

Heath's Modern Language Series

SPANISH SHORT STORIES

*EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION, NOTES, AND
VOCABULARY*

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PREFACE

These *Spanish Short Stories* are, for the most part, realistic pictures of the manners and customs of modern Spain, written by masters of Spanish prose. All were written in the second half of the nineteenth century or in the first decade of the twentieth,—except the story by Larra, which was written about seventy-five years ago. And all describe recent conditions,—except the tale, partly historical and partly legendary, by Bécquer, which goes back to the invasion of Spain by the French under Napoleon in the early years of the nineteenth century; the story by Larra, which, however, is nearly as true of Castile to-day as it was when written; and Trueba's story, which is partly legendary, partly symbolic, and partly realistic. The stories by Bécquer and Pérez Galdós contain incidents that are supernatural, and those by Fernán Caballero and Alarcón have romantic settings that are highly improbable; but all the stories are, in the main, true to the every-day life of contemporary Spain.

The Spanish stories in this collection have been arranged, so far as possible, in the order of difficulty; but some instructors will doubtless prefer to read them in chronological order, or, better still, in an order determined by the "school", or literary affiliations, of each author. This latter arrangement is difficult to make, and it must be, at the best, somewhat arbitrary. But to those who wish to study in these stories the

growth of contemporary Spanish fiction, it is suggested that the authors be taken up in the order in which they are given in the Introduction.

To the stories by Spanish authors have been added two by Spanish-American writers,—the one a native of Costa Rica, the other of Chile. These stories are excellent and well worth reading. For a fuller statement regarding them, see the last pages of the Introduction.

The texts have been taken from standard editions (see the first note to each story). The integrity of the texts has been scrupulously preserved, with only the two following changes: (1) the orthography has been made to conform to that of the latest editions of the *Dictionary* and the *Grammar* of the Royal Spanish Academy; and (2) a few omissions from the texts have been made, all of which are marked by five suspensive points(.....).

The Vocabulary contains the more irregular verb-forms, and it has also descriptions of the important places and biographies of the noted men and women that are mentioned in the texts.

The editors offer these *Spanish Short Stories* as suitable material to be read immediately after a beginners' book.

E. C. H.

L. R.

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INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Spain was awakened from her torpor by the assault of the French armies under Napoleon (in 1808), and there ensued the tremendous struggle known in Spanish history as the War of Independence (*Guerra de la Independencia*). When the Spanish people, though deserted by many of those to whom they looked for leadership, had worn out the French by their stubborn resistance, a new disaster fell to their lot. Their American colonies, extending from California to the straits of Magellan, fell away from the mother country one by one, until only a few islands were left. And through it all the peninsula was rent by civil discord. Spain sank to the lowest level of inefficiency and corruption, and was forced to drink the bitter dregs of humiliation and despair. But from her travail there came a new birth. With the expulsion of Isabel II in 1868, Spain entered upon a new life. She has since then suffered from civil and foreign wars and from internal dissensions, but she has grown in wealth and strength and intellectual cultivation, until there is once more in the heart of her people the hope of ultimate and complete redemption.

In Europe generally the nineteenth century brought to literature a resumption of religious sentiment and of the artistic sense, with their appeal to the emotions, and lyricism became the dominant note in letters. The romanticists turned to history and legend for their material, rather than to contemporary life. The cult of the medieval brought with it much that was sentimental or grotesquely fantastic, but it awakened in the people a renewed interest in their past history. All Spaniards worship the past, for Spain was once great; and when romanticism came from France and England into Spain, it was warmly welcomed. The historical novel flourished beyond measure. The artificial epic in *ottava rima*, imitated from the Italian, gave way to a flood of pseudo-historical romances which followed the lead of Sir Walter Scott and the elder Dumas. They were mostly weak imitations, carelessly done and without depth or brilliancy. The best presentation of Spanish legends was made by José Zorrilla (1817-1893) in verse: his work has enduring value. But the historical romance turned the mind of the reader away from adventures in classic lands or in the orient, and brought his own land to his attention. It thus caused renewed interest in the one-time native excellence of Spanish literature, and it also paved the way for the national novel of manners. The historical romance has now taken a secondary place in fiction; but it was cultivated till quite recently by so virile and popular a writer as Pérez Galdós.

Before passing on to the modern school of realists, mention must be made of a writer whose influence has been far-reaching. This is BÉCQUER,^[A] a poet, writer of short stories, and journalist. His tales are mostly legendary, and are imbued with morbid mysticism. He is primarily a poet, for even his prose has the poetic fancy, and, to a large extent, the music of verse. Bécquer's lyric verse is perhaps the most finished that was written in Spain during the nineteenth century, although it has less force than

that of Núñez de Arce. The dreamy, fairy-like mysticism of Bécquer's writings has been widely imitated throughout the entire Spanish-speaking world.

Although modern realism triumphed in Spain only with the coming of Fernán Caballero's *La gaviota* in 1848, the ground was prepared in advance by several writers, the more important of whom are Larra, Estébanez de Calderón and Mesonero Romanos.

LARRA,^[B] many of whose writings appeared over the pen-name *Fígaro*, was a master of Castilian prose; but even his best work is marred by a morbid distrust of human nature. In his satirical articles he attacks the follies and weaknesses of contemporary Spanish life with biting sarcasm and bitter invective: he criticizes not to reform but to crush. There was in him little milk of human kindness, but he was not afraid of man or devil. He tried his hand at the romantic drama and novel with little success. Larra's most enduring works are his critical reviews and his essays on manners.

Writing with the pen-name *El Solitario*, Serafín Estébanez de Calderón (1799-1867), gave in his *Escenas andaluzas* fairly true pictures of the manners and customs of the lower classes of Andalusia in his day. This volume was published in 1847, but many of the articles had appeared much earlier in periodicals.

In 1842 *El curioso Parlante*, Ramón de Mesonero Romanos (1803-1882), published his *Escenas matritenses*. The author was a kindly scoffer, and in this work he gave merry pictures of Madrid customs, written simply and accurately in language that was chosen but diffuse.

In 1848 FERNÁN CABALLERO^[C] published *La Gaviota*, a story dealing largely with the manners and customs of Andalusia. This work, which has probably been the most widely read of all Spanish novels since *Don Quijote*, marked the transition from romanticism to present-day realism in Spanish literature, as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* did in French letters ten years later. Fernán Caballero was probably influenced by the *Escenas andaluzas*, the *Escenas matritenses* and Larra's essays on manners; and it is quite possible that from her German friends came to her some of the modern spirit of scientific investigation that led her to declare the novel to be "not the product of invention, but of observation." She practiced this theory, however, only in part, for her work partakes of both the romantic and the realistic. Her stories usually have a romantic framework of passion and intrigue that is always unreal and often dull; but within this framework, almost in the nature of digressions, there are pictures of home life among the lowly Andalusian peasants that are charming in their simple, refined realism. No better work than that of some of these realistic scenes has ever been done in Spanish fiction, and yet it is nearly always found in bad company. Crimes, sentimental episodes, ultra-Catholic preachments and true pictures of the life of the humble are jumbled together in a queer medley. The work is evidently that of a clever

but untrained mind, that was largely controlled by its emotions. Her later works are marred by extreme religiosity and a growing habit of scolding.

It has been well said that the realistic novel in Spain is essentially provincial or regional.^[D] The people of the several provinces of Spain differ greatly. The proud, stern Castilian; the gentle, pleasure-loving Andalusian; the Catalán, alert and practical; the light-hearted, turbulent Valencian; and the plodding, dreamy Galician,—all these differ as do the lands in which they dwell. A realistic literature, therefore, that describes accurately the doings and the environment of Spanish villagers must be regional: it can not be broadly national.

After Fernán Caballero had begun to tell of life in southern Spain, PEREDA^[E] came forth with tales of the northern mountainland, the *Montaña*, that lies on the shore of the Cantabrian Sea. Pereda was, perhaps, the most provincial, the least cosmopolitan, of modern Spanish writers. An old-fashioned *hidalgo*, or country gentleman, he rarely left his ancestral home at Polanco, and if he did go away, he was always sorry for it. In politics he was a conservative and a Carlist, and his writings evince a hostile attitude towards modernism. Pereda was the most reactionary, Pérez Galdós one of the most progressive, of modern Spanish writers; but the two men were the best of friends, which goes to show that neither was narrow. Pereda's language is academically correct, with some of the flavor of Cervantes; but his thought is often ponderous, or even obscure. He is at his best when he pictures the uncouth homely life of his highland peasants or simple fisher-folk. This he does with the truthfulness of the most scrupulous realist, but without stooping to pornographic detail. The *Escenas montañesas* are direct descendants of the *Escenas andaluzas* and the *Escenas matritenses*. The better known works of Pereda are *Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera*, *Pedro Sánchez*, and *Sotileza*.

In the Spain of the past fifty years, the most cosmopolitan man of letters, and the writer of the most polished prose, has been JUAN VALERA,^[F] poet, novelist, literary critic, and, first of all, diplomat. At one time he also sought to become a realist, but his nature revolted. He was always an idealist, and at times a mystic. Valera's *Pepita Jiménez* is perhaps the master-piece of Spanish prose fiction of the nineteenth century, and it shows some attempt at realism. His short stories are fantastic and allegorical, or are translations from other languages.

Pedro Antonio de ALARCÓN^[G] was by nature and training a journalist. He served his apprenticeship as a writer on the staff of several radical journals. A volunteer in the African war of 1859, he won a cross for gallantry in battle, and his account of the war brought him sudden fame as a writer. In his earlier novels Alarcón was fond of sensation, as young writers are wont to be. He was extravagant in description and intemperate in criticism, keen of observation but shallow; and he showed a lack of sense of proportion; but he had a versatility and dash that brought him some meed of

popularity. In later life Alarcón passed over from radicalism to conservatism in politics, and his writings became more sober in tone. His best stories are probably *El sombrero de trespicos*, *El capitán Veneno*, and some of his *Novelas cortas*.

Of the lesser writers of stories of manners and customs, Antonio de Trueba and Narciso Campillo should receive especial mention. At one time TRUEBA shared with Fernán Caballero the esteem and admiration of Spanish readers; but he is now nearly forgotten, except among his fellow-countrymen, the Basques of northern Spain. A journalist, poet, and writer of short stories, Trueba is best known as an interpreter of Basque life. Though a conservative and a monarchist, he loved the common people, and he delighted in describing their customs and in collecting their traditions. In his tales of manners and customs he idealized the simple life of the country folk almost beyond recognition, and he worked over and embellished their traditions to suit his taste. His works are pervaded by a genial, kindly humor; but his language is not seldom dull and insipid.

NARCISO CAMPILLO is known as a poet and a writer of short stories. His prose writings have a light and graceful humor that is peculiarly Andalusian.

The most important Spanish novelists now (in 1910) living are Pérez Galdós, Pardo Bazán, Palacio Valdés, and Blasco Ibañez. Of these the first is now usually classed as a writer of psychological novels and plays, and the others as naturalistic novelists.

PÉREZ GALDÓS began as a writer of historical romances modeled largely after those of Erckmann-Chatrion. His *Episodios nacionales* treat of the War of Independence (called by the English the "Peninsular War") against the French under Napoleon and of the immediately following years. These works are not historically accurate; but they present in an entertaining way the elemental facts of an important period in Spanish history. Their appeal to Spanish pride and patriotism won for them an extraordinary popularity in Spain, although they are little known outside of the peninsula. From the historical struggles of the past Pérez Galdós next turned his attention to the inner struggle that is now going on in Spain between conservatism and modern progress, and his prolific pen produced a series of interesting psychological novels. He is a firm believer in the ultimate good of modern progress, but he represents pitilessly and with the impartiality of a judge some of the tragedies that result from the readjustment of conditions. A liberal in politics and religion, Pérez Galdós attacks not the Church and State but the abuses that have grown up under their sheltering wing. It is needless to say that his polemical writings, though presented in the sugar-coated form of highly entertaining novels, are not taken with pleasure by the monarchists and ultra-Catholics; but they are received with joy by the large and rapidly increasing numbers of liberals. Pérez Galdós' literary activities are now devoted chiefly to the drama which, it would appear, he considers a better vehicle than the novel for the expression of his views. The later work of Pérez Galdós is realistic, but it is in no

sense regional. Rather does he seek to be broadly national in his realism by presenting problems that confront the Spanish people as a whole. As a writer, he is often careless and sometimes incorrect. To him the thought he expresses, and not the language in which it is expressed, is all-important. As he approaches old age, there seems to grow upon him the desire, not to be a literary artist, but to become a leader in reform.

The Galician PARDO BAZÁN^[K] is considered the most highly cultivated and the most forceful contemporary writer among the women of modern Spain. In theory she has been a disciple of French naturalism, and some of her novels, particularly *Los Pazos de Ulloa* and *La madre Naturaleza*, have somewhat of the repulsive realism of Zola's work. At times she expresses a cold cynicism or a mocking flippancy which detracts from the usual charm of her writings. She pleases most in her picturesque descriptions of the life and manners of her fellow-Galicians. Pardo Bazán early founded a critical review, *El Nuevo Teatro Crítico*, and in this and in other periodicals she has published many valuable articles of literary criticism. She is now giving her time and thought chiefly to critical work. Her most popular novel is probably *Pascual López*.

PALACIO VALDÉS^[L] began as a member of the school of naturalists, but his later works have become more and more idealistic. He has been a writer of regional novels, like Fernán Caballero and Pereda, but he differs from the others in that he portrays life now in one province and now in another, passing from the Asturias to Valencia and from Madrid to Andalusia. This very broadness of outlook has made his work more cosmopolitan than that of any other modern Spanish novelist,—excepting only Juan Valera,—and has brought him a large meed of popularity in foreign lands. No other contemporary Spanish writer has been so generally translated and so widely read by foreigners as has Palacio Valdés.

In his realistic works he is a careful observer and a faithful describer of life, and he is especially successful in his portrayal of the uneventful lives of the middle and lower classes. Although in his earlier novels he is a pronounced realist, he displays a care-free optimism and a sympathetic humor that distinguish his work from the cynicism of Pardo Bazán and the bitter invectiveness of Blasco Ibáñez, nor has he the seriousness of purpose that characterizes Pérez Galdós. His style is usually direct and simple, but at times it becomes careless or even dull. His genius is uneven, but when at his best Palacio Valdés is one of the most charming of modern novelists. His better known works are probably *La hermana San Sulpicio* and *La alegría del capitán Ribot*.

The most forceful of the younger writers of Spain is the Valencian BLASCO IBÁÑEZ.^[M] His earlier writings were mostly short stories of manners and customs. In these vivid pictures of life among the Valencians and their neighbors, the influence of Maupassant and Zola is easily discernible. Blasco Ibáñez next brought forth a series of polemical writings, in the form of novels, in which he attacked Church and State ruthlessly. His literary work is now quieter in tone, but it still gives evidence that he

wishes to arouse the Spanish masses and to lead them on to the complete acquirement of political and social equality. His best known work is *La barraca*.

* * *

Spain has done excellent work in prose fiction during the last fifty or sixty years past, but this work is little known outside of the Spanish-speaking countries. Even those people who are, for the most part, well read in the literatures of Europe are generally ignorant of recent Spanish fiction. Or if they have read a few of the best Spanish novels in French or English versions, they may not have found them very interesting. This is explained, I take it, by the fact that Spanish literature is essentially national, and if you do not know the Spanish people you can not fully understand their literature. This is largely true of all literatures, but it is especially true of the Spanish. The French literature, for instance, is more universal and less national than the Spanish, perhaps by the very force of geographical position. Spain is nearly surrounded by water, and on land it is separated from the rest of Europe,—excepting only Portugal,—by an almost insurmountable barrier of lofty mountains. France, on the other hand, is so situated as to feel the cross-currents of European life. Do not these facts explain, at least in part, the relatively insular characteristics of much contemporary Spanish literature? The Spanish literature, however, by its very provincialism is fascinating to those who are interested in Spanish civilization.

Although it is doubtless quite true that there has been in modern Spain no writer of short stories who rivals Guy de Maupassant, nor has there been any writer of longer stories who may compare favorably with Honoré de Balzac, yet, as a whole, the Spain of the nineteenth century has probably been pictured as faithfully as France by native authors. And Spain has to-day a group of vigorous young writers, who give promise of carrying the work forward to an even greater future.

* * *

Spanish America has done little work of merit in prose fiction, but it has produced much lyric poetry. If we may believe the statements of Juan Valera in his *Cartas americanas*, the Spanish Americans have written more good verse than have the English Americans. In the domain of letters the Spanish-speaking peoples of America have been slower than their Peninsular cousins to throw off the yoke of French imitation. Most young men of wealth in Spanish America are educated in Paris, and their Castilian shows unmistakably the effect of their long residence in France. This influence may be studied in the works of Manuel Ugarte (even in his *Introducción to La joven literatura hispano-americana*, Paris, 1906) and of Rubén Darío (cf. *La muerte de la emperatriz de China*).

But among the younger writers there are some who show little French influence, or none at all. These may be divided into two classes: (1) those who write only in pure classical Castilian, and who, if they use Americanisms at all, use them consciously and with due apologies; and (2) those who write freely and naturally in the current language of the educated classes of their own particular Spanish-American country. To represent the first of these two types, *Un alma*, by Ricardo FERNÁNDEZ GUARDIA,^[N] has been selected for this volume of *Spanish Short Stories*. Juan Neira, by Joaquín DÍAZ GARCÉS,^[O] has been chosen to represent the other type. They are both thoroughly good stories, and they speak well for the future of prose fiction in Spanish America.

E. C. H.

COLORADO SPRINGS, 1910.

Footnotes to the Introduction:

[A] Don Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, born in 1836 at Seville. An orphan in his tenth year, he was educated by his godmother, whom he left at the age of eighteen to go penniless to Madrid. He suffered many hardships, and died in 1870 at the early age of thirty-four. Works: three volumes of prose and verse.

[B] Don Mariano José de Larra, born in 1809. His father was a medical officer in the French army (then stationed in Spain) of Joseph Bonaparte, whom he followed to France after the defeat of the French. Larra returned to Spain at the age of eight. Read law at Valladolid, but did not complete the prescribed course. Removed to Madrid, and engaged in journalism. Killed himself February 13, 1837, in his twenty-eighth year. Works: Essays on manners, critical reviews, several unimportant plays, and a novel,—*El doncel de D. Enrique el Doliente* (1834).

[C] Doña Cecilia Böhl de Faber de Arrom (Fernán Caballero) was born in Switzerland in 1796, daughter of a merchant of Hamburg, Johann Nikolaus Böhl von Faber, and of a Spanish lady of Cádiz of noble family. Fernán Caballero knew both the Spanish and the German literatures. She outlived three husbands: Don Antonio Planells y Bardají (m. 1816), Don Francisco Ruiz de Arco, Marqués de Arco-Hermoso (m. 1822), and Don Antonio Arrom de Ayala (m. 1837, d. 1858). Died in 1877. Works: *Lagaviota* (1848), called in the English version *The Lost Beauty*, *Lágrimas* (1858), *La familia de Alvareda* (1856), *Una en otra* (1861), *Clemencia* (1862), *Cuadros de costumbres* (1862), *et al.*

[D] See *Modern Spanish Fiction*, by Professor William Wistar Comfort of Cornell University, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, March, 1907.

[E] Don José María de Pereda, born February 6, 1833, at Polanco, near Santander. Studied in Santander and (engineering) in Madrid. Returned to live in Polanco. Carlist deputy to the Cortes in 1871, but found political life distasteful. Elected to the Spanish Academy in 1897. Died March 1, 1906. Works: *Escenas montañesas* (1864), *Bocetos al templo* (1877), *Tipos trashumantes* (1877), *El bueysuelto* (1877), *Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera* (1878), *Pedro Sánchez* (1883), *Sotileza* (1884), *La Montálvez* (1888), *La puchera* (1889), *Nubes de estío* (1891), *Al primer vuelo* (1891), *Peñas arriba* (1895), *Pachín González* (1896), *et al.*

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