filling part of the gap, as well as of introducing to students two contemporary Spanish dramatists, very well known in their own country, and very well worth while, I have selected these two short plays of the brothers Álvarez Quintero. While they are not the most important works of these authors, they are probably the best adapted to school use. The many Andalusian forms in most of the Quintero comedies debar them wholly, and in others continental plainness of speech is an obstacle.

Doña Clarines

and

Mañana de sol

are not too difficult, are written in bright and idiomatic Castilian, are entirely fit for class use, and are reprinted without the alteration or omission of a word in the original. They may well be read in the first year of a college course in Spanish, or in the second year of the high school. The editing has not been done with an eye to the needs of absolute beginners.

As no critical writing worth mentioning has yet been directed toward the brothers Quintero, notwithstanding their great popularity in Spain and Italy, the introduction is performed in the nature of pioneer work. I wish to express my very sincere gratitude to the authors of these comedies, who first gave their courteous authorization to reprint, and then extended their generosity so far as to furnish information which would have been wholly inaccessible otherwise. Without their graciously manifested kindness, this book could obviously never have appeared.

Various colleagues have helped in the interpretation of difficult idioms; to all of them I convey my hearty thanks, and in particular to Professor Schevill and Professor Bransby of the University of California.

S.G.M.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,

February, 1915.

INTRODUCTION

Serafín and Joaquín Álvarez Quintero are brothers, and write in collaboration. They are among the most popular and prolific playwrights of the day in Spain. Neither qualification is necessarily flattering, but the comedies of the Quinteros [A] have many permanent beauties which speak well for the taste of the contemporary Spanish audience. Even in their farces they are never vulgar, never coarse, and they are not to be confounded with the many amusers of the crowd in Madrid, the Ramos Carrións, the Vital Azas, the Carlos Arniches, etc. Their work possesses a distinction and color which lift it into the realm of literature.

[Footnote A: Picón and Mariano de Cavia write "los Quinteros", but other Spaniards seem to prefer "los Quintero".]

I

The brothers Quintero have never made public the details of their private life, and no article of importance seems yet to have been published concerning them. From a little semi-serious Autobiografía, originally printed in Alma española (1904), and from various other sources, the following facts have been gleaned:

Don Serafín was born on March 26, 1871, and don Joaquín on Jan. 20, 1873, in Utrera, 20 miles from Seville. To this capital the family moved "when the two boys together measured a yard in height", and there they attended the Instituto. Their dramatic talent appeared at the earliest possible age, and they composed and acted plays in the patio of their own house before any other stage could be provided. Their ages were 16 and 15 when Esgrima y amor, a farce, was produced at the Teatro Cervantes in Seville (Jan. 30, 1888). Their father took them to Madrid in October of the same year, in order to give their talents a broader field. Success did not come at once. For nine years, to provide a livelihood, they held positions in the Treasury department (

Hacienda

). During this period they labored desperately at writing, rising at dawn to get in some hours before the office work began at eight. They founded a weekly paper,

El pobrecito hablador

, which was respected and admired, but was not a financial success. Their writing was done at first over the signature

El diablo cojuelo

. In the

Autobiografía

they speak in feeling terms of the ten years of severe and unrewarded labor which laid the foundation of their later popularity. Before the appearance of

El ojito derecho

, their first hit, they had only three plays produced in Madrid, all very ordinary farces. But they must have been storing up material for future use, for in 1900 they declared [B] that they had 51 plays on hand in manuscript. In 1897 the "entremés"

El ojito derecho

and the one-act comedy

La reja

attracted favorable notice; they were both in the vein which has given them most popularity, namely, the depiction of Andalusian customs. In 1898 a musical comedy,

La buena sombra

, completed the victory, and since that date they have seen produced, between long and short, an average of nearly five plays a year. In 1900

Los galeotes

, a four-act comedy, and their first full-sized piece, was crowned with the approbation of the Spanish Academy, but not until about 1904 do we find the brothers Quintero accepted on a par with Benavente as entitled to rank among the chief figures of modern Spanish literature. In 1907 they were both presented with the cross of Alfonso XII. Don Serafín was elected to the Academy on March 27, 1913. The brothers spend their winters in Madrid, and their summers in the quaint northern town of Fuenterrabía, where they find ideal conditions for composition and rest. [C]

[Footnote B: In a letter to the

Heraldo de Madrid

. See

Ilustración española y americana

, 1900 (II) p. 258.]

[Footnote C: The Teatro Álvarez Quintero, which has recently been founded in Madrid, receives from them only its name; they have neither financial nor managerial connection with it.]

The collaboration of the two brothers has excited wonder in many, for it approximates to mutual thought. It is so intimate that it can hardly be imagined possible in any but two persons who have been accustomed to work and think together from childhood. Their intellectual harmony is so perfect that on one occasion, as a test, the younger composed a

copla

of four lines; the first two were then given to the elder, who completed the stanza with the identical words of his brother. Their method of composition is described by them as a continuous conversation. They plan their plays while walking out of doors, in the morning; thus they discuss characters, outline the plot, division into acts and scenes, and even dialog. When the whole and the details are well in mind, the actual writing is done by don Serafín. He reads the result to his brother as he proceeds, and the latter comments or corrects. Details of style are settled in the same viva voce way, better adapted to the drama than to other forms of composition.

When we look over the whole work of these men, we are struck first by their tremendous productivity. The elder of the brothers is now 44, but it is 27 years since their first play was presented. Up to the latest advices (Jan. 1, 1915), they have had performed 91 dramas, comedies, farces and operettas, called by the various names of

comedias, juguetes cómicos, entremeses, sainetes, pasos de comedia, zarzuelas, and still others. From 1900 to 1914 they averaged

5 estrenos

a year, a record which one knows not whether to commend or to reprove. The conditions of the stage in Spain are such to-day that dramatists are spurred to turn out novelties in order to earn a living. A popular hit may remain on the boards for some time, but after its initial run is over, it is seldom returned to the repertory. But it would be a mistake to ascribe to commercial motives what is a trait of national genius. The race of Lope is not that of Molière, and Spanish literature, in its most characteristic phases, is the work of brilliant improvisers. That exuberance of creation of which Lope de Vega was the perfect exemplar is continued undiminished to-day in Pérez Galdós, Echegaray, Benavente and the Quinteros.

The enormous output of the Quintero brothers includes an equally impressive variety. They have attempted almost every known kind of comedy in prose (never in verse) from the screaming farce (*Las casas de cartón*

,
El nuevo servidor

) to the grand comedy in which there is a strong tragic element (

La casa de García

,
La zagala

). One may very roughly divide the mass into plays short and plays long, or, in Castilian

el género chico

and

el género grande

The short dramatized picture of national customs known as *entremés*

or

sainete

has as continuous and glorious a history as any literary genre in Spain, including as it does the names of Lope de Rueda (16th century), Cervantes, Quiñones de Benavente (17th), Ramón de la Cruz (18th) and Ricardo de la Vega (19th). The Quinteros maintain worthily a tradition in which the great qualities are wit, concision and fidelity to nature, and up to the present writing these short popular sketches represent possibly the greatest perfection of their accomplishment.

Elojito derecho

(1897) is a classic of horse-trading, and only one of an unsurpassable series depicting Andalusian life among the lower classes. The famous

El patio

(1900) draws an enchanting picture of domestic arrangements in a house in Seville. [D]

La buena sombra

,
El flechazo

,
Los chorros del oro

,
Sangre gorda

and very many others, which, like those previously cited, are written in the Andalusian dialect, are thumb-nail sketches caught in the streets and patios of Seville. But, following the lead of Ricardo de

la Vega, the Quinteros have woven a thread of sentiment into their scenes from popular life, and thus given them a relief and truthfulness which the sainetistas of the earlier centuries would have scorned to consider possible.

La pena

,
Elchiquillo

,
Nanita, nana

are masterpieces, pure and simple, of sincere, unexaggerated realism, and one knows not where to turn for a parallel, unless to Dickens, who touched childhood with a hand more loving than any other's.

[Footnote D: The authors define a sainete

as a form restricted to one act, and depicting manners of the lower classes only. Hence

El patio

(in two acts), and the

pasos

mentioned further on, are not

sainetes

, for the characters are not taken from the laboring classes. The term

cuadro de costumbres

would perhaps cover them all.]

It was the Quinteros who started the now declining fashion of "andalucismo" on the stage, but they were also the first to work away from it. The pasos de comedia

are short pieces, but they are differentiated from the

sainete

type by the station of the dramatic personae, who are not of the working class. They speak Castilian, not Andalusian, the scene is laid farther north, and the interest is sought in fine psychology, instead of popular manners.

Mañana de sol

(1905) contains a delicate mingling of philosophy and humor with the faintest suggestion of pathos, and the same qualities appear in

A la luz de la luna

(1908), as fanciful and dainty as one of De Musset's

Proverbs

.

El agua milagrosa

(1908) is a delightful revelation of human nature, and

El último capítulo

(1910) equals it in shrewd psychological observation. Such dramatic pictures as these are a permanent and worthy addition to Spanish literature.

So much cannot always be said for the more ambitious flights of the Quinteros. Many times they have tried comedy on a large scale, and tragic figures are not lacking in their long list of created characters, but their success has not been uniform in the broader field. In it are to be found marks of haste in construction, the inevitable harvest of intellects not allowed to lie fallow, and even of concession to popular applause. When they are content with observation or satire they are supreme, as in the interesting zarzuela

zarzuela

,

El estreno

(1900), a vivid glimpse behind the scenes at a "first night"; and in

El amor en el teatro

(1902) and

El amor en solfa

(1905), which exhibit the love-scene as it is rendered in various types of play and opera. But when the authors grow serious they approach the danger line, for it is then that a tendency to sentimentality shows unpleasantly at times, which in the purely objective studies serves only to cast a glow of poetry. The public, too, has been overcritical with its favorite funmakers whenever they have tried to convince it that their talent is not confined to provoking laughter; their future has been to a certain extent circumscribed by past successes, and they are not granted a fair hearing. So one must set down as unsuccessful attempts at high comedy or drama

La dicha ajena

(1902),

La musa loca

(1905),

La casa de García

(1904), and

La zagala

(1904), the last two with almost tragic endings; perhaps even

Malvaloca

(1912), in spite of its lofty aim and generous teaching.

Los Galeotes

(1900) is too well rounded and solid a play to be included in the same category. In

El amor que pasa

(1904) we are shown the longing for a finer life which may beset sensitive woman-kind in a provincial town.

La escondida senda

(1908) sings the praises of quiet country life;

Doña Clarines

(1909) is a character study of much power and truth.

El genio alegre

(1906), flooded in southern sunshine and perfume, is truly a hymn to the joy of living, and it is the favorite in Spain of all the long plays. A remarkable piece of dramatic technic is

La flor de la vida

(1910), a three-act play in which only two characters take part. The conflict between the lure of the stage and the attraction of the home in a woman's heart was never stated more clearly or more logically left unsolved than in

Pepita Reyes

(1903), a very perfect piece of work. Still, the most finished of all the longer efforts is

Las flores, comedia en tres actos

(1901). The plot is so simple that it will scarcely bear analysis, but the setting is so redolent of flowers and shot through with light, the dialog so restrained and suggestive, the characters so well studied, that one feels in this play the inevitableness of a masterpiece. An artist compared it to a painting of Velázquez, in that the author sketched with the fewest possible strokes an epitome of Andalusian life. Here there is much sentiment, but no sentimentality.

Las flores

was coldly received by both audience and critics at its first performance, but since then the latter, at least, have made ample amends. [E]

[Footnote E:

Las flores

has been highly praised by R. Altamira, J.O. Picón, and other esteemed Spanish writers. Manuel Bueno, by no means partial to the Quinteros, speaks of it as "una de las obras más bellas, intensas y veraces del teatro español contemporáneo".]

The lyric quality predominates in other plays beside
 Las flores
 ;notably in
 La rima eterna
 (1910), which is an expansion and interpretation of a famous
 Rima
 of Bécquer, and a worthy tribute to his memory. The Quinteros have not acquired fame as versifiers,
 perhaps because their extraordinary power of visualizing characters made them dramatists instead, but
 their interest in poets is as obvious as the poetic quality of their thought. Bécquer is the favorite, and
 Campoamor and Luis de León have furnished texts for certain plays, while one,
 Malvaloca
 , is inspired by an Andalusian
 copla
 .

A word as to the language employed by the Quinteros. Southerners themselves, they revel in the
 Andalusian speech forms, and few of their plays do not contain one or two characters who use them. To
 those who love the soft accent of Seville and Cadiz, this will prove no draw-back, but an added charm.
 Yet when one reflects that writings in dialect, even if they are the work of a Goldoni, cannot fail to drop
 soon out of the current of active literary influence, it is much to be regretted that such remarkable
 compositions as
 Las flores
 ,
 El patio
 and the racy
 sainetes
 are doomed to pass quickly from the stage on that account alone.

The dialog of the Quinteros is lively and natural, at times sparkling with wit—they are inveterate punsters—
 , and again charged with rich, quiet humor. Long speeches are rare. Their Castilian is highly idiomatic, but
 not free from Gallicisms and slang. For this reason it has not the value as a pure speech-type that one finds
 in their Andalusian writings.
 According to the latest information, 19 of their plays have been translated into Italian, six into German, two
 into French, one into Dutch and one into Portuguese. It may be hoped that English will not long remain
 conspicuously absent from the list.

III

The drama may be a vehicle for any mental concept: satire, ethics, cynicism, philosophy, realism, poetry,
 social problems, melodrama. Sane optimism and realism suffused with poetry are the inspiring forces of the
 brothers Quintero. They have no thesis to prove, except that life is sweet and worth living; no didactic aim,
 except to show that human nature is still sound in the main. It is a distinct relief to read plays so natural and
 serene, after one has surfeited upon the products of many contemporary continental playwrights, the
 monotony of whose subject-matter is so obvious that not even supreme technical skill can conceal the
 sterility of the authors. The eternal triangle, the threadbare motivation into which true affection never enters
 for a moment, have been ridden to death, and even a French critic is led to comment with resignation upon
 "this completely unmoral world which is almost the only one we are permitted to see upon the stage". [F]
 When literature becomes so far separated from life, it needs to be led back to reality, and the excuse, often
 made, that the average person's life is not an interesting theme for dramatic presentment, argues nothing
 but impotence on the part of the writers. There has never been an age nor a place where average life did not
 contain potential material for a creative writer. The Quinteros have undertaken precisely to present
 the average existence of the bourgeois and lower classes in an interesting way, instead of racking the
 audience with problems that to at least nine people out of ten are no problems at all. Like Dickens, they
 touch the comedies and tragedies of daily life with a poetic light, and the revelation of Spanish character
 reminds us once more of the saying that Spaniards, more than any other European people, resemble

Americans. It was William Dean Howells who said, in writing of one of the later novels of Palacio Valdés, that he found in it "a humanity so like the Anglo-Saxon." He would surely extend the statement to the Quintero comedies.

[Footnote F: J. Ernest-Charles, in
L'Opinion
, Dec. 2, 1911: "Tristan Bernard et Michel Corday nous conduisent une fois de plus dans ce monde complètement amoral qui est presque le seul que l'on soit admis à fréquenter au théâtre."]

In the later plays of the Quinteros one notices an increasing eagerness to impress the beauty of vigorous, right-minded living upon the audience. One must be frank, and say that the most successful plays are those in which the moral is best concealed. They do not always escape the pitfall of bourgeois sentimentality.

In dramatic technic the Quinteros and Jacinto Benavente have introduced in Spain an important change. The drama is the one literary genre in which one looks for action in abundance, for one-piece characters, intrigue, surprise, conflict of passions, climax, then the solution of the knot. Otherwise, of course, the drama is not dramatic. Scribe and Sardou are the arch effectivists, who harrow the spectators' feelings by sheer cleverness or brutality, and so induce him to forget that what he is witnessing is not life. In modern Spain, Echegaray has not disdained the coincidences, duels and other stage effects of this school, combining them with the moral or social problem of Ibsen. Benavente and the Quinteros have sought to discard all factitious devices, and to arouse interest solely by means of natural dialog, suggestive charm, color and accurate characterization. The eternal struggle in art between exact copying of nature and artificial selection and arrangement has swung to the former side, perhaps farther than was ever before seen in the literature of the stage. Plot is always secondary with these writers, and in fact many of their plays could be denominated speaking tableaux of life better than dramas in the conventional sense. The Quinteros themselves define their theory: "El interés subsistirá por sencilla que sea la acción que se forje, siempre que haya un poco de arte en la composición. No estribe el interés en lo que pasará, sino en lo que pasa. El ideal sería que el público, durante la representación de (nuestras) obras, llegara a olvidarse de que se hallaba, en el teatro." (El patio, p. 71.) Intrigue is to be replaced, then, by marvelous rendering of atmosphere and states of character, just as Velázquez rendered planes in *Las meninas*. The personages unfold themselves before us in their natural environment, and we merely observe, like the limping devil, what takes place within their homes.

Perhaps the exclusion of the dramatic has been carried too far,—for the stage has its requirements, and punishes with oblivion those who choose to ignore them. It is true too that artistic selection has not always been duly exercised, and superfluous characters sometimes cumber the stage. Exaggeration may be necessary behind the footlights, as Molière believed, and when deprived of it we feel the lack of something, as a Mexican would miss his chile, or a Hindu his curry. Nevertheless, the change from sensationalism is as restful as a congenial fireside to one who has been fighting with strangers for his daily bread. Lack of action is not in harmony with the great dramatic tradition of Spain, and for that reason the reaction against it may be strong. The fact remains that the school of realism in its true sense, of naturalness, light and color is producing some masterly results at this moment.

IV

Of the plays in the present volume,
Doña Clarines

is not pretentious, but within its limits it is better worked out than is sometimes the case. It is a character study, sketched in broad lines without over-subtlety. In the exceptionally blunt, straightforward and withal womanly figure of the heroine the Quinteros have created an exceptional personage, certainly,

whose striking qualities they have succeeded in reproducing without caricature and with eminent fairness. The person who speaks plain truth at all times and in all places would not be the most agreeable neighbor in the world, perhaps, for few of us can afford to be subjected at every instant to the moral X-ray, and if all human beings were patterned after the protagonist, society, as we know it, could not exist. But the average man leans the other way, duplicity is rampant, and one Clarines in a village is a refreshing acid to cut the prevailing smug concealment of thought. That the straight path is the only safe one is the moral of the play, as it is of
Peer Gynt

As a drama
Doña Clarines
has unusual qualities both for acting and reading. The minor figures are, as always, closely observed; the types are clearly distinguished, and Tata, the old servant, who combines loyalty with forwardness, is wonderfully well rendered.
Doña Clarines
has been translated into Italian by Giulio de Frenzi, under the title
Siora Chiareta
, and there is also an adaptation in the Venetian dialect.

Mañana de sol
is more delicate and subtle. It is one of the dainty sketches in which poetic fancy and sympathetic humor transform figures in themselves trivial and even ridiculous into personifications of enduring passion. By some alchemy of art doña Laura and don Gonzalo, aged, infirm and crochety, are transmuted into symbols of the eternal youth of love. To expand the four-line
dolora
(no. XLIII) of Campoamor into such a gem calls for real creative power. The esteem in which
Mañana de sol
is held on the continent is shown by the fact that it has been translated into French, German and Italian.

DOÑA CLARINES COMEDIA EN DOS ACTOS

Estrenada en el TEATRO LARA el 5 de Noviembre de 1909.

A FRANCISCO BRAVO RUIZ
GRANDE AMIGO DE PERSONAJES EXTRAORDINARIOS, A QUIEN DEBEMOS EL
SABROSO TRATO DE DOÑA CLARINES Y CON ÉL LA FELIZ INSPIRACIÓN DE ESTA
COMEDIA.[1]
LOS MÁS VULGARES DE SUS AMIGOS,
SERAFÍN Y JOAQUÍN.
PERSONAJES
DOÑA CLARINES MARCELATA TADARÍA MIGUEL DON BASILIO LUJÁN ESCOPETA CRISPÍN
ACTO PRIMERO

Estancia preferida de doña Clarines en el piso principal de su casa de Guadalema,[2] ciudad castellana. A la derecha del actor, en primer término, la puerta de las habitaciones de la señora. Inmediata a esa puerta, de frente al público, vetusta galería de cristales, con zócalo de madera tallada que da al jardín, y la cual, avanzando hasta el medio de la escena, cierra en ángulo recto con la pared del foro.—Una puerta a la izquierda del actor y al foro otra. Lo mismo éstas dos que la de las habitaciones de doña Clarines son de cristales y tienen medio puntos.—En el suelo, que es de losas encarnadas, y en primer término de la izquierda, una mirilla de madera para ver desde arriba lagente que llega al portal, y cerca de ella, también en el suelo, una argolla atada al extremo del cordel que sirve para abrir el portón sintener que bajar escaleras.—Muebles antiguos, pero ricos y bien cuidados. Algunos retratos al óleo,

de familia, decoran las paredes. Esde noche. Una lámpara que fué primero de petróleo, luego de gas y ahoraes de luz eléctrica, alumbrá la estancia. La luz de la luna platea lascopas de los árboles del jardín, que asoman tras los cristales de lagalería.

La escena está sola. Dentro, lejos, en el piso bajo, óyese ladrar aLeal, el perro de doña Clarines, anunciando que alguien llega a lapuerta. Por la del foro aparece
TATA,
vieja desdentada y ruinosa,pero activa y despierta, pies y manos de doña Clarines y su admiradoraincondicional.

TATA. ¡Calla, Leal, calla! Con este perro no hemos menester campanilla.

¡Calla ya, escandaloso!
Calla el perro. Tata se asoma a la mirilla.

¿Quién es? ¡Ah! Don Basilio con el amigote que esperábamos. Haga el
Señor que no tengamos toros y cañas con el tal amigote.

Tira del cordel
para abrir.

Sale
ESCOPETA
por la puerta de la derecha. Escopeta es un mozoandaluz, criado reciente de la casa. En la mano trae una botella de labotica, llena de agua al parecer.

ESCOPETA. Pos, señó, güeno está.[3] Oiga usted, Tata.

TATA. ¿Qué hay con Tata?[4]

ESCOPETA. Las señoras de Guadalema, ¿son todas como doña Clarines?

TATA. ¡Qué disparate! Lo que quisieran las señoras de Guadalema era[5]saberla descalzar. ¡Aaaaah!
¡Doña Clarines! Doña Clarines no hay más queuna...

ESCOPETA. Más vale. Porque si no, era cosa de pitá otra vez pa mi tierray dejá a Guadalema y a toa Castiya na más que pa vení cuando hubierafestejos.

TATA. ¿Pues?

ESCOPETA. ¿Er criaio que estuvo en la casa antes que yo, duró mucho arservisio de la señora?

TATA. Seis días escasamente. Era muy casquivano y muy gandul.

ESCOPETA. ¿Y er de antes?

TATA. El de antes no duró sino tres. Aquel era muy poquita cosa. Seasustaba de todo.

ESCOPETA. ¡Es que se asusta er Sí Campeadó! ¿Usté sabe los mandaos queesta señora quié que uno le yeve a to er mundo?

TATA. ¿No he de saberlo?[6] ¡Aaaaah! Y que o se dicen las razones comoella las da, ce por be, o por la puerta se va a la calle. ¡Es muchaseñora!

ESCOPETA. ¿Pos sabe usted lo que se me ocurre? Que en lugá de un criaodebía tené un piquete de infantería.

TATA. Poco murmurar, ¿eh?

ESCOPETA. No es murmurá, señora; es que ahora me ha mandao que me yeguea la botica con esta boteyita que traje pa la señorita Marsela, y que lediga ar boticario: «De parte de doña Clarines, que no es esto lo que eyaha pedío; que agua der poso ya tiene eya bastante en su casa, y que sevaya usted a robá a Despeñaperros.»

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