The ancient liturgical Spanish theatre is known to us only by fragments of the play of the *Magian Kings,* of which mention has already been made ; but certain regulations of the code of the *Siete Partidas* (compiled be­tween 1252 and 1257) prove that this theatre existed, and that at the great festivals, such as Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter, dramatic representations were given in church. These representations, originally a mere com­mentary on the liturgy, grew more complicated in course of time ; they were gradually adulterated with buffoonery, which frequently brought down the censure of the clergy. Alfonso the Wise even thought it necessary formally to forbid the “ clerks ” playing *juegos de escarnios,* and per­mitted in the sanctuary only dramas destined to commem­orate the principal episodes of the life of Christ. Of all the church festivals, the most popular in Spain was that of Corpus Christi, instituted by Urban IV. in 1264. At an early date was introduced the custom of accompanying the celebration of this festival with dramatic representa­tions intended to explain to the faithful the Eucharistic mystery. Those dramas, called *autos sacramentales,* ac­quired more and more importance; in the 17th century, with Calderon, they become grand allegorical pieces, regular theological dissertations in the form of dramas. To the *auto sacramental* corresponds the *auto al nacimiento,* or drama of the Nativity. The secular theatre is in Spain as elsewhere a product of the religious theatre. Expelled from the church, the *juegos de escarnios* took possession of the public squares and there obtained a free development ; they cease to be a mere travesty of dogma to become a separate type, a drama whose movement is no longer determined by the liturgy, and whose actors are bor­rowed from real life in Spanish society. This new theatre starts about the close of the 15th century with the little pastoral pieces of Juan del Encina (died 1534), which, after Virgil’s example, he calls *eglogas.* Genuine shep­herds, clumsy, rude, and long-haired *(melenudos),* are the interlocutors of those bucolics, into which are also sometimes introduced students, and even, by Lucas Fernandez, a contemporary and pupil of Encina’s, gen­tlemen *(caballeros)* and soldiers. A book which, strictly speaking, does not belong to the theatre, the *Tragicomedia de Calixto y Melibea,* by Fernando de Rojas, much better known as *La Celestina,* and dating from about 1492, caused the new theatre, still so childish in the attempts of the school of Encina, to make a gigantic step onwards. The history of two lovers, who are brought together by a go-between (Celestina), and who after various vicissitudes ultimately commit suicide,—this astonishing novel taught the Spaniards the art of dialogue, and for the first time exhibited persons of all classes of society (particularly the lowest) speaking in harmony with their natural surround­ings, thinking and acting in accordance with their con­dition of life. The progress caused by the *Celestina* may be estimated by means of the *Propaladia* of Bartolome Torres Naharro (Naples, 1517), a collection of pieces represented at Rome in presence of Leo X. and distri­buted by their author into two groups—*comedias a noticia,* those treating of things really known and seen, and *comedias a fantasia,* those bringing fictions on the stage, though it may be with the appearance of reality. The most interesting, if not the best composed, are the *comedia soldadesca,* depicting to the life the Spanish man-at-arms of the time, and the *comedia tinelaria,* a picture of the manners of the menials of the pontifical court. Torres Naharro is the first Spaniard who borrowed from France the division of the play into “ days ” *(jοrnadas)* ; shortly after Naharro we find the comedy of manners in Lope de Rueda, goldbeater of Seville (died about 1566), whose dramatic work is composed of regular comedies constructed

on the model of Naharro and Italian authors of the begin­ning of the 16th century, and also of little pieces intended for performance in the intervals between the larger plays *(entremeses* and *pasos),* some of which, such as *El Con- vidado, El Rufian Cobarde, Las Aceitunas,* are storehouses of sprightliness and wit. Some of Naharro’s and espe­cially of Rueda’s pieces have already the character of the comedy of intrigue, which is emphatically the type of the classic stage. But to reach Lope de Vega the Spanish stage had to be enlarged in relation to national history. A poet of Seville, Juan de la Cueva (born about 1550), first brought on the boards subjects such as the exploits of the Cid, Bernardo del Carpio, and others, which had previously been treated of only in the “ romances.” To a. poet called Berrio, of whose work nothing has been pre­served, are attributed the *comedias* of Moors and Christians, in which were represented famous episodes of the age-long struggle against the infidel. Aud it is at this period that Cervantes (1585) experimented in the dramatic line; in his *Tratos de Argel* he gives us a picture of galley-life, painful recollections of his long captivity in Algiers. There is no need to linger over certain attempts at tragedy of the ancient type by Geronimo Bermudez (born 1530), Cristobal de Virues (born about 1550), Lupercio Leonardo Argensola (1562-1613), &c., the only successful specimen of which is the *Numancia* of Cer­vantes ; these works in fact, cold and manneristic, mere exercises in style and versification, remained without influence on the development of the Spanish stage. The pre-classic period of this stage is, as regards dramatic form, one of indecision. Some write in prose, like Rueda ; others, like Naharro, show a preference for the *redondillas* of popular poetry ; and there are those again who, to elevate the style of the stage, versify in hendeca- syllabics. Hesitation is also evident as to the mode of dividing the drama. At first a division into five acts, after the manner of the ancients, is adopted, and this is still followed by Cervantes in his first pieces; then Juan de la Cueva reduced the five acts to four, and in this he is imitated by most of the poets to the close of the 16th century (Lope de Vega himself in his youth composed pieces in four acts). It was only at this time that the custom which is still maintained of dividing all dramatic works into three acts or days was introduced,—exception of course being made of short pieces like the *loa* (pro­logue), the *entremes,* the *paso,* the *baile* (different kinds of *entr’acte).*

The golden age of Spanish literature, as it is called, belongs to the 16th and the 17th centuries, extending approximately from 1550 to 1650. Previous to the reign of the Catholic sovereigns there exists, strictly speak­ing, only a Castilian literature, not very self-reliant and largely influenced by imitation first of France and then of Italy ; the union of the two crowns of Aragon and Castile, and afterwards the advent of the house of Austria and the king of Spain’s election as emperor, proved the creation at once of the political unity of Spain and of Spanish literature. After the death of Philip IV. (1665) this fair- shining light went out ; the nation, exhausted by distant expeditions, the colonization of America, Continental wars, and bad administration, produced nothing; its literary genius sank in the general decline, and Spain is destined ere long to be subjected again to the influence of France, to which she had submitted during all the first period of the Middle Ages. In the 16th and 17th centuries the literature is eminently national. Of course all is not equally original, and in certain kinds of literature the Spaniards continue to seek models abroad.

Lyric poetry, especially that of the highest order, is always inspired by the Italian masters. An irresistible