

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Descartes Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Darwin Dickens Schopenhauer Bebel Proust
Wolfram von Eschenbach Bronner Melville Grimm Jerome Rilke George
Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus Moltke
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz
Marx vom Stein Lawrence Irving
von Ossietzky May Michelangelo Knigge Kock Kafka
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Doña Clarines y Mañana de Sol

Serafin Alvarez Quintero

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Heath's Modern Language Series

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 perforce 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 Serafin. 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.

II

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. *El ojito 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, El chiquillo, 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, *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 fun-makers 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 womankind 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 authors 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*.

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, in-

stead 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 swayed 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.