

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE WORK

OF

JOAQUIN DICENTA

by

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## Preface

Joaquín Dicenta made himself famous by his drama, Juan José. It is well known that he was more interested in social problems than in any other phase of Spanish life, and that he wrote many plays and stories dealing with these problems. But little or nothing has been written about his attitude toward social Spain as presented in his work as a whole. The purpose of this study is to determine this attitude. Certain of his books which are out of print have not been available to me. However, the thirty-eight titles represented may be fairly considered as representative and cover his whole productive period and each of several fields in which he was active. My thanks are due to Professor Arthur L. Owen for his assistance and encouragement.

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### Introduction

Joaquín Dicenta was born in Calatayud, in 1863, of Aragonese parentage. His father died when Joaquín was young and his mother was unsuccessful in curbing the restless, prodigal tendencies of her son. She sent him to military school, but he was expelled. He lived a dissipated, bohemian life for many years, and during these years, he wrote for various obscure periodicals. He wrote as a means of support and also because he was intensely interested in the problem of social conditions. His first play, El suicidio de Werther, which was written in 1887, was romantic. He was able, thru the friendship of Tamayo y Baus, to have it produced; and from that time on his works received some attention. Dicenta's first didactic play, showing his socialistic tendencies, was written in 1892. This play, Los irresponsables, was the first of his works to receive serious public attention, and the praise of critics. His most important drama, Juan José, was written in 1895. After the word "Fin" in this play, was written "No pasarás de aquí." Juan José and Dicenta have come to be indivisible,--as if they formed on-

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ly one person. Dicenta wrote other social dramas, before and after this masterpiece, but none compares with it.(1) Juan José established Dicenta's reputation. He also wrote lighter works, lyrical dramas, zarzuelas, even a farce, De tren en tren. He did not confine himself to the theatre, tho he understood it well from the viewpoint of the actor as well as that of the playwright. He wrote both prose and poetry of non-dramatic character, exercising his talent in almost every field of literature. He excelled in the sociological drama. He wrote until the year of his death, 1916.

Dicenta wrote as he lived,--impetuously, forcefully, passionately. He lacked control in his writings,--the control resulting from concentrated, methodical study,--just as he lacked control of himself. He squandered words as he squandered life. His personality is as strong in his writings as in his influence on his friends and acquaintances. Since such a person is more often despondent than exuberantly happy, so are Dicenta's works more often depressing than inspiring. His bright and joyful expressions of hope and happiness serve only as

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(1) León Pagano, Al través de la España literaria.  
(Vol. 2) pp. 59-60

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a momentary contrast with the dark and shadowy pictures of despair and misery. There is no doubt that he was sincere in his presentation of life as he saw it,--from the standpoint of a member of the classes of society he pictured. By association with those of the laboring class, by being one of the bohemian group, by experiencing the privations of the aspiring artist, he leaened to sympathize with and work for the unfortunate members of society. He wrote for the unfortunate because he could not help it, any more than he could help drinking and loving and forgetting those he had loved. He wrote to combat the injustice, the falsity of society,--both causes of misery and crime. In the depths of his work lies a generous impulse, a romantic love of honor and a romantic aspiration; but in the exterior,--in types of character, dress, speech, and manners, Dicenta is a realist, who photographs the life of his day faithfully. (1) Because Dicenta was a man of action, his books are full of it. He writes with few details, but with great force. He insists on having the sympathetic attention of his reader. He seems to rise behind his characters and cry out, as if ready to fight any opponent; "Si,

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(1) Cejador, Historia de la lengua y literatura castellana. (Vol. 10), p.118.

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señores, aunque os pese, tenéis que oírle, porque ello es verdad." (1)

Dicenta criticises literary Spain. He says there is no real literary atmosphere because there is no market. And the dramatist is hampered and bound by a public which demands entertainment and recreation, not art. No social or political question may be brought into a drama, because the public doesnot want propaganda; that is, if an author does attempt anything of the sort, it is at the risk of his popularity. (2)

In answer to the criticism that the theater is a center of corruption, a reflection of social degradation and the baser passions, Dicenta says:

"¿Pero qué desean estos señores? ¿De dónde vamos a sacar los dramas nosotros? ¿De la vida real que ante nuestros ojos palpita, o de una vida imaginaria cortada a patrón, o a capricho de pudibundos cursis y falseada en beneficio de cuatro mozuelas insubstanciales y de una docena de caballeros bien alimentados?"

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(1) León Pagano, op. cit., p. 61

(2) Idem. pp. 62-63-64.

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But he believes that the truth must return to the theater for the things we consider as new, are only old ones revived; and so it must be with the presentation of real life in the theater; for the younger writers will return to their ideals and methods. Truth inspires young writers and makes them struggle to hold it. Art will never be satisfied without a true presentation of nature.

Dicenta lived an indifferent life as far as religion is concerned. He was so intensely interested in the broader, more general social problem, altho he respected others' beliefs. He spent all of his emotion and altruism in attempting to better social conditions by his pen. Altho his first works show a decided romantic tendency, he later became more sober, more realistic, more modern, more sincere in his social appeal. (1) Dicenta is a philosopher and thinker as well as an able writer. If he were not, he never could have combined all the elements that are found in Juan José. Here he brings the social problem to the theater, gives literary form to the cry of the economic

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(1) Cejador, op. cit. (Vol. 10) p. 118.

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revolution, discovers the social cancer, and succeeds in producing a modern drama. In Dicenta's works even the most insignificant story involves a thought, a protest, or a problem.

Y como escritor, será violento, ahorrará la frase y hasta el vocablo, verdaderas menudencias ante la mejor expresión de la idea, ante el párrafo caliente, lleno de vida y de color, que va derecho, sin desviaciones, sin timideces, saltando por todo, como obedeciendo a un imán irresistible, a Dantear pronto y desenmascarar el problema o el personaje que estudia. (1)

Dicenta's attitude toward society is usually pessimistic. Other writers, interested in the same problems, are distressed by labor conditions, by the intemperance of the people, by the harmful distribution of charity; but they have not expressed these problems with a like intensity and force. Dicenta presents each problem in a vivid, almost violent manner and then from the depths of his morbid concentration, he rises at times to a hopeful outlook for the future. As compared with Blasco Ibáñez, for instance, Dicenta seems less rational and less logical, for the reason just suggested. However, his brevity in presenting his ideas is impressive; he waits for no

(1) Valero Díaz in Cuentos, Introduction.

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explanation of how or why, but leaps from the despair of the present to the assurance of the future. Though Dicenta has been criticised for overdrawing his realism, it is more forceful and effective than that of, e.g., Martínez Sierra who treats social problems too idealistically to influence the reader profoundly. Galdós sometimes, as in Celia en los infiernos, uses the question of the misery and poverty of the poor as a setting for the main incidents of the play. As a result of this, his appeal for social justice is secondary. Dicenta makes other things subordinate to his appeal. Galdós sometimes writes ineffectively because his realism seems to be only a background to make possible the good works of philanthropists. The fact that Dicenta often wrote under the stress of poverty, that he experienced the feelings of the reckless, unrestrained youth, and knew the women of whom he wrote, makes one feel the sincerity of his realism. If his treatment of the upper strata of society seems unjust, we must remember that he was writing from the poor man's point of view,--his own.

If Dicenta sometimes overdraws a picture, one must consider that he is an emotionalist. He sees the same things that others see, perhaps from the same angle, but on account of his own emotionalism, he pictures them in the blackest colors. Then for the sake of contrast and because his was a positive nature, he draws briefly

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a picture of a more hopeful future, perhaps not even a picture, but a mere suggestion of happiness to come. His future is brighter, more idealistic than another's, because his present is darker. Dicenta impresses one with the fact that he is writing solely to cry out against society. His plot is a minor element; his accusations of injustice are the important thing. He seems, at times, impulsive, hasty, bitter and radical, but always sincere and earnest. While Blasco Ibáñez preaches and Pío Baroja observes, Dicenta rages.

Is his raging at all justified? Let us look briefly at the society of which he wrote. Macías Picavea gives a description of it in his Problema nacional:

Spanish society is in much the same condition as are the lands,—depleted by lack of care, ruined by a former regime. The situation appears hopeless, for there must be capital in order that men may work and men must work so that they may produce capital. (1)

With such suggestions in his opening chapters, Macías Picavea continues to present the picture of Spain as it appears to him. Education is deplorably inefficient. Agriculture is in a barbarous state as compared with other civilized nations. As far as morals are concerned, the Spanish race is ruled by passion rather than

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(1) Macías Picavea, El problema nacional, pp. 93, 103, 104.

will; and vices have corrupted public life in Spain to the political state of affairs,—"por fuera y en torpísima apariencia, libertad, derechos, instituciones civiles, ciencia, arte, industrias..., todo ese catálogo de hermosas palabras que tanto enajenaron al iluminado Castelar, irritando su natural retórica hasta el extremo de ofrecernos al mundo atónito, cual ejemplar y modelo—¡incomprensible delirio!—de un pueblo cuasi perfecto y cultísimo en sus instituciones; por dentro, y en la triste realidad, el despotismo africano, la arbitrariedad, el caciquismo, la ignorancia, la tosquedad, la incultura... ¡todas las cualidades que caracterizan a las sociedades bárbaras!"

Dicenta deals in his dramas, novels and cuentos, in all his works, indeed, with the several social problems, or the several aspects of the one great social problem, mentioned by Macías Picavea. He wrote effectively, and his efforts are of value. He did not attain a full realization of his genius, because he lacked self-control and complete mental balance. He was never able to shake off the vice of drunkenness. "Pero lo mismo en la vida pública que en la vida privada, Dicenta forma en las filas de esa vanguardia de revolucion<sup>9</sup>erios que son primero niños sublimes que no miran al ayer ne se preocupan de la mañana; después, jóvenes generosos que derrochan el talento como derrochan la vida, y en fin combatientes aguerridos que, polvorientos y sangra-

dos, marchan a buen paso hacia la montaña del ideal, dejando atrás el pasado y diciendo: "¡Muera!"

He treats the Industrial Problem in general, and its relationship to the poor in the dramas, Juan José, Aurora, Piedra a Piedra, Aniversario Negro, Mares de España, Espumas y Plomo, Treperías, and Paraíso Perdido; also in the novel Los bárbaros, and in the expository articles called Crónicas. In fact, he touches on this problem in nearly every thing he writes. Closely connected with this is the question of ineffective charity. He shows how the latter is partly responsible for poverty. He deals with the problem of harmful giving in Los de abajo, De la batalla, Los bárbaros, and in the drama, La confesión.

The problem next in importance is that of the relationships between the sexes. He treats of this in nearly all his writings, sometimes only to touch on it briefly; but he deals with it more fully in the plays, Sobrevivirse, Daniel, Luciano, Aurora, and El crimen de ayer; in the cuentos, Mujeres, Los de abajo, De la batalla, Paraíso perdido and Spolarium; in the novels of the collection Las novelas; and in the book of poetry, Del tiempo mozo. Prison reform he suggests in the dramas Juan José, and El lobo; also in the collections of Cuentos, Los de abajo and De la batalla, and elsewhere. This problem is related to that of politics and government, which is touched on in the stories in La finca de los muertos, and Los de abajo, and in the

novel, Los bárbaros. War and the army are dealt with in De la batalla, Traperías, Sol de invierno, Crónicas, and Daniel.

Dicenta is not particularly well acquainted with the problems surrounding the lives of children, but he treats the question of Education briefly in Desde los rosales, El Idilio de Pedrín, Mujeres, Por Bretaña, Mares de España, and Paraíso perdido. He has ideas, too, upon the relationship between children and their parents. He expresses these in Páginas de oro, Los de abajo, and Por Bretaña.

Other problems are treated much more briefly; religion, for instance, he says little about; drunkenness, he deplores but does not dwell on, perhaps because of his own weakness; amusements and their harmful influences, he suggests. All these questions are touched on in various works, but are treated more fully in Por Bretaña, De piedra a piedra, Luciano, Aurora, Los de abajo, Idos muertos, Taperías, and Encarnación.

Of society, in general, its injustices, restrictions on individual freedom and its future, he speaks frequently. He emphasizes these points in Los de abajo, Los bárbaros, Spolarium, Traperías, De piedra a piedra, Crónicas, and Juan Francisco.

## Chapter 1

### The Economic Situation in Spain

The question of the distribution of wealth is a social one which involves the happiness of every individual and which consequently attracts the attention of all who consider the possibility of benefiting mankind. The economic problem may be considered as a basis of all social life,—the cause of most crimes, of political corruption, of injustice, of immorality, indeed of a major part of those abnormal situations which lead to unhappiness. It is an essential element of modern civilization,—a necessary evil. Because it is closely related to the other problems, and may be considered a cause of each of the others, it has sometimes been treated as the one great social problem. Dicenta does not treat it as such, tho he necessarily relates it to the others. Because he closely connects (1) poverty, (2) industry, and (3) the ineffectiveness of charity, as it is administered, we may consider the economic situation in that sense.

That poverty in Spain is widespread is shown in many of the plays, sketches and novels of Dicenta. He frequently makes use of contrast for the sake of impressing the reader with the wretchedness of the poor and the injustice of the rich, or of society in general. This is the case in the novel Los bárbaros, for example. The picture of the misery caused by the drought is made the more vivid by describing the banquets and parties of the rich. The

story of Rebecca contrasts a girl in the Moncloa with the Rebecca of biblical days. The modern Rebecca also carries water in an earthen jar; but in the older story, Rebecca was going to be happy, rich, blessed of the Lord, the mother of children. The modern Rebecca, the just as innocent and upright at first, will meet one of those jackals of civilization that are always prowling around cities, and thus her life of sordid tragedy will begin. Her children will grow up in a foundlings' home.(1) In the book of sketches, Los de abajo, there is a story, Aire y Luz, which describes slum conditions and the effect on the inhabitants of such places. Eight men live in a room six feet square. One of these dies of typhus. This house, which is typical of its class, was built for renting by an avaricious landlord. Such a deplorable situation is contrasted with a large home near Moncloa on the Carretera del Prado. And so on thru a list of stories where contrast is effectively used.

The descriptions of unfortunate humanity are often connected directly with situations which wholly or partially cause them..The novel before mentioned, Los bárbaros, shows how the poor farmer oppressed by the landlord is helpless. At the time of the terrible drought, the working man suffered intensely, while the overlord wondered what to do to keep the hungry mob quiet. Their af-

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Los de abajo, p. 169.

flictions concerned him only in so far as their discontent threatened his easy existence. Their condition was pitiful. "Los labradores, sentados en lindes; cruzaban los brazos, contraían los rostros, pateando en endurecida tierra. Los braceros recorrían las calles en actitud mendicadora, en solicitud de un socorro, casi siempre recogido por los mostredores tabernarios. Contra éstos se amontonaban aquellos infelices, para enloquecer su miseria, para maldecir juntos, para insultarse en disputas agrias que remataban a golpe de puño y a corte de cuchillo. Las mujeres de los braceros requisaban inútilmente rastros y planteles cajones y armarios. No había que espigar; no había que empeñar tampoco. Dejando a sus criaturas encomendadas a su suerte, se dirigían a casa de los señores, a llorarles su angustia, a limosnearles el mendrugo. Las mozas, sintiendo en sus estómagos los mordiscos del hambre, juntábanse por las noches al borde de la fuente poniendo más oído que a los requiebros del galán, al alcahueteo de las viejas terceras, que les ofrecían manjares a elección, plata a ricos, si, admitiendo las consejos de su experiencia, echaban repulgos de honestidad a un lado... Los almacenes de comestibles sólo fiaban a quienes llevaban vales suscriptos por los propietarios a cuenta de jornales; el Municipio andaba mal de fondos: algunos auxilios llegaron por oficios del diputado gobernante, pero quedaron entre los adictos a su política. No era cosa de

repartirlos al tun tun." (1) But as far as the landlords were concerned, it was different. They were annoyed that there would be no crops and were discomfited at the threats of the laborers. Otherwise life for them was as easy and luxurious as usual. Another illustration of the unjust treatment of laborers in the country, is in De piedra a piedra. (2) The story tells of a shepherd's lonely life. He never returned to the village where he had seen things which made him envious, hateful and unhappy. The landowners ate better bread and lived without working. But that was as nothing compared with the thot that they had robbed him of his sweetheart and put him in prison on false pretexts. So he tried to forget his human associations and connections with a group which caused unhappiness. Another story in this same collection describes the labor of men and women in the field. They work in the heat of the day, when even animals seek rest and shade. They are "a race cooked by the sun and enslaved by misery." (3)

A more general and inclusive treatment of the land cultivation problem, especially in Andalucia, is found in Traperías. "¡Triste espectáculo el de las tierras sin cultivo, que los pájaros no quieren entretener con sus cantos

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(1) Los bárbaros, pp. 123-4.

(2) Piedra a piedra, pp. 52-5.

(3) Id. p. 70.

porque no encuentran alimento que picotear, y los labriegos cruzan de prisa, contemplandolas rencorosamente porque no pueden hundir en ellas su herramienta y ganar, trabajándolas, el pan de sus hijos!... ¡Triste espectáculo el de esas tierras, espectáculo del cual distrae al caminante el paisaje de los cultivados terrenos que lucen sobre su espléndido escaparate el poderío del campo andaluz! La tierra cultivada paga con usura el esfuerzo de sus cultivadores, pariendo olivares donde la aceituna broncea entre las hojas verdes; etc.... Tierra incansable en dones, que no satisfecha con cubrir su superficie de tesoros, los esconde en su fondo también para que el minero los <sup>busca</sup> y descubra." But the fertility of the soil is only an aggravation. For the laborer, becoming independent, decides that he should have a larger portion of the wealth gathered from the soil, and crossing his arms, refuses to work if his demands are not met. The proprietor answers that it is impossible to give any larger wages for the expense of transportation and loss and trouble, all make it necessary to limit the expense of production. And he crosses his arms in defiance.

"De estos dos cruzamientos de brazos, surge el conflicto que comienza por la negativa del amo, por la declaración en huelga del obrero, y acaba por matar al obrero de hambre, y por arruinar, no al propietario, que esto, aún siendo muy sensible, sería poco porque se trata

de un individuo; al Estado, a la nación, forzados a sufrir las tristes consecuencias que esas cosechas paralizadas, esos propietarios faltos de brazos, y eso jornaleros muertos de hambre, han de provocar forzosamente."(1)

The problem of land cultivation as shown in Dicenta's works, is not an extreme presentation of the matter when compared with the same subject as treated by others. Macías Picavea, for example, says that agriculture in Spain is the least technical and the most barbarous of all the economic factors. It cannot be considered as an industry in Spain, in the same sense as it is in other civilized nations; because three essential elements are lacking to make it such: enterprise, capital, and technical knowledge.(2)

Joaquín Costa, likewise, recognizes the demoralized conditions of land tenure and the need for change. The terrible situations existing in some provinces demand changes among which he suggests as possible remedies: agricultural training in schools; public school instruction in the need of cooperation, agricultural syndicates and similar unions; farmers' banks; better roads; revision of the national expenditure; and justice without political bosses. The land owner should transform his methods of production so as to produce more and also to lower the price of food and

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(1) De piedra en piedra, p. 90

(2) El problema nacional, 163 ff.

increase the wages: because, "El problema agrario o cuestion social de los campos se reduce a estos términos: que el jornalero, aún con la ayuda de su familia, no gana lo estrictamente preciso para sustentarse: que para vivir vida medianamente humana, necesita con absoluta necesidad bastante más de lo que gana; y que no ganándolo, salda el déficit con privaciones, con escaseces, con enfermedades, acostándose todas las noches con hambre, llegando viejo a los cuarenta años. (1)

Besides these men who treat the subject in an expository way, several present day novelists and dramatists have considered the land problem. Martínez Sierra in the drama Esperanza nuestra, shows how the older generation of land-holders cannot change its attitude toward the laboring man; but the younger, more thoughtful, less prejudiced members of the class, see need for a change; they realize that the working people have good minds capable of being trained and they desire social justice. The picture of conditions as they exist under the system of land tenure affirm the impressions expressed in the former statements.

Blasco Ibáñez in La bodega and La barraca shows that the laborers cannot be interested in tilling land to the best advantage when it belongs to someone else. They do only what they are forced to do. The owners are interested in getting as much profit as possible for as little expenditure as can be made and the result is lamentable.

(1) Señoritos chulos, p. 30.

"Resultaban malos trabajadores porque trabajaban para otros; porque tenían la obligación de defender su vida miserable unos cuantos años más, huyendo el cuerpo a la faena, prolongando los ratos de descansar concedidos para fumar un cigarro, llegando al trabajo lo más tarde posible y retirándose cuanto antes." (1) Blasco depicts the life of the laborers when at home. The men and women all sleep together in sheds, suffering there mental, moral and physical degradation. Life means little to them. "Solo era verdad los tres gazpachos y los dos reales de jornal. Y con esto alguna borrachera de vez en cuando, y el asalto de una trabajadora, a la que afligían con el engendramiento de un nuevo desgraciado, se consideraban felices mientras duraba en ellos el optimismo de la juventud y la fuerza." (2)

Another phase of the economic situation is the question of mining; and with it is closely connected the problem of the factory. Dicenta dwells at length on this phase of industrial life. The coal mines in Spain employ many workers. The injustice done to these men is comparable to that suffered by the agricultural laborer. Here, too, much of the injustice is in the attitude of the capitalist toward the working men. Hullyez, the

(1) La bodega, p. 109.

(2) Id. p.143.

one discovered coal, began working in the mines because he had no money to undertake a mining enterprise. He did work that an imbecile might do because he lacked capital. He never was able to acquire a fortune because of his exploitation by those who had wealth. So it has always been; the unjustly rich receive more riches and do no work. The poor give their health and strength for the enjoyment of the rich. The energy of the man and the strength of the youth are alike spent in the dark passages of the coal mines. Dust impedes the functioning of the organ of respiration, and the victims become anemic. A weakened condition is inherited by the children of the miners and suffering from all sorts of diseases results. The gas formed in coal mines is even more dangerous than the dust. Its count of victims is innumerable, and why should there be this inequality, this unjust distinction between the two classes? Did nature intend that those who have should have more, and that those who are unfortunately born poor should give their lives and happiness and receive none of the fruits of their labor? Surely, this inequality was never intended. Nature said: "¡Ahí va eso! Trabajadlo y disfrutadlo equitativamente; pero sucedió todo lo contrario. Los chicos más fuertes cogieron por el cogote a los más débiles y les gritaron, '¡Eh! Los trabajos para vosotros, para nosotros los beneficios! ¡Obedecéis o apretamos!' y los débiles se pusie-

ron a la faena y los fuertes al acaparamiento y la madre naturaleza fué estafada una vez más." (1)

In the story El grisú, the author describes the explosion of gas in a coal mine, where forty-three laborers lost their lives. The explosion was caused by an inexperienced miner, forced to the dangerous work by necessity of earning his living. He held his open lamp near the mouth of the mine where gas escapes. The effect of this accident on the families of the miners was disastrous. They had nothing to depend on and were compelled to turn to charity. (2)

Dicenta was interested in every kind of mining and he visited different districts for the purpose of acquainting himself with the lives of the miners and their families. He describes the salt and lead miners in Espumas y plomo. The salt workers are forced to labor under unfavorable conditions caused by the heat of the drying process. "Los seres, inclasificables por la distancia, eran jornaleros que trabajaban en un infierno al aire libre; infierno que, para mayor escarnio y burla de los miserables obreros, habían construido el cielo con rayos, asisinos entonces, de su lumbre fecundadora; el hom-  
merico banquete, codicioso tráfico, explotación de hombres, realizada por la avaricia y el ansia de oro de otros hom-

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(1)Crónicas, pp. 68-71; p. 70; p. 69.

(2)Los de abajo, p. 219

bres...Pierden la salud, porque no es trabajo, sino martirio inicuo el que padecen bajo aquella atmósfera de fuego, trajinando sin descanso horas y horas para que el brique no retrase su marcha y el mercader no pierda un segundo en las urgencias de su tráfico-----". The work is not man's labor but that of a beast of burden. (1)

The lead mines are compared not to the infernal regions, but to the inquisition. Here the injury to the health of the miners is even greater than in the coal mines. The mission of the lead industry is "to kill, always to kill." Men after working in the mines are merely the "human residue of exploitation." (2) And the worst feature of the misery, as Dicenta shows it to be, is the attitude of the owners toward the miners. Of a victim, one mine owner says, "Vivirá poco. Perro que anda por estos sitios, no dura un año." (3)

Tho the victims of the lead mines are a pitiable group, they cannot be compared to those who have given their health to earn a livelihood by quicksilver mining. Dicenta describes such a victim in El modorro. "¡Miserable imagen la que nos miraba con sus ojos sin erillo y nos sonreía con su boca sin dientes! La carne, rebujada en un chaquetón y unos pantalones, no debía ser carne, sino una gelatina de hombre. Tan continuo, tan acentuado, tan

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(1) Los de abajo, pp.27-8

(2) Id. pp.109-114.

- (3) Id. p. 119.

oscilante era su temblor, que no podía tener músculos que la afianzaran, ni huesos que la fortalecieran, ni médula que la sirviera de puntal. Pasta, hecha con linfa y sangre y filamentos nerviosos machacados, era, indudablemente, aquel tronco informe y convulso....aquel hombre era víctima de la mina, un contribuyente del mercurio que platea los criaderos de Almadén. La miseria, las urgencias del mendrugo diario le empujaron hacia el pozo y le metieron en la jaula y le desembocaron en la galería, enfrentándolo con la vida de azogue y poniéndole una piqueta o un barreno en las manos."(1) When this being first entered the mine, he was a strong, agile individual, full of hope, health, and energy. When he came out for the last time, he was a hopeless victim of mercury, horrible to see, useless to humanity, and utterly miserable in every way. And for his sacrifice he now receives twenty-four pesetas a month, while the state sells each flask of mercury, of which he produced thousands, for three hundred pesetas. What injustice could be greater?

In the play Daniel, Dicenta again tells of the miners, their work and their lives. The mine and the foundry are closely connected. The effect of the work on the mental attitude of the laborers is as bad as the effect on their lives. The mine and the foundry are closely connected. The effect of the work on the mental attitude of the

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(1) Traperías, p. 26

laborers is as bad as the effect on their health. It makes them lose hope and self-respect. They can never satisfy even their modest ambitions, so they lose faith in themselves and take the little money they do receive to stifle all other desires by drinking. An evil effect of the foundry work on health is arsenic poisoning. The workers are more subject to all exposures because they cannot afford sufficient food to keep themselves healthy.

Aside from the fact that the work is injurious, and that the mental attitude of the workers is undesirable, the point is often made that the capitalist takes advantage over the worker. He takes advantage unfairly in the economic sense, and also in other ways. In Aurora, we have the girl's own story. She tells how she was forced to support herself from childhood by working in a factory. "¡La fábrica! ¡Maldita sea! ¡Cuánto la odio! En ella quedaron los dos únicos regalos buenos que Dios me hizo; mi niñez y mi honra!" She went into the factory looking back at her childhood friends; she came out looking down for shame. She was only fourteen years old and was forced to work for her living. She was innocent and obedient to her master, and he took advantage of her. "¡Y aquel hombre! ¡Aquel hombre! Bien se aprovechó de mi ignorancia! ¡Era el amo! ¡El amo! ¡el que desde pequeña mandaba en mi voluntad y en mi cuerpo! Tan acostumbrada

estaba a obedecerle, que hasta, para deshonrarme le obedecí. ¿Qué iba a hacer yo? Lo que hice; lo que el quiso. ¡Que afortunadas son las obreras feas! ¡A ésas no les piden más que el trabajo." Even obedience in this would be enough to make the factory system a curse. But they had to obey in everything and suffer extremely, for ¡Qué remedio! ¡Es la obligación! Y si el sudor te ahoga, y el fósforo te asfixia, y el trabajo te mata, y tu carne se rompe a cachos, y tus huesos se parten a crujiidos, ¡no importa! ¡Aguántate que para eso te pagan!"(1)

The same side of the question is dwelt on in De piedra a piedra. Here the author describes in a more comprehensive manner the effect of factory life on the laborers. They work incessantly, breathing poisonous air, becoming machines, devoid of intelligence and a sense of honor. Their faces are pale, their bodies anemic, their souls starved. They come to work hopeless and return home exhausted.

Another instance of the advantage which the rich take over the poor is in the story El desquite. Here the laborer works willingly for his employer until the latter dishonors his wife. In revenge, the injured man kills his master and has to suffer punishment. (2) Juan José, the masterpiece, is the most forceful example of all these il-

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(1) Traperías, pp. 21-23-24.

(2) De la batalla, pp. 115-116.

illustrations of injustice. Juan José, the masterpiece, is the most forceful example of all these illustrations of injustice. Juan José, a laborer, lives only for Rosa, whom he loves. They live happily together until Paco, the overseer, Juan Jose's superior, decides that Rosa shall be his. He tries to persuade her to leave Juan José; but she is true to him. So Paco revengefully dismisses Juan José, who is unable to find other work and becomes destitute. After pawning everything possible, he is forced to theft by his love for Rosa. He is arrested, put in prison, and the girl goes to Paco, the despicable overseer, who now accomplishes his purpose. Juan José, in prison, learns of Paco's success, escapes from prison, goes to Paco's home, and sees his sweetheart, who has turned to his enemy for help and love. In despair he kills Paco and then Rosa, and after that returns to prison. He gives up all hope of any future happiness because Rosa was his life and she was stolen from him by treachery. This is the most vivid and effective picture of the oppression of the poor that Dicenta attempts.

From the foregoing, it is evident that Dicenta deplores the industrial situation in the fields of mining and manufacturing, not from the national economic point of view, so much as from the viewpoint of the individual worker. Galdós recognized the same evil, tho his interest in other things is not often subordinated to the tho of so-

cial betterment, as is Dicenta's. In Celia en los infier-  
nos, Galdós recognizes the need for a complete change of  
 relationship between the employer and his employees. He  
 sees that the existing attitude is detrimental to the gen-  
 eral welfare.

Since we have noted some of the facts concerning  
 conditions as they are, we may turn to the further treat-  
 ment of Dicenta's ideas of the effect of such a life on  
 men, and of the means they take to better their conditions.  
 These results are dependent on the individual's nature.  
 That is, the effect of hardship and injustice on some is  
 to make criminals of men is emphasized by the story of  
Juan José. He robbed only as a last resort, after society  
 had refused him any other means of existence. By nature  
 he hated wrong-doing. He was honest and admirable; but  
 poverty and love drove him to it. The fundamental idea  
 at the root of this attitude of the poor, is concisely  
 expressed in the words of a laborer. "Si comen los ricos,  
 que coman los pobres también." (1) And is that not just,  
 when one considers that the poor do the producing almost  
 entirely? Why should they not be allowed to consume as  
 well as the rich? Another instance of the criminal effects  
 of poverty is in the story, La última trinchera. An old  
 woman, moneyless and ugly, is killed because a man took

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(1) Los bárbaros, p. 199.

her doorstep one night when she had money to pay for a bed. The next night, she claimed her old place; the beggar killed her. "Horrible, bárbaro, es que se llegue a asesinar por eso. Pero es más horrible, más bárbaro aún, que la miseria y el desamparo conviertan a los hombres en tigrés y los hagan asesinar por eso." (1)

Some of the oppressed seek new opportunities in a different country, as has been suggested. Dicenta regrets that the inhabitants leave because they are not able to support themselves in a society that is civilized. It is very different from what it was formerly, because in ancient times, the barbarians invaded civilized lands on account of hunger; and now hunger drives the population from a civilized nation to new and less civilized communities. (2) There is something wrong with such a civilization. "En vez de colonizar nuestra tierra, nos metemos a colonizadores de extranjero país; en vez de desmarroquizar a España, presumimos de europeizar a Marruecos. Así nos va; así se despuebla España de españoles. Lo raro es que aún queden algunos de los que en el trabajo personal ponen su medio único de existencia!" (3) They leave Spain because their natal land denies them bread and pro-

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(1) Los de abajo, pp. 180-184.

(2) Id. p. 218.

(3) Mares de España, p. 103.

tection. Dicenta, here as elsewhere, has taken a pessimistic attitude, not only toward the condition but also toward the reason for the existence of the condition, that is, the widespread emmigration. Altamira takes another view of the matter. He shows that everywhere in Spain there is discontent with the present management of affairs and "it is customary to charge even the untoward incidents of daily life to the fault of bad government. Many factors have combined to bring about this state of mind; the very material progress of the country, resulting in a betterment of the condition of the poor, tho their lot is still far from being an enviable one, has awakened desires among the masses of which their ancestors never dreamed; and the relative prosperity of many of the returned Spanish emigrants, has lead to a widespread belief that men can do better anywhere than under the bad government of Spain. The average Spaniard of the working class takes little interest in his right of suffrage, for he is convinced that it makes no difference; he is hopeless and helpless in the face of the government which seems quite apart from him."(1)

The other reaction of the oppressed is that of opposing their oppressor and attempting to change their conditions. As this is a more general reaction than either criminal revenge on society or submissive departure from an unfavorable country, Dicenta treats it more at length.

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(1) Chapman, History of Spain, p. 510.

In Los bárbaros, hunger turns a whole district of working people into barbarians who kill all the wealthy people and destroy their property. Little is said in conclusion as to the results of such an outbreak; but it is evident that the condition of the poor is only very slightly improved even temporarily, and probably not at all permanently.

Dicenta is just in his criticism of the attitude toward the strikers. It seems to him that the oppressors say to those who are striving for just treatment: "¿Quién piensa en los despreciados y en los muertos? ¿Qué puede hacer esa gentuza desarmada y hambrienta? ¡Bah! ¿Que se amotinan? Se carga contra ellos. ¿Que el hambre les hace gritar mucho? Se les tapa la boca con un puñado de calderilla. No merece la pena. Sigamos explotándolos y enriqueciéndonos. Para someterlos están los soldados, para dominarlos nuestro oro; la sangre acobarda, el oro humilla." Only in such a way can one explain the attitude of the rich toward those who claim justice. And the government's attitude has been at fault. Its only decision in the matter has been to meet force with greater force; to kill the leaders and imprison the accused for a long time awaiting trial. (1) The result is often a series of fights between soldiers and strikers ending in more unhappiness than existed before. The best picture of this is in Daniel, the

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(1) Traperías, p. 91.

drama which carries to a conclusion the social ideas suggested in Juan José. Daniel, the father of two sons and a daughter, works in a mine. His daughter, also a worker, is dishonored by Luis, manager of the mine and son of the owner. One son is a soldier of the Civil Guard, the other a miner; not one of the common laborers, but a thinker, an idealist, who labors for the purpose of learning how to better the condition of his fellow-workers. He, Pablo, loves Cesarea, a working girl whose husband has been killed in a strike. She, like Pablo, is noble and desirous of helping her co-workers. The great difficulty is in making the mass of laborers see the advantage of organized revolt against unjust treatment. The already low wages are lowered again and a strike is declared. The workers are willing to strike as long as the promise of happiness is kept before them; but soon hunger makes them cowards and they try to return to work. Daniel, the representative of the older generation is unwilling to revolt against his master at any time, and his unwillingness becomes rebellion against his son, the leader, as hunger and cold increase. When the crisis comes, after a few days, and he sees the strikers destroying his beloved tools so that they may keep the new employees from working, Daniel can stand it no longer and turns against his own associates. The troops are brought in; Daniel's sons, fighting against each other, are killed. Daniel, ill from shock and grief, is taken to a hospital.

Here a change takes place in his attitude. He hates his formerly respected superiors and decides to take revenge. He recovers from his illness and at last accomplishes his purpose by letting a party of his enemies fall to the bottom of an elevator shaft.

In this play, Dicenta shows how the civil guard dislikes its duty of putting down strikes; how timid the laborers become when they are starved; how suspicious they are of their best friends, the labor leaders; and how set in their ways are the members of the older generation. It takes great sorrow and suffering to effect a change of attitude in a man like Daniel; but when the change comes, no revenge is too great. The casual spectator may say that such things do not happen in life; that the entire effect is overdrawn; but Daniel does not represent one man, nor one generation of oppressed, but many; his misfortunes are those of many lives; the cruelty and strength and indifference of the controlling class are not exaggerated when considered from the broader view-point. It is the privilege of the artist to condense and concentrate his picture. This is not exaggeration, but art. (1)

Blasco Ibáñez also describes a strike and pictures labor conditions as bad as any in Dicenta's works. But Blasco is an observer of conditions, a moralizer and preacher rather than primarily a hater of injustice and misery

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(1) Benavente, De sobremesa, Vol. 1, pp. 17-21.

as Dicenta is. Blasco pictures the strike clearly so that the reader feels himself to be a spectator. Dicenta sympathizes so much with the downtrodden that he writes in such a way as to make the reader, himself, feel the suffering of the laborer. (1)

We have considered Dicenta's ideas of (1) poverty itself, (2) industry and its relation to poverty, and now remains (3) the consideration of charity and its effectiveness as administered in place of social justice. Those who have wealth like to help the poor because it gives them something to think about for a little while. After a great disaster, such as a flood, the emotional strain on the wealthy class seeks relief in philanthropic actions. But this is only temporary, insufficient relief for the poor, who have been deprived for a long time and whose needs continue after the disaster is forgotten. (2) Justice would almost always make charity unnecessary, because justice would better the condition of all the poorer class, at all times, while charity helps only a few for a little while. For nineteen hundred years the law of charity has ruled and it has failed. (3) We need a new law of justice. For example, a group of fifty-three miners were killed in a coal mine, their widows had to depend on charity. They should have

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(1) La bodega, 265-275. (pp.)

(2) Los bárbaros, p. 189.

(3) El Grisú. Los de abajo, p. 225.

been free to demand their rights. Another impressive picture which shows the ineffectiveness of charity, is that of an old lady who is refused entrance at several different charitable institutions. Finally, she falls dead from hunger in front of one of them. "La caridad ha hecho bancarrota." (1) Another illustration of the fact that justice to the individual is needed instead of charity, is in the story of La desdicha de Juan. Juan, the father of a family, is taken to an asylum because he is thought to be insane. He has always worked hard, tried to support his children, and has seldom resorted to drink. Because he was not used to liquor, he became drunk easily, was taken for insane, and locked up. His children were sent to a home for orphans. The unfortunate man worried so about his children that they kept him in the asylum for four years, still thinking he was not in his right mind. Finally, a young doctor came to cure him, told him of his children and nearly lost his life at the hands of the desperate father. Such is the effect of charity. Society should make it possible for a man to maintain his family, if he tries as this man did. (2)

Dicenta is not alone in his attack on the prevailing system of charity. Galdós plainly states that charity will never solve the problem of poverty, no matter

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(1) Al fin abrieron; Los de abajo, pp.37-40.

(2) La desdicha de Juan; De la batalla, pp. 30-35.

how much charity is practiced.(4) The laboring class cannot be redeemed by charity. Martínez Sierra expresses his views in the portrayal of Sor Gracia, and he believes that the rich can never give alms. They merely bestow a small part of their superfluity(1) To be truly charitable one should give his life to remedy the crimes of earth. Blasco Ibáñez goes so far as to say that: "Caridad es el egoísmo disfrazándose de virtud; el sacrificio de una parte de lo superfluo repartida a capricho; es la más imponente y anémica de las virtudes. Unicamente la justicia social podría salvar a los hombres, y la justicia no es del cielo, sino de la tierra." (2) To illustrate his meaning of egotistic charity he tells of a celebration, arranged for all the laborers, by their master, on a festival day when they wanted to go home. They were all forced to remain and they resented the infringement of their limited liberty; for the time at home with their families was little, at best, But the master considered it differently; he was doing them a great favor in preparing the religious ceremony. Blasco identifies himself with Dicenta in believing that it is necessary to "change the organization of the world and proclaim Social Justice as the only law, thus abolishing charity, which is no more than an hypocrisy which gently masks the bitter cruelties of the existing system." (3) For "¡La caridad!--es el medio de sostener

(1) Reino de Dios, p. 60. (2) La bodega, p.148.

(3) El Intruso, p. 167. (4) Celia en los infiernos, p.223.

la pobreza de fomentarla haciéndola eterna. Los desgraciados la odian por instinto, evitan el buscarla mientras pueden, viendo en ella una institución degradante que perpetúa su esclavitud." (1) Still another author who condemns charity as it is administered now, is Pío Baroja. He shows how charity becomes a matter of form, a heartless, cold-blooded system. The officers of charity are unsympathetic and have no helpful attitude behind their acts; they investigate cases according to rule and do only what they have to, which is very little. (2)

When Joaquín Dicenta writes of the poor, their misery, their work, and their treatment at the hands of others, he sympathizes deeply and expresses himself sincerely and earnestly. His pictures of this sort of life are true to his ideas. His opinions are usually just. He knows his subject matter, for he has experienced the life of a poverty-stricken and miserable laborer. However, in criticising social injustice, he blames society for everything, the individual for nothing. This, of course, may be considered ultimately true, for the individual did not ask to be born. But if a laborer should become imbued with the idea that he is in no way responsi-

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(1) Blasco Ibáñez, El Intruso, p. 257.

(2) Pío Baroja, Mala hierba, p. 166.

ble, then social revolution and anarchy would always prevail. Merely because society allows an individual to be born, is no reason that society should support him without his making any effort whatsoever; nor should society be responsible for everything he does; for, after all, he, himself, is a part of society, and as such he owes something to it. That each individual is a part of society is what Dicenta, at times, seems to overlook. However, he is usually logical and his pictures of unhappiness are probably not exaggerated. He shows more of the misery and less of the pleasant side of life than many of his contemporaries. This is due to his nature and his experience.

## Chapter 11

### Relationship between the Sexes

The question of relationships between men and women is a vital matter, an ever-present problem as well as one which seems to defy solution. Dicenta recognizes the difficulty of the situation. He suggests no actual remedy for the existing conditions, probably because there is none. He discusses the results of disregarding marriage laws; shows how disastrous such disregard is, not only to the individuals who are at fault, but to their children, as well. Then he shows the necessity of marriage. But this is no solution to the problem, for he pictures more unfortunate marriages than cases of unhappiness where marriage has never taken place. Dicenta sometimes pictures a perfect love, but when he does so, the realization of that love is made impossible by circumstances. So the entire human situation must have seemed impossible to him. He thinks that woman must love, yet he objects to either marriage or a freer relationship between the sexes. He seems not to have even an idealistic theory to offer as a solution, such as we find in Trigo. For Trigo advances the idea of placing the martial relation-

ships entirely in the hands of the state; the children would be reared by the state; the entire system would be mechanically regulated. His general plan suggests the old Spartan ideal. (1)

In his happiest, most optimistic moments, Dicenta seems full of hope for society, but as far as the individual is concerned, he is utterly hopeless. This is inconsistent, unless he first looks for a betterment of society by some miraculous process, and then the change in the individual's state of being, which is now unalterably wretched.

Let us consider first Dicenta's treatment of the effect of disregarding marriage laws. The distress resulting from such lawlessness may effect most disastrously the man, or it may be the woman, or perhaps the child. An illustration of the first case is in the story Una mujer del mundo. The woman in the story is already married. She is attracted by a young man, who falls in love with her innocently unsuspecting of her married state. She leads him on to love her; goes with him to a country resort, and finally leaves him, because she will not give up her husband for him. She made the boy lose his faith in woman. She took from him all that he had to give her, gave him nothing in return but a wretched mistrust, and when she tired

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(1) Felipe Trigo, El amor en la vida y en los libros.

of him, left him. (1)

La infanticida depicts the suffering endured by Hortensia, the youngest child of a noble family, who is brought up to believe that the most wicked and dishonorable thing in the world is the birth of a nameless child. She has a friend who is ostracized by having fallen. The marqués, a friend of the family, has been deceived by his wife, has left her and now frequents the home of Hortensia. She innocently trusts him. He betrays her trust, and flees when she discovers to him the proof of his guilt. Hortensia then suffers mental anguish, alone, until the birth of her child. She is frightened to distraction and struggles desperately to keep the tiny thing quiet, finally strangling it in its first breaths. Still terrified, she tries to rid herself of the child by carrying it thru the streets to the river. She is seen by a night watchman; is arrested; disowned by her family; tried publicly; and finally given her freedom because of the plea of her lawyer. But liberty is worse than death. She suffers intensely, because of her sensitive nature; but is faithful to the marqués thru it all, and will not tell the name of her betrayer. Such is the effect of an unconventional relationship upon the girl.

Dicenta does not treat in such detail the life of

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(1) De la batalla, p. 219.

the child whose father will not own him. He does not mention the great misfortune of such a one, very often. However, in Juan José, the boy is such a child. His father was never known to him and his mother, while he was still tiny, even before his birth, had the impulse to kill him, which she would have done had she been courageous enough. Tho Dicenta does not devote whole stories or plays to the subject of the trials of this unfortunate class of society, he sincerely sympathizes with them and pities them. "¡Hijos sin padre! Frase dolorosa cuando la muerte deja las crías de hombres sin el ámparo vigoroso del macho que las engendró. Frase horrible y cruel, cuando el macho vive y abandona la cría a los débiles cuidados de la hembra que partiera con él los goces supremos de la reproducción, la dicha inmensa de perpetuar su carne, la tarea sublime de contribuir, con deleitosísimo tributo, a la inmortalidad humana! ¡Hijos sin padre, teniendo el padre vivo! ¿Puede haber nada tan bárbaro como esto?" (1) He continues his condemnation of the faithless man, saying he is beast-like, but such a comparison is unjust to the beasts. It is not a law of nature, but a law of infamy which governs such conduct. "¿Es el hombre quien hace eso, quien permite eso? No; los que así proceden no pueden, no deben ser, no son hombres. Hay que decirlo en desagravio de la especie. Sí,

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(1) De piedra en piedra, pp. 241-242.

hombres son; hombres que, pervertidos, desnaturalizados por los egoísmos, por las ruindades, por las consideraciones y respetos y conveniencias de la vida social, olvidan las leyes naturales y hacen llamar hijos sin padre a desdichadas criaturas que tienen el padre y la madre vivos sobre la tierra." (1)

Thus he cries out against the guilty parent, tho he gives little time to the misery of the unhappy child. Martínez Sierra, for example devotes a large part of the play, El reino de Dios, to a presentation of the life of the orphans. But Dicenta seems rather to be troubled by the cause of the existing condition and to devote his energy to an attempt to remove the evil by reforming society and thus preventing rather than remedying the harmful situation.

Besides these brief citations of illustrations of the misery brought on the different members of the group concerned, Dicenta has numerous pictures of unhappiness and sorrow and remorse brought about by this great cause of human distress--the uncontrolled passions of men and women. It is true that the author recognizes as perfectly moral, the state of marriage accomplished without the help of courts or clergy. As long as a man and his wife are true to each other and live according to certain defi-

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(1) De piedra en piedra, pp. 244-245.

nite standards, as did Juan José and Rosa, Dicenta does not criticize them for having omitted the marriage ceremony. Rather he criticises society for making the formality an expensive luxury. But he does see the harmful effect of free relationships between the sexes. His own life was passionate, impetuous and unrestrained, but he lived to see the results of his selfishness and passion, and he regretted his mistakes deeply. He tells the story of his loves in Encarnación, tho he uses the third person, and calls himself Tomáa. Tomás is an only child, pampered by his widowed mother. Because of an unruly nature he has been sent home from military school. He is a tempermental author; he writes both prose and poetry. He refuses to go on to school because he wants to make money and help take care of his mother in her old age. So he says, at least. They have been using up their resources for his education. He falls in love with Isabel, a childhood playmate; but their love is only momentary. She deceives him and then tries to force him to marry her, because the man she has really loved, disappears. Tomás refuses, tho there is danger of the other's guilt being shifted to his shoulders. After this tragic disillusionment, he pursues ignoble paths of pleasure. Finally he goes to live for a year or so with an attractive girl, Encarnación. He writes poetry and edits a newspaper to support himself and

his love. She is happy, domestic and good, so long as he is with her; but he finally tires of her and returns to his mother. Then he thinks he loves Luisita, but she gives him up for another. He has every sort of misfortune; his mother loses everything, thru his fault; his newspaper fails. In the midst of this trouble, Encarnación comes to see him and tho he resents the intrusion, she forces him to go with her to a quiet nook where she tells him of her love for him. After he left her she had to return to her former life of sin in order to live; but rather than live thus she has decided to die. She has taken phosphorous and will die within a few hours. Tomás, now completely overcome by sorrow, takes her to a hospital where she finally dies. Tomas' mother sells her last jewels to pay for a funeral and keep the girl from the dissecting room. Tomás, remorseful and dejected on account of his own actions, resolves to better others of herclass.

The attitude of Tomás toward women after his disillusionment is expressed in his outburst of temper when Luisa turns to another. "Lo de Luisita le importaba muy poco. La chicuela fué para él pasatiempo. Sólo su amor propio sufría. Ser suplantado por un comiquillo de la legua le crispaba los nervios." He expected the girl to be faithful to him, but wanted the privilege of leaving

her as soon as he chose.

The grief and unhappiness brought upon themselves affected more than Encarnación and Tomás. His mother was crushed under her load of sorrow. She sought to make every possible amends to the girl for her son's wrongdoing, but she began too late. Tomás also repented too late. He shows a certain belated nobility. "Yo tengo la culpa. Yo que la arranqué de su vida, que le hice ver, disfrutar otra más honrada y después la he abandonado brutalmente sin más razón que mi egoísmo. ¡Soy un miserable, un canalla!...Sostenida por un joven, Encarnación hubiera sido modelo de mujeres, santa madre quizás...La suicida no era ya un individuo; era una concreción humana; el símbolo de toda una casta educada en ambientes de prostitución y miseria. Aquella casta se revolvía en la ignorancia, en el envilecimiento, en el crimen, por falta de apoyo, por culpa de un bárbaro egoísmo que no oxigenaba su atmósfera." (1) What Tomás owed Encarnación, the whole submerged half of humanity which she symbolized, should have. Her death brought a rude admonition of the road to travel. "A procurar el advenimiento de un mundo nuevo donde abandonos, injusticias, ignorancias, prostituciones y miserias no pudieron ser; donde la humanidad toda comulgase en

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(1) Encarnación, pp. 196-197-199.

altares de amor, debían tender sus esfuerzos. Correspondía esta obra a los fuertes. El lo era." (1)

So because Dicenta had such experiences and a definite conviction of his duty to the class represented by Encarnación, he wrote effectively, vividly, forcefully of this problem. It is interesting to notice, however, that at this time he blames himself, or rather men generally, for much of the unhappiness caused by their egotism. Later his blame falls heavily on the woman. In Dos naturalezas, a beautiful woman tempts a man, who has the power to resist her. The idea is here presented that the woman is always to blame. (2) In Luisa, a wicked woman tempts the author to fall in love with her. He struggles with himself and conquers. Again, the woman is to blame. (3) Ana pictures a beautiful, admirable woman; but Dicenta cannot leave his picture of her without suggesting that she, as all others of her sex, will deprive some man of his liberty and happiness, sooner or later. (4) In fact, he goes so far as to say plainly that "Nuestras mujeres son todavía, en su mayor parte, por vicios de edu-

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(1) Encarnación, p. 209.

(2) Spolarium, p. 52.

(3) Id. p. 110.

(4) Mares de España, p. 109.

cación, de herencia, de sociales contrafacturas, más causa de martirio que de goce para el hombre que está a su lado."(1)

The most impressive and forceful of Dicenta's works which treats of this question of relationships is the drama, El crimen de ayer. The play deals with a group of Bohemian couples who disregard marriage laws for the sake of convenience. Julian and Carmen are the only two of the entire group who have a child. Julian tends to shift all responsibility. After a time, Carmen tries to make him promise to give the child his name. He promises to do everything, except to take any immediate action. Then wearying of Carmen, he tries to leave. She realizes it will be the last time she will see him, so she grasps the scissors and stabs him. The curtain falls as he dies.

Carmen's position is pitiful. She has deceived her parents and left them for Julian. She has been happy with him until his love of fame and desire for a marriage of convenience, appropriate to the lawyer he intends to be, make him forget his attachment to Carmen. He becomes ashamed of her and his child. He will not take it out of the house for fear of being seen. He returns often to his

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(1)Por Bretaña, 166-67.

parents, who excuse his boyhood follies and encourage him in his study of law and his courtship of a girl of position, saying that because he has once been foolish, he should not be unhappy forever. Julian's attitude and neglect hurt Carmen for a long time before she will admit it, and she refuses to believe he has deceived her as long as she can. But when he refuses to give her adored child the name it should have, her spirit is aroused and she takes vengeance. Here we have a forceful presentation of the unhappiness brought to the man, the woman and the child, as well; although the child is blissfully ignorant of his misfortune.

These illustrations are not exhaustive of the field which presents this side of the question of human relationships in Dicenta's works; but at least, these serve as a basis for comparison with treatments of relationships between the sexes where marriage laws are observed. In numerous other sketches, stories, and dramas, Dicenta treats of this unlawful association, but there is no additional point of importance that demands our attention except that society is responsible for much of the unhappiness of the woman, who is usually no more to blame for the wrongdoing than the man. Dicenta recognizes the injustice of the double standard. He points out in many places the indefensible attitude of society toward the fallen woman;

but the most forceful plea for fairness is in the lawyer's address to the court for Hortensia, in *La infanticida*. "Esas causas existen. Son producto de una organización social raquítica, antinómica, defectuosa, llena de contradicciones; que se juzga perfecta en sus leyes, que olvida las imposiciones de la naturaleza y--por olvidarlas--crea conflictos y provoca crímenes de los cuales hace responsable al individuo, mientras ella colectivamente se exculpa." (1) A woman is dishonored because she does not comply with the social laws of marriage which are only human made--that is either social accidents or individual conclusions. The woman simply obeys impulses that human laws cannot impede. The man abandons her, a natural course according to custom; so the woman takes all the blame, the hate, the suffering. She is afraid, ashamed, feels that the child is certain, ever-present ignominy, if permitted to live; and therefore, she kills it in terror. The crime is great. Like crimes should be prevented. "Para ello es preciso que vosotros, entidades sociales, hombres serios, jueces sabios, muchachas curiosas, no abofetéis con vuestro desprecio a la mujer caída; que le tendáis la mano; que amparéis su desdicha; que si esto no basta, modifiquéis vuestras leyes por impotentes o por defectuosas; que cuando una mujer

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(1) Novelas, pp. 223-6.

os enseñe a su hijo, no preguntéis cómo le tuvo y que ajenos a toda ofensa, respetando a la madre, porque es madre y sólo porque es madre, os inclinéis ante su paso en reverencia." If this were done, women would not kill their children.

So it is evident from the foregoing illustrations that unsanctioned relationships are unsatisfactory, trouble making and undesirable. But does marriage do away with the evils? It might be if a man married, "para constituir un hogar dichoso; para enaltecerse por el trabajo; para mirarse en los ojos de una mujer bella y virtuosa; para tener una compañera en sus alegrías y un consuelo en sus infortunios."(1) But do men marry for this? To answer the question as Dicenta sees it, we must consider several individual cases. One very attractive story is that called El Sino.(2) A great astronomer who has won his honor and position by overcoming the greatest difficulties, is progressing rapidly, until he falls in love. Then he is married and his troubles begin. Ultimately he must support eight children, a mother-in-law with asthma, and a crazy sister-in-law, besides his wife. He earns very little, though he is a great scientist. He is annoyed con-

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(1) De la batalla, p. 69.

(2) Paraíso perdido, p. 87.

stantly by collectors, till he contracts pneumonis, while working late in his laboratory, and dies. The story does not end here because his misfortunes follow him to his grave, where, after ten years, he is again bothered by financial matters; for his grave was rented for only ten years, so his rest and peace are again disturbed. To put it briefly, the poor man lived among the stars and was happy until he married. Then he had to come down from the heavenly region of his thoughts and life, to love, to marriage, to earth, yes, to a regularhell, from which he was released by death, only to be reminded of his suffering after ten years. So here marriage resulted disastrously even tho the man loved his wife.

Another interesting illustration is in the drama, Luciano. In this play, the husband is an artist, whose wife is entirely out of sympathy with her husband's work. She doesnot care for art; she makes no attempt to appreciate it; she is jealous of anyone who does understand and sympathize with her husband. She acknowledges that she once loved her husband and for that reason is determined to prevent any other person from supplanting her in his affection, even tho at present she cares nothing for him. Luciano; the

artist, an admirable character, explains his love for his wife thus; "Hay una época de la vida, en que todo hombre, y más que ninguno, quien, como nosotros de sueños y de ilusiones se alimenta, siente anhelos inexplicables y acaricia con su imaginación un fantasma vaga de mujer que no tiene forma precisa, ni realidad tangible. Este fantasma, es nuestro sueño de amor, la juventud que necesita completarse en presencia de una naturaleza donde todo ama, desde el sol que se descompone en átomos de luz por cubrir y fecundar a la tierra...El hombre, fascinado por este espectáculo sublime...quiere amar también porque el amor es ley de su existencia...Soñaba y desperté. Eso es todo!" Luciano then comes to love another, but their happiness is made impossible by social conventions.(1)

Another illustration of the same type is in Mi Venus. An artist loves Rosario, his model, but marries a wealthy marchioness partly for social reasons, and because he thinks he loves her. Their happiness lasts while they travel and while he neglects his work. But when he returns to it, their lives are out of harmony. They misunderstand each other. The artist finally returns to Rosario for sympathy and leaves his wife. This story contains a most pointed condemna-

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(1) Luciano, P. 22

tion of married life. It is implied that the looser agreements, such as that with Rosario, bring more happiness.

Un divorcio is another case of an artist and his wife having such different views of life and values that they separate, altho only the day before they believed themselves ideally suited to each other.(1) In the story already mentioned, La infanticida, the unhappiness of married life is depicted in the characters of the marques and his wife, before the marques begins his destruction of Hortensia's happiness. In this case the woman loved a painter. Her husband discovered that someone else was giving his wife the love that he himself refused her; he challenged the young artist to a duel, killed him, and left his wife. The woman lost her honor, her freedom, all pleasure. The man, after his treachery in killing the artist and tho he was as much to blame for her guilt as his wife, lost nothing; but continued his villanous life. "El perfecto caballero, el hombre ideal triunfaba en la corte como una resurrección de los andantes paladines, mientras su esposa, reclusa en la casona montañesa, vivía para sus hijos y para la memoria del pintor muerto a golpe de hierro por

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(1) Mujeres, p. 108.

el brazo experto del marqués." (1)

An amusing illustration of the fact that happy married couples are not so because of true mutual love, but because of their baser emotions and passions is in the story, El triunfo de la condesa. The countess is very jealous of a friend of hers who spends much money and displays her wealth to advantage. This friend's husband dies and the funeral takes place with much pomp and ceremony. Soon after, the count is killed in an accident. The countess mourns for him because she is expected to, and because she had always liked him well enough and he had always humored her; but when it came time for the funeral, the woman was proud to think that her husband's Burial was more costly than her neighbor's, and that she looked better in her mourning costume than her friend did. Such was her love for her husband! Such was their married life that her pleasure in outdoing someone else was greater than her sorrow for the loss of her husband. (2)

So it is with all the pictures of married life. If the two are not miserable to the point of separation, they are, at least, unhappy for some reason. Di-

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(1) La infanticida, p. 178.

(2) Mujeres, p. 169.

centa has an ideal of what a truly happy union should be; but he finds it realized only in the life of birds.

"Eran dos. La hembra, fina, pequeña, con el plumaje blanquinoso, el pico menudo y las patitas sonrosadas. El macho, más grande, más fuerte, con la cabeza adornada por un moño de color de oro, era un cantor infatigable y un amante rendido y leal. Siempre estaban juntos.

"Allí en lo alto de la pajarera, construían todos los años un nido chiquitito, como viven los que aman, ¡como yo he soñado vivir! ¡como ya no viviré nunca! (1)

Such is the life of birds, but with man, marriage is different. It is a great hindrance and an actual misfortune. "Anatolio la erró casandose..... ¡Mala tarde la del hermoso abril en que abandonó su Observatorio y fué a recostarse contra aquel banco del Retiro y sintió dentro de su carne el llamamiento de la primavera! Venganza del planeta Tierra, encolerizado con los desprecios del astrónomo, fué la aparición de la criatura femenina. Por sueño la tomaba Anatolis. Al presente el sueño se había vuelto mujer propia con seis hijos y añadidura de madre vieja y hermana en irremediable soltería. (2)

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(1) Mujeres, p. 108.

(2) Paraíso perdido, p. 124.

Dicenta has drawn several pictures of ideal love, where union would mean happiness, but in each of these cases, there is an insurmountable obstacle to overcome before marriage is possible. In Daniel, for instance, the love of Cesárea and Pablo, is ideal; but they give up their hope of happiness together because each sees the importance of sacrifice to carry out their purpose of bettering their fellow workers. It is the altruistic motive which makes their love perfect and the same motive prevents their marriage. In the play, Luciano, the realization of the love of the artist for Angela is prevented by the artist's wife and the high moral qualities of the girl. Juan Francisco presents the question of social prejudice in the matter of marriage. Juan and Anita truly love each other, but they may never marry because Juan, tho justified in his act, has killed Anita's brother. Her father, an old-fashioned fisherman, hates Juan for this reason, tho he respects him. Anita is obedient to her father. So the lovers are kept apart. Another illustration of the effect of social pressure is in El tiesto de rosas. Because a man is not a noble and his name and family are unknown to the parents of the girl he loves, they forbid the marriage, and he kills himself in desperation. (1)

(1) Spolarium, p. 161.

What solution is there to this great problem? None, apparently. Woman must love. Dicenta firmly believes that. He shows it to be an essential part of her nature. One woman, whose husband had died, and who wanted to be true to his memory, is loved by another whom she admires and respects. The latter, finally conquers her prejudice. "No eran ellos: era la vida, que entraba despaciosamente, callada, traidoramente, en el gabinetito, con el aire de fuera, con los alientos primaverales que del jardín subían...La vida reclamaba su puesto en el gabinetito; en él quería ostentar su imperio la primavera triunfadora...La vida no se detiene. La muerte no puede ser estorbo de la vida. Amad y vivid." (1) So if it is possible to do so we should "gozar primero y morir después; porque ésa es la ley humana." (2) But it is difficult even to enjoy life for a little while for "el dolor es el compañero más seguro y constante del hombre. No dudo de la inmortalidad del dolor." (3) Perhaps the reason for this is that love is an essential part of human experience and it usually results in unhappiness. "Amor prendió en ellos e hizolos, como a todos los hombres en los comien-

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(1) Paraíso perdido, El retrato del Maestro, p. (85.

(2) Spolarium, p. 163.

(3) Id. p. 116.

zos de una pasión, cobardes, recelosos y huraños. Amor es, cuando empieza, casi odio. En odio suele concluir." (1)

Such is Dicenta's idea of love and its effect on the relationship between men and women. Macías Picavea seems to see the situation in much the same light. In regard to the question of love, or the element of volition in the moral temperment, the Spanish race is governed in its actions more by passion than volition, that is the Spanish people act on passionate impulse rather than after consideration. As a result, moral vices have corrupted Spanish public life. The worst of such vices is the inconsistency of conduct, due to a perpetual contradiction between judgement and actions and leading to lack of personal or civic pride. (2)

Felipe Trigo deals with this subject of sex relations from a different viewpoint. He attempts to discover causes for the different emotions, rather than to discuss the morality of actions or the results of such actions on society, as Macías Picavea does. As Dicenta touches on the question from both angles,

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(1) Paraíso perdido, P. 17.

(2) El problema national, p. 210.

a brief comparison with Trigo is worth while. Trigo's ideas, in general, are more morbid and depressing than Dicenta's. He blames much of the unhappiness and misery of married life upon the man. "Sabio: tú que desprecias a las mujeres, tu que te debes total a tu ciencia, te has casado y te has perdido,...porque tu esposa, tus cinco, tus doce hijos, se han apoderado de tu vida, de todas las horas de tu vida, en nombre--

¿En nombre de que?

Del amor, no; porque lo niegas. En nombre de la lujuria, designada por ti con el disfraz de necesidad orgánica.

¡Qué cosa tan triste!"

And, after giving examples of men who deny their better impulses and fail to develop their real intellectual abilities on account of weakly submitting to baser impulses, he ends the chapter with,

"Sabio, ¡por Dios, sábetete a ti mismo!" So men fail to develop themselves as they might, because they follow the course of least resistance and marry without due consideration. (1)

Trigo's idea of women is far from idealistic; for "el amor es la vida entera de la mujer. En la del

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(1) El amor en la vida y en los libros, pp. 30-32.

hombre es un episodio." This in itself is not unidealistic, but when one considers his ideal of human love he can better appreciate the significance of the statement. "El amor ha de ser belleza. No puede ser amor, entonces, el amor humano, basado en los humanos cuerpos llenos de imperfección, de suciedad, de repugnancia." Furthermore, he says, "Hay en general para la mujer por lo tanto, según su procedencia de clase, y en el mismo dintel de su entrada a la plena vida, dos sociales e inversos modos de recibirla: el del vicio más brutal y repugnante, aquel vicio, porque es el amor sin amor, la parte bestia del amor, recibiendo en medio del social abandono, a la mujer formada bestia por el abandono mismo."(1)

Many writers, beside Dicenta, treat of the question of relationships between men and women. Martínez Sierra in El reino de Dios, presents vividly the lives of the different types of women who come to<sup>a</sup> maternity home. Candelas tells her story saying that she is there because she loved a man who did not deserve her love. He would have loved her openly and married her had she been rich. She regrets her lot especially be-

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(1) El amor en la vida y en los libros, p. 110.

cause her child would never have the advantages she wanted him to have. She felt herself disgraced.

Quica is quite a different type. She is an inmate of the home for the third time. She explains her ideas of the situation thus: "Pues no pasa mal. Primero y principal, no le cuesta a Usté un céntimo. Tiene Usté buen médico, tiene Usté las hermanas, que aunque para ellas es Usté lo peor de este mundo, por el aquél de la caridad, la cuidan a Usté lo mismo que si fuera Usté una reina; mata una gallina pa Usté no más; tiene Usté su caldo, su copa de jérez, su chocolate con bizcochos, se pasa Usté medio año descansada, sin más obligación que darle el pecho al chico, y encima si se quiere Usté quedar otro medio año para criar a otro, le pagan a Usté de ama cuatro duros al mes. A ver qué más va Usté a pedir. Yo he criado ya siete, entre míos y ajenos, y he vivido cuatro años y medio de balde y le he sacao a la Diputación más de mil pesetas."(1)

But few women are of that state of mind. Some still love the fathers of their children; and here Martínez Sierra suggests the injustice of the double standard as Dicenta also does. Other women are desperate and kill their children,--another thing already noted in Dicenta. One great difference between the

(1) El reino de Dios, p. 98.

two writers in treating the subject is that Martínez Sierra sympathizes deeply with the unfortunate one and emphasizes her trouble because of his own gentle nature, while Dicenta pictures the misery to rouse the reader's anger against an unjust society.

Galdós, Blasco Ibáñez, and Pío Baroja also deal with this phase of social life. They show how rich men often take advantage of poor girls, as does Dicenta; how society is unjust very often, and how the current social attitude causes unnecessary suffering and even murder. Thus Dicenta is not alone in his desire to better humanity by pointing out its weaknesses in this way. In this matter, as in the labor question, he subordinates other details and matters of plot construction to the presentation of the problem. He is more energetic and radical than the others. But neither he nor they offer any solution.

### chapter III

#### The Government

There is a myth which tries to account for all the natural resources of Spain, the attractiveness of the Spanish people, and the beauty of the country, by saying that these gifts were granted by Jupiter at the request of a beautiful Spanish maiden. But the girl forgot to petition the father of the gods to bestow on her country the blessing of good government. She remembered, too late, that her people had told her to ask for this favor as well as for the others; so it was refused. Ever since, the Spanish nation has suffered because of her forgetfulness. Dicenta recognizes that the system is at fault. He knows that defects of legislation and administration are responsible for much of the distress of the people. But he is not scientific in his treatment of the situation; nor does he stress its importance very much.

Closely connected with the question of government, itself, are the matters of national protection and of the correction of crime. Dicenta criticises certain phases of army life and points out the

effect of war on the nation; but he recognizes this as only a minor problem in comparison with that of labor or with that of personal relationships. He is concerned by the conditions surrounding the administration of penal institutions. He criticises the methods of procedure in the course, and the treatment of prisoners, who may not be criminals until after serving a term in the corrective institution. But even at best, a prison system is only an attempt to cure an evil after it has taken deep root. It is not one of the vital, fundamental factors of human welfare. So why should one interested in social betterment, spend so much time pointing out the faults of an institution which would be unnecessary if other social adjustments were properly made? That is, if proper emphasis were placed upon the cause of evil, and such causes removed, if proper government regulation were made possible, the question of prisons might be reduced to one of very small importance. So long as a writer is interested in bettering social conditions, why should he not attempt to remove the cause rather than effect a cure? From Dicenta's viewpoint this might be answered in two ways. The hope of diminishing noticeably the number of corrective institutions by preventing crim-

nal acts, is uncertain. It will take generations to reduce materially the causes of crime. So long as prisons are a necessity, should they not be made more efficient as a means of reforming the prisoner, rather than a means of retaliation upon him or making him an example to others? Moreover, prisons are a tangible, concrete question to handle; the defects are outstanding and may be remedied to a certain extent. But prevention of crime by improving social conditions and by government regulation seems abstract and difficult to accomplish. So Dicenta emphasizes the need of prison reform, and gives comparatively little consideration to the means of bettering legislation and government control of social conditions.

That the government is responsible for the diseases, the evils of Spanish social life, is made clear in Salpicaduras. The criminals, themselves, accuse the government officials of being their accomplices in the crimes which it is their duty to prevent. (1) The representatives of authority prove each other to be infamous, morally and also materially; that is, they neglect their real duties and try always to keep in popular favor, for this is to their personal advantage.

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(1) Los de abajo, p. 273.

Beside that, they cheat the government in a material way whenever it is possible. The reason for the corruption is that the Spaniard is dominated by a passion for gold, favor, influence and praise. He is selfish and ignorant and society suffers. He does not realize that he, as a member of society, suffers with the others. In the story, La ciudad y el campo, the Stone Mason's Union asks the laborers in the quarry to join it in a larger union. The author says that more is accomplished in this one meeting than in thirty years of the Congress in Spain.(1) In El problema resuelto, already referred to as a treatment of the land problem in Andalucia, the government is condemned for taking no helpful action in the matter. "Esto ocurre en Andalucía todos los años; y todos los años el Gobierno se preocupa de ello mucho y trata de poner remedio a los males. ¡Vaya si trata! El que padecemos hoy lo ha anunciado ya." (2) The government corruption is indicated in the sketch Por donde viven las actas. A young graduate of a law school wishes to enter government service. He is an earnest, upright man who wishes to do honest work. On

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(1) Traperías, p. 90.

(2) Los de abajo, p. 105.

investigation, he discovers that it is impossible to enter government work without lowering his ideals and standards; for political corruption dominates their field of enterprise. (1)

In Los bárbaros we have an interesting account of government intervention in labor troubles. A strike is threatened in a mining district. The situation is critical. "El gobierno intervino. Hubo conferencias con los patronos; ofrecimientos, sólo ofrecimientos de leyes más equitativas; arbitrajes inútiles de patronos, gobernantes y obreros. Toda la comedia político-social de rigor que fué representada, sin omitir requisitos ni gastos." Then the workers had meetings, many meetings; the ministers had councils, many councils; and finally when reconciliation was found impossible, the government was declared conquered and the strike took place. Force had to be used; lives were lost; property was wasted; unhappiness prevailed, because of inefficient governmental authority.

The attitude of the soldiers toward their obligations in case of a strike, is made clear in Daniel. Pedro, Daniel's son is a soldier. His brother

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(1) La finca de los muertos, p. 45.

is a laborer. Pedro greatly dislikes his duty of firing on the strikers; but "¿Si nos lo mandan, qué vamos a hacer? ¿Crees que los oficiales y nosotros disparamos por gusto? No; pero la disciplina es la disciplina." (1) Another thing that the recruit resents is the attitude of his superior officer toward him. Because the higher officials are domineering and harsh with the men, as soon as a private becomes sargeant he assumes the same attitude and his men resent it. Because the army is used to keep down the laborers, and because of the attitude of the officers toward their men, "El ejercicio no es lo que debe ser; brazo armado por la patria para defenderla; es muchas veces instrumento de los opresores contra los oprimidos. Los oprimidos no deben amarle. En el breve espacio de ocho días se vino abajo en el espíritu de Manuel la falsa leyenda militar." Another injustice of the army is the favoritism shown to the rich soldiers. In Crónicas, this thought is made clear by showing the attitude of a poor boy who is being sent on a dangerous trip, while his companion, whose father is rich, is left in safety.

Aside from these points in connection with the

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(1) Daniel, pp. 10-11

army, Dicenta shows the effect of war on the conditions in the country; he shows how women who send their sons to war are just as heroic as the men who go, and as those who give their money; he criticises the ordinary patriotism and mentions the cause of the Spanish American War, justifying Spain's position. But his criticism is not constructive, nor does he treat these matters at length, nor relate them to other social problems.

As to the other matter closely related to government control,--the matter of penal institutions,--Dicenta has more to say. In his masterpiece, Juan José, he shows the ineffectiveness of management of the prison; for Juan José escaped when he wished, returning of his own free will and not because he was retaken by officials. Also, the desolate, mentally unhealthful atmosphere is suggested; and the injustice of his being sent to prison in the first place is brought out. He was sentenced not because he was a criminal, but because he had been caught in his first theft, which he committed only because society refused to let him live honestly. So he was taken to prison to be supported by society, while he lost his honor, his strength, his self-respect, and his desire to live.

Another play, El lobo, is entirely devoted to the question of prison reform. El lobo, king of the prisoners, is a hard-hearted old bandit, whose life has been spent in the mountains with his dog. He hates all men outside of the prison and considers them his enemies. Some of the prisoners are making an attempt to escape from the prison. They are discovered and the warden comes to investigate the matter. His little daughter comes to find her father, sees El Lobo knitting a sock, and asks him to make some for her doll. She climbs on his knee and kisses him in her sweet, trustful way. El Lobo's life is changed by this gentleness which is the first he has ever known. He thinks only of the child from this time until his death. He gets news of her when he can, and makes other little things for her, tho he is ridiculed for it. Finally another escape is attempted. Many of the prisoners are involved. The warden is to be killed first. El Lobo knows of the plans and saves the man's life, but receives a fatal wound himself. He is taken to the hospital where he dies after telling the warden that he saved his life for the sake of Aurora, the little girl. So Aurora is sent for and carries out El Lobo's last request by kissing him again. The story illustrates

how a little humanity shown to a criminal, may change him into a hero. It suggests that milder treatment of the prisoners would produce better results; for these men are not kept active and are not given anything to think of; so their minds are filled with hatred of others, and their thoughts develop only along lines of escape by any means possible. They are miserable, both mentally and physically. Their sleeping quarters are cramped and unhealthfully damp and musty. Their beds are uncomfortable and dirty, and the bed-clothing is ragged and scant. They become beasts because they are treated as such. The officials are severe and unreasonably domineering. They often inspire hate and rebellion rather than respect. (1) And still their system is ineffective, for the prisoners frequently escape. And what is worse than mere escape is the fact that most of the released prisoners are worse criminals after a term of imprisonment than they were before. This is especially true in the case of children.(2)

The fact that a child has committed a misdemeanor does not mean that he is a criminal. But because he has committed one wrong, it will be easier for him

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(1) Paraíso perdido, pp. 25-27-43.

(2) Spolarium, p. 41.

to repeat the process if he is not handled with tact. Since a child has so much of life before him, and because he has not the judgment of an older person, it is unreasonable to hold him responsible and treat him as other convicts are treated. But Dicenta thinks that this condition, productive of crime and young criminals, exists in reform schools and children's wards of the prisons. One little boy has stolen four stockings. He is before the justice at the Casa de Canónigos. The case cannot be settled for a period of from four to ten months. So the child is placed in a reform school where he will receive a course in criminal training from the older boys. (1) Un vástago del Cid also pictures the injustice of placing children in prison. The boy in this case, a lad of twelve years, has killed his father because the man was beating the child's mother, and the boy couldn't endure it. He had noble impulses and emotions. His life would have been a useful one, had he not been imprisoned for the best part of it, and taught the way of youths trained in crime. (2)

Another objectionable feature of the present

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(1) Los de abajo, p. 208.

(2) Id., p. 75.

system of administering punishment is the open court procedure and the public spectacle of the condemned. The effect of making public the trials of those accused of crime is harmful both to the person who is being tried and to the audience, as well. It is never a beneficial pastime to follow the details of a criminal case simply from curiosity. The young mind, especially, is open to suggestion and by filling it with such thoughts, no good can be hoped for. Men are liable to take sides in the matter and perhaps derive satisfaction from the other's misfortune. Such pleasure is debasing and injurious. (1) But this evil is not so harmful as that of displaying the convicted men in public. Diversión gratuita shows that to march prisoners thru the streets as if they were on exhibition, increases their hatred and disrespect of society. But free men and women take pleasure in such brutality and even write to the warden for good seats at the next execution. This appeal to man's baser nature is one phase of social pathology. Satisfaction of such emotions should not be encouraged. (2)

The best treatment of this matter is in Codo con

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(1) Spolarium, p. 144.

(2) Los de abajo, p. 285.

condemned and reason for the condemnation is given. Tho the men may be criminals, they are still human beings. Most of them were brought up in poverty, without love or education, in an environment suited to wild beasts. As a result, they became animal-like. The law and society represented by the law do nothing to help these creatures, but always remember them when a crime is committed. (1) The situation would be greatly improved if schools were built instead of prisons; if men were trained instead of punished; if children were given something to do instead of being forbidden to do what they want to.

A last point in this connection is the attitude of the writer toward capital punishment. Dicenta does not stress this point, nor go into detail as to his opinion of the executioner, as many others do; but he makes it clear that he objects to punishment by death for any but the most atrocious crimes, and even then the sentenced man should not be shut up in a gloomy cell to await the day of execution. (2) For the punishment should be for society's protection; society should not attempt to retaliate upon a victim of circum-

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(1) Los de abajo, p. 99.

(2) Id. p. 162.

stances.

The author is more than ordinarily explicit as to the particular defects of the existing prison situation and also as to some means of bettering conditions. He wants prisons to be more sanitary and less depressing in their effect on the prisoners; he wants more sympathetic treatment of the convicts, less publicity of court procedure and administration of punishment; and most important of all, he suggests the better education of the down-trodden, a more sympathetic treatment of the lower class before they become the wards of society. In other words, the law should take care of the convict before he becomes one.

Every writer who interests himself in the social problems of Spain recognizes the defects of her government. Macías Picayea concludes a long discussion of the political situation thus: "Hemos procurado dese-ear el monstruo político, matador de España, --cien veces más matador que los propios yankees e ingleses, reunidos en aviesa conjura contra nuestra vida, ... por fuera y en torpísima apariencia, libertad, derechos, instituciones civiles, ciencia, arte industrias, ... cual ejemplar y modelo de un pueblo cuasi perfecto y cultísimo en sus instituciones; por dentro, y en

la triste arbitrariedad, el caciquismo, la ignorancia, la tosquedad, la incultura..., ¡todas las cualidades que caracterizan a las sociedades bárbaras!(1)

This author's discussion of the causes and possible remedies of the situation are theoretical, contains abundant historical details, and suggests a practical revolution. The theory is probably admirable, but it compares in no way with Dicenta's concrete suggestions as to immediate possible changes in human attitudes and social customs. El problema nacional is far more inclusive and scientific than anything Dicenta undertakes.

Joaquín Costa criticizes the governmental procedure thus: "Las libertades políticas, adquiridas a precio de tanta sangre; han fracasado, porque los legisladores y gobernantes no se cuidan más que de escribirlas en la Gaceta sin darles cuerpo y raíz en el cerebro y en el estómago, en la despensa y en la escuela; la libertad sin garbanzas no es libertad; el que tiene la llave del estómago, tiene la llave de la conciencia."(2)

Altamira takes a brighter view of the situation tho he corroborates many of the foregoing statements.

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(1) El problema nacional, pp. 269-271.

(2) La tierra y la cuestión social, p. 89.

"The year 1898 marks a definite revival of economic prosperity. The evils of industrial and economic life of Spain are fully recognized and tho not overcome at this time, there is a rapid rate of economic progress...Parties are divided on lines of allegiance of individuals to the chieftan of their group. National policies and projects of reform on the part of those in power, get little beyond the stage of rhetoric, while government is too largely given over to the interplay of personal ambitions... Everywhere there is a discontent with the present management of state affairs and it is customary to charge even the untoward incidents of daily life to the fault of bad government. Many factors have combined to bring about this state of mind: the very material progress of the country, resulting in a betterment of the condition of the poor, tho their lot is still far from being an enviable one, has awakened desires among the masses of which their ancestors never dreamed... But the social, economic, and pñlitical betterment of Spain, cannot proceed very far while the aristocracy is in control. On the other hand, the experience of the past has not demonstrated that democracy could maintain order

and this present regime does. Furthermore, the aristocracy is by no means an exclusive caste but is open to the entry of all."(1) The reasons for the control of the aristocracy are, according to Chapman: (1) that the more ambitious poor men go to America because they have no spur, nor any stimulus of the other's successes. Only the poorest, least ambitious, least troublesome remain; (2) the government owns and operates lottery establishments, gambling is a national disease; (3) the extensive character of charitable enterprises, the army surplus, the church activity and others, make it possible for men to live without work; (4) the extreme poverty of the masses, their low wages and degrading living conditions are a great drawback; (5) the lack of a good school system is a detriment, for good government is impossible without the education of the masses.(2)

Martin Hume sums up the situation in a concise and explicit way. "All the nation asks is to be left alone to overtake the time wasted in the past. Administrative corruption exists still and will continue to exist until gradually education shall have reached its constituents and the demand for honesty shall be made

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(1) Chapman's Altamira's Hist. of Spain, pp. 508-  
 (2) Id. p. 523.

in tones of united authority. The loss of the colonies is only the natural result of this political and administrative dishonesty which is the last dying remnant of the bad old times. The danger which still threatens Spain is the ineradicable tendency of certain regions to assert autonomy. The reasons for this are rooted in the very origin of the peoples. Probably this will have to be faced and accepted in some form before the Spanish race assumes its permanent position among the reborn nations of the world." (1)

So Dicenta is supported in his attitude toward the government. Others also recognize that the shortcomings and defects may be at least partially eradicated by a better system of education. But he does not emphasize this suggestion, nor does he treat the question of education fully, nor relate it particularly to the problem of government any more than to suggest it as a possible means of bettering the situation.

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(1) The Spanish People, p. 513.

## Chapter 1V

### Other Social Problems

Dicenta's field is broad. He studied society in every aspect with which he could acquaint himself. But necessarily his work on certain problems was limited and his premature death found unfinished. Even those problems which he treats most fully have not the conclusions that might be expected of one who writes almost exclusively of social pathology. But this may be true merely because Dicenta's genius was obscured by dissipation and because of his impulsive nature, rather than because his life ended before his plans for a means of social betterment were fully developed. Evidence of this is the fact that his masterpiece, Juan José, was written among the first of his social works. The problems already treated, are those with which Dicenta deals at most length. Others interested him and he made an attempt to point out the evils of these. The most outstanding of such questions are those of education, religion, drunkenness, and amusements.

Considering the fact that education is suggested as a means of bettering general social conditions, of reducing crime, and increasing the efficiency of

government, it is odd perhaps that Dicenta does not treat the matter more fully. He mentions the unsatisfactory results of the education received in private schools, and brings out the fact that tho the public school is considered too plebeian an institution for the children of any but the poorest and most careless parents, yet the training is more beneficial and thoro. This is illustrated by a contrast between the lives of twin brothers. The favored child was sent to a private school where he studied little, but received prizes and undeserved rewards, merely to make his parents think he was being well trained. He finished school in that way after spending much of his parents' small income, and showed his gratitude by robbing them of what they had saved for their later years. The other child, put thru the course of a public school, received no honors other than the praise of his teachers, but learned much by hard work and rough experience. After the completion of his training, he worked for a living and made up to his parents what his brother had robbed them of.(1)

But public instruction is not universal. Too many children receive no education at all and those who do are forced to study in unsanitary buildings

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(1) El idilio de Pedrín, p. 18.

where they are driven to unpleasant tasks by worn-out underpaid teachers, who lack the sympathy which children need. Both in the city and in the village is education neglected. (1) Dicenta's ideal of instruction is an open-air school where the children are kept healthy and happy; where the teachers are sympathetic and joyful in their work; where the children learn because it is an interesting, attractive process. But he regrets that such education is almost non-existent in Spain. (2)

In El problema nacional, the discussion of education verifies the impression given in Dicenta. "If one examines the state of public and private establishments, entrusted with the instruction of the children, the sad reality becomes manifest." Primary education is wretchedly inefficient. The teachers are undesirable because of their attitude toward the children and toward their work. Secondary education is considered unimportant by the general population. The attitude of students who attend secondary schools is detrimental to their proper development. "Indeed, the imperfections and vices of Spanish education are reflected in a deplorable manner, in the national culture." (3)

(1) El idilio de Pedrín, p. 18.

(2) Mares de España, pp. 37-38.

(3) Macías Picavea, El problema nacional, pp. 122-155.

Joaquín Costa emphasizes the importance of schools to teach agriculture and specialized lines of industry, as well as better public schools to teach the need of cooperation and the mutual benefits of organization. Galdós points out that the poor are in poverty partly because of their ignorance and superstition due to lack of training. (1) Giner de los Ríos believes that one reason for the inefficiency of the school system is the lack of sympathy between society and the schools. The two are entirely separate and become more uncooperative as education advances. The situation of the schools is a critical one. (2)

So Dicenta is justified in his opinion, tho he puts little emphasis on it. But how is the problem to be solved if the people must be educated to make better laws and if the laws have to improve the school system so that people may be better educated? It is, of course, in the hands of those who are trained and who should have the interests of the people at heart; and they may improve the situation by gradually bettering school conditions.

Religion is another problem to which Dicenta makes

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(1) Celia de los infiernos.

(2) La Universidad Española, pp. 66.

little reference. He refers to it indirectly at times; for instance in Luciano, the Catholic laws of marriage are objected to because of their unjust restriction, their prevention of divorce and therefore of a second marriage between two who are really suited to each other. (1) Another institution for which Catholicism is responsible is that of the monasteries. Dicenta objects to them, not because they are harmful, but because they are useless. Their effect on those who give themselves to the service of the church is to make them self-satisfied and indifferent to the unhappiness of the outside world which they might be helping to remedy. The rivalry among the several monastic orders expresses itself, not in attempts to better humanity and lessen suffering, but in futile self-sacrifice. (2) A more direct attack on modern religion is in a comparison with the old druid religion which demanded bloody sacrifice. The ancient custom seems to us barbarous, but is the present system any less so? For hundreds of heretics and Jews have suffered death for refusing to proclaim the Catholic religion. And it becomes no less tolerant as time goes

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(1) Luciano, p. 51.

(2) De piedra a piedra, pp. 162-4-5.

on, tho its methods change, apparently. Catholicism is not the only intolerant creed; others commit similar outrages against humanity in the name of religion; but Catholicism is the one which has dominated Spain.(1)

Dicenta's views on science versus religion are interesting. Science has a religion of its own, which is truth. Religion itself is full of fanaticism and intolerance. These qualities,--truth and fanaticism are irreconcilable enemies. When the final test comes, science will overrule because science is just. (2)

In Los de abajo, one finds more references to religion and Christianity than in any other volume of the author's works. He shows here his objection to the celibacy of the clergy, for priests are only human beings who take vows, sometimes without due consideration. Then they are supposed to be superhuman in their suppression of the natural emotion of love. (3) Dicenta is anti-clerical, accusing the priests of hypocrisy and blaming them for always favoring the upper classes instead of the oppressed. As he sits at the foot of a dead tree, he thinks of what the same tree was a hundred years before in the time of Charles IV. He compares the con-

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(1) Por Bretaña, pp. 28-31.

(2) De rastrillo adentro, p. 159.

(3) Aurora, pp. 29-31.

ditions that existed then with those obtaining at present, and finds that there has been little advance in freedom of religious thought, as well as in other things. The priests still rule and the common people are not allowed to think. (1) His most open attack on Christianity is in the story of the old lady who was refused entrance to many charitable institutions and finally dies in front of one of them. "La caridad ha hecho bancarrota. A un reinado (referring to Christianity) que perpetúa la desventura humana en la tierra, asegurando dichos eternos en el cielo, debe suceder otro reinado, --el de la justicia." (2) In other words, Christianity has failed.

Other writers also touch on the religious situation, criticising certain aspects of it; but not, as a rule, condemning it as Dicenta does. Martínez Sierra criticises the Catholic marriage vows as being too rigid and stringent; but he declares that religion will help cure the evils of this world. The life of Sor Gracia illustrates his point, for she was religious and her whole purpose in life was to help others. (3)

Blasco Ibáñez maintains that religion is one cause of the mental inactivity of the laborer. The dead

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- (1) Al pie de un tronco, Los de abajo, p. 127.  
 (2) Al fin abrieron, Los de abajo, p. 37.  
 (3) Reinó de Dios, pp. 98-224-5.

and not the living Christ is all they think of in connection with their religion. (1) This is a stagnation of mental and moral development. The entire novel El Intruso, is an attack on the methods used by the Jesuit priests in gaining their purposes. They spend their lives praying and scheming to induce others, especially the rich, to become members of their sect, while they should be working and earning an honest living. Blasco condemns the religious war carried on by such men. "¡Martirse, herirse por un pedazo de leña groseramente tallado que estaba allá en lo alto, entre luces y flores, mientras existían en el mundo terribles enemigos, como el hambre y la injusticia, que hacían necesario el esfuerzo común y fraternal de todos los hombres!" But he believes that idols have deceived the people too long and their days are numbered. Men are beginning to curse them. "Eran los encubridores de la injusticia. Bajarían de sus altares, como habían descendido los dioses del paganismo, cuando les llegó su hora, a pesar de que fueron más hermosos que aquellos. Quedarían en los museos entre las divinidades del pasado...y la humanidad, incapaz ya de representar bajo formas groseras sus aspiraciones y anhelos, adorarán en el infinito de sus

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(1) La bodega, pp. 203-6.

idealismo las dos únicas divinidades de la nueva religion,--la ciencia y la justicia social." (1)

It would seem that if one writes of the things he knows most about, Dicenta would have more to say about drunkenness than about any other problem. But such is not the case. He cannot avoid the question entirely for it is one that enters into the consideration of other social problems; but he evades the discussion as much as possible. In one place he seems to justify, or at least, to sympathize with habitual drinkers; for he says that men drunk only occasionally, do far more harm than those accustomed to liquor at all times. (2) He describes one under the influence of drink as "un borracho que despierta y guiña los ojos para acostumbrarse a la luz: y desentrmese su lengua con chasquido ronco, y se pasa la mano por la frente para alejar de ella la neblina embrutecedora del alcohol." (3) He recognizes the harmful results of both occasional and habitual drinking. A boy unaccustomed to being under the influence of liquor, killed a companion unintentionally. (4) Another man, a friend

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(1) El Intruso, p. 233.

(2) Paraíso perdido, p. 116.

(3) De la batalla, p. 30.

(4) Id. p. 138.

of the author, killed himself by weakly submitting to his desire for drink. "Entregándose al envenamiento diario del alcohol y al diario cultivo de la ociosidad, destruyó su organismo, mató su porvenir, amortiguó su inspiración.(1) With a certain class of people, drink is the only means of pleasure. "El aguardiente es mi recurso y gano pocas perras pa beber el que necesito." (2) The effect is demoralizing.

Blasco Ibáñez devotes a novel, La bodega, to a discussion of alcoholism. He shows its harmful effects and makes it evident that drink is one cause of poverty. The laborers are taught to believe firmly in the wine they make and are encouraged in their drunkenness, so that the masters and land owners may more easily keep them under control. (3)

Pío Baroja also attacks drunkenness. He shows the effect of the alcohol habit on both men and women. He points out the fact that men go to a wineshop for the sake of forgetting their sorrow. The result of this habit is the ruin of their minds and bodies, as well as to endanger the lives of others. (4)

(1) Idos y muertos in Novelas, p. 110.

(2) Daniel, p. 42.

(3) La bodega, p. 147.

(4) La busca, pp. 128-30.

The question of amusements is one which Dicenta treats only as the sources of amusement appear to him to be injurious forms of diversion that deprive the poor of their rights or that stand out as absolute injustices of the present social situation. For instance, he criticises the idle summers of the rich, spent in luxury and ease at some resort, while the laborers toil thru the heat of the day, earning the money that their overlords waste. He criticises the amusements of those who frequent the wineshops and cabarets when their passions are aroused and they commit crimes as a result of dissipation. He says little of the national sport, the bull fight; but his opinion is expressed clearly. "I do not defend the bull fights, nor do I condemn them. I believe that due to man's nature, because he is not completely educated, he needs a brutal spectacle to serve as a valve for the release of the element of beast-like savagery which every individual possesses. As proof of this theory, it may be noted that every nation has its barbarous diversion, and frankly I prefer to see a bull fighter foiling a beast by means of his skill, to witnessing the spectacle of two pugilists or two gamecocks in action, or a gymnast tempting fate from his trapeze. Bull fighting is more artistic. There is one

objection, of course. The cruel suffering of the horses constitutes the sad and repugnant part of the Spanish spectacle. (1)

Eugenio Nöel writes against certain amusements, especially against the excess to which they are carried in Andalucia. He shows that the extent to which a certain class worships pleasure, is a detriment to society because all initiative is killed. He indicates that bull fights are a great evil; that gambling is carried to excess with harmful results. (2) He objects to such men as Bibi, whom he uses as an example. The man was accustomed to gamble, to trick anyone he could, to run away with another's wife, and amuse himself to his own satisfaction at all times. But Nöel's treatment of such questions is not so serious as Dicenta's. The former takes the subject as an interesting one for a group of stories. He brings out many amusing features, while Dicenta uses the same material with more serious intent. Nöel uses the serious element as a suggestion and makes the whole more attractive to the casual reader.

Pío Baroja also attacks gambling and the bull fights. He treats them as serious problems but introduces the question in the midst of other incidents and details; that is, he does not make the treatment of some harmful pleasure the basis for a novel.

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(1) Traperías, pp. 69-70. (2) Señoritos chulos.

Chapman mentions the bull fight and the lottery as two of the causes for the control of the aristocracy. Such control is one of the drawbacks to social progress. The lottery is a national disease, and the bull fight is too emotional a sport for the best interests of the people. (1)

(1) History of Spain, p. 523.

## Chapter V.

### Society--Its Responsibilities and its Future

Society is responsible for the welfare of its individual members. Many recognize that this is true to a certain degree, but few put less blame on the individual and more on society, than Dicenta. Just in so far as society fails in its duty to the individual, it is unjust. Dicenta does not neglect to point out these injustices. Nor does he fail to see that tho the present social conditions of Spain are undesirable, there is hope of bettering them in the future. How far distant this future may be and how the changes are to be brought about, are unanswered questions; at least, they are not satisfactorily answered. Some of the means of bettering conditions have been mentioned in previous chapters; but even tho all these changes were made, the result would not be what Dicenta hopes for and many years would be required for their accomplishment.

L. Bonafaux compares Dicenta's picture of society with a beast of the arena. The men of Dicenta's stories are the victims of this beast; they struggle vainly in combat against conditions, only to be forgot-

ten, as were the vanquished gladiators. They suffer, shed blood and die for no more recompense than the men who died to satisfy the multitude.(1) The comparison is a good one, for many of the characters in the stories already referred to are such victims; for example, Juan José, Encarnación, Hortensia. Dicenta compares man to a fly in a cobweb. He tells how the insect tries to save itself, but becomes more and more entangled. It is a helpless victim from the first moment of its entanglement and becomes more helpless every moment. (2) So it is with men. It is the law, which must be fulfilled. Therefore, society is to be blamed for the unhappiness and misfortunes of the people. Society, not the individual needs the penitentiary. (3) Society is in such a condition that Dicenta compares it to an organism in an advanced state of decomposition. It cannot be examined anywhere without displaying alarming signs of decay.(4)

That society is responsible for individual misfortunes is evident in numerous instances. Agua fuerte pictures a helpless imbecile, a social product.(5)

(1) Spolarium, p. 10.

(2) Id. pp. 18-23.

(3) Por Bretaña, p. 23.

(4) Los de abajo, p. 273.

(5) Id. p. 114.

La infanticida shows that the social attitude is to be blamed for Hortensia's crime. El sino makes clear the fact that society does not appreciate a man's efforts until he is dead and cannot be encouraged and inspired to greater accomplishments by a just recognition of his labor. The reason for strikes, the reason that one man struggles against another to gain an uncertain end, is not that man, by nature, likes to fight and kill and make others suffer, but because of a "barbarous social organization, in which all are prisoners." (1) No one has an opportunity to follow his own inclinations, his better impulses, because he is so bound by social law that he is not a free agent. The reason for all crimes is not that man is criminal by nature, but that through years of experience, he has had this thought constantly impressed on his mind, "They have wounded you; strike back." (2) So his animal nature is appealed to and he acts like a beast. Another reason for infamy is that the world deserts those who need it most. "El mundo descuida tanto a los seres que lo constituyen, tan escasamente regula las omisiones de la naturaleza y las perversiones del ejemplo, que cuantos, por capricho de la fortuna, no poseen las bondades de éste, ni las com-

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(1) Los bárbaros, p. 22.

(2) Spolarium, p. 39.

placencias de aquélla, se hundén, y se hundén más en el légamo sombrío que nacidos en la infamia, en la infamia se educan, de la infamia se alimentan y por la infamia existen; el mundo los abandona, y allá van ellos con el ímpetu fatal de un mecanismo ciego que arrolla y destruye cuanto halla al paso. Cuando uno de estos seres tropieza en su camino con alguna criatura nerviosa por temperamento y salvaje por educación, esa criatura está perdida sin remedio." (1)

Another thing for which society is responsible is that one who wishes to become great must give up his sense of shame, his real ideals, his high standards of art; for society appreciates only cheap, showy things. (2) One who wishes to better society, to respond to his impulse to develop himself ideally must sacrifice hope of fame and prosperity, probably even of earning a living. Dicenta is especially interested in the theater; but "today, the decay, the lack of manhood and enthusiasm which have overpowered the race, are reflected in the theater, as everywhere else. The public asks to be entertained in a pleasant way, which will not greatly stimulate one's nervous reactions. It wants no presentation of problems of great conflicts

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(1) Spolarium, 90-94.

(2) Id., Lo que sobra, p. 151.

or tragic situations. It goes to the theater to be diverted with jokes, preferably coarse, vulgar jokes. And as for the authors, what can they do? They comply with public demand. They cannot afford to lose popularity, for it determines their means of existence. They must attempt to please! (1) So art, virtue and justice suffer as a result. The general public does not care to look at the sun, because it hurts the eyes; nor at the social abyss, because it breathes of decay; it turns from the good man of humble station to the rich, become so thru dishonesty. (2)

Society thru its own fault, is in need of many changes. "Muchas cosas de bieran suprimirse en España: empezando por el sistema de gobierno y acabando por el convento, muchas: desde el atraso social de nuestros gobernantes, que apenas si en cuestiones obreras saben más que poner Guardia civil al auxilio de las codicias del patrono y responder con manserazos a las reclamaciones del trabajador, hasta el despotismo clerical, que todo lo domina y todo lo invade: al colegio para apoderarse de los cerebros y el hogar para esclavizar las conciencias; muchos: desde el cacique que cubiletea votos y vende actas, hasta el favoritismo que entrega

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(1) Idos y muertos, pp. 140-141-(2) Id. p. 98.

(2) Mujeres, pp. 246-248.

los puestos oficiales, no al más inteligente y al más honrado, al que tiene más recomendaciones y más plata; desde la Administración de justicia hasta la Enseñanza hasta los planes de Hacienda; desde nuestra manera de hacer leyes y formar costumbres, hasta nuestro modo de hacer barcos y formar ejércitos. Todo eso podíamos, ¡qué podíamos! debíamos desterrarlo, suprimirlo, barrerlo, si queremos parecernos a las restantes naciones del mundo culto."(1)

In Niños en Vitrina, Dicenta says that the discovery which needs to be made, in order to ameliorate the present conditions is a means of remaking men for society. (2) But evidently he thinks such a thing is possible, tho the means is not made clear; for he paints the future in bright colors. Society must be converted into an immense family governed by justice and love.(3) This can never be done by a constant return to the past, an attempt to rebuild old castles and institutions; but by a new method of that, a constant desire to hasten the future. (4) There is hope of this in the fact that the common people are coming to themselves and are being re-

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(1) Mujeres, pp. 246-248.

(2) De piedra a piedra, pp., 257-262.

(3) Por Bretaña, p. 107.

(4) Id. p. 175.

cognized as an essential part of the social system. Novelists, dramatists, painters, and all classes of artists are being inspired more and more by the common people; not because of convenience, nor because of the existing fashion, nor because it is easier to reproduce faithfully the simple actions and sentiments of this class of society, but because politicians, economists, and men of science are coming to recognize these people as a necessary element; they are giving the downtrodden a place in their thoughts, considerations and plans, that has been denied them previously. Individuals now are persons, not things: they not only feel, but think; they demand as well as implore; they rebel instead of submit. It will be a gradual process, necessarily; but the fact that the change has begun to take place is a good sign. (1)

As has been mentioned, Dicenta has a bright outlook on the future, brighter than seems possible after knowing what he thinks of the present. The story, Familia, describes a group consisting of a laborer and those dependent on him, not his own wife and children, but others whom he has taken under his protection. The family is a very happy one. As he looks at it and considers that without legal obligations and without blood relationship,

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(1) Los de abajo, pp. 11-12.

a group can be as happy as this one, he thinks the human family of the future will be wonderful indeed. For altho it may take time, such a family must unite all men in a union where all will partake of work, pleasure, and mutual love; a family where the strong and the young will work for the aged, because the older ones have worked before; they will work for the sick who cannot work; for the children, because they have hope and assurance that these little ones will repay them in the future with their own labor. It will be a family which will change humanity into a home without walls, the world into a fatherland without boundaries. (1)

Another instance of the same utopian suggestion is in Puesta de sol. Rich and poor children are playing together in the streets one evening. They forget their respective stations socially and mingle happily. "En tal momento, el último chorro de la lumbre solar desapareció tras la nube roja; el astro se ocultó, mientras los niños pobres y los niños ricos se unían como hermanos, anunciando el nacimiento de otro sol, bajo cuyos rayos aquella fraternidad ocasional y deleznable, volveríase definitiva é irrompible." (2)

Another picture of the future is equally promis-

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(1) Los de abajo, pp. 242-243.

(2) Id. p. 201.

ing. Men will not have to work like beasts to earn a crust of bread; they will not be chained to the lands they cultivate, to the trees they cut down, or to the wood they make into charcoal. They will not have to suffer in factories where they lack air and proper surroundings and are hampered by intellectual and moral privations. They will not have to go down into the mine to labor under dangerous conditions for a sum of money which will not enable a family to live, but which will merely prolong their existence. In the future, ignorance, inequality, servitude will disappear from among mankind. The land and its products will be common property and all will work for the general welfare.(1)

In his own words, Dicenta expresses still another idea of the future: "Yo ayer contemplando el mapa alemán, viendo cómo las nuevas ideas iban dominando en él con sus enérgicas coloraciones, las coloraciones que expresan ideas antiguas, pensaba que en fecha, acaso no lejana, los oprimidos de hoy, los opresores de hoy, si no hartos de venganzas y luchas, dominados por el invencible poderío de la verdad depondrán sus odios y sus egoísmos, sus brutales codicias y sus espantosos desquites, para reconocer el derecho, el deber de todos, a ser hermanos, a constituir un hogar común, donde el trabajo sea ley, la libertad madre, y la justicia religión."(2) (1) Los bárbaros, pp.174-5.

(2) De piedra a piedra, p. 271

The entire social situation is well summed up in Crónicas. The necessity for social betterment is not a theoretical hypothesis. "It is not an aspiration, it is not a desire, it is not a supplication; it is a clamor which reaches the remotest places, which enters everyone's ears, which attracts all those who have consciences, and demands the attention of all thinking persons. It is a formidable cry which comes from below with vibrations of anguish, of desperation, of anger, of surprise, of hatred; which inspires pity and causes fear; pity because injustice provokes it. It is an immense protest of one humanity, trampled under foot by another humanity; the miserable, the exploited, the hungry, the unfortunate are the ones who cry out against those in power, those who exploit others about them, those who have wealth, those who are happy. And this is what they say, "How long is this going to last? We have had enough martyrs. We cannot endure it any longer."(1)

Then one must stop in the face of this condition and consider it; he must listen with respect to the cry which comes from below. Because that question, "How long?" is universal; it comes from the soil baked by the sun and hardened by the frost, where the laborer is transformed into a beast in order to culti-

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(1) Crónicas, pp. 191-192-193.

vate a land which does not belong to him; from the factory, where the spirit of the worker is crushed and his strength wastes away; from the workshop where men are buried alive without being granted the repose which accompanies one to the tomb; from the places where avarice is satisfied by the necessities of poverty, from the humble dwelling at whose door the woman sells her body to satisfy her stomach; from the great productive centers where childhood pleasure is denied to the children, youthful rights are denied to the youth, rest to old age, and beauty to the women. From all these places comes that sorrowful question which begins in a sob and ends in a threat, 'How long?'

And since we listen to the cry of suffering because it is reasonable and takes possession of one's judgment, the demands of the oppressed have become the substance of all intellectual manifestations in the modern world. The philosopher discusses them; the economist takes them as the principal factor of his system; the politician weaves them into his discourses, the poet into his fantasies, the dramatist into his creations, the artist into his paintings, the novelist into his plots. The tragic problem has begun to dominate thinking people. But that is not enough; something is still lacking; aspiration must be converted

into action.

The situation needs it, demands it; but no one dares to face the problem. The European governments, the monarchical governments, speak of reforms which are never realized, and promulgate laws which result in nothing. The oppressors offer to the oppressed, gracious compensations which would provoke a laugh if they did not arouse indignation. No one denies that the demands of the unfortunate should be heeded, but no one attends to them, with efficacy. For the poor do not ask for charity, but for justice; they do not wish promises, but immediate action.

To solve the social problem, decided changes are essential, new institutions, progressive government action, fundamentally dramatic. For, as far as Spain is concerned, the constitutional monarchy is incapable of confronting the situation. A monarchy which acts thru the clergy and the militarist and is supported by the gold of the monopolist can do nothing to better the social standing of the common people. Governments of this sort will never take any action toward social improvement, nor could they if they would; they are tied hand and foot so far as bettering the unfortunate people is concerned. Another form of government action must be taken, and that immediately,

For there is more anger than grief in the cry of the oppressed; the need for a remedy is urgent; a sinister movement threatens if the situation is not met.(1)

Is Dicenta consistent? Is he justified in picturing the future as he does, when his ideas of present conditions are so unpromising and his suggestions for improvement so meager and unsatisfactory? We must admit that his conclusions are not all justified; he is inconsistent. For if everyone were to follow his policy of blaming society for all the existing evils, and the individual for nothing, the world would degenerate immediately into a hopeless state. Society is responsible; but individuals make up society. Therefore, each individual is partially responsible for the general state of affairs; it is his duty to improve conditions by taking care of himself first, and then making life more enjoyable for those about him. If individuals become possessed of the idea that society is wholly to blame, their unhappiness and dissatisfaction are assured; for they cease to exert themselves and their usefulness to others decreases as their discontent becomes greater; while others, active, energetic and sensible, take advantage of every opportunity to better themselves and others and are necessarily

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(1) Crónicas, p. 199.

more contented. The busier one is, the less time he has to become unhappy. But if men ever reach the stage of unselfishness and altruism that would be necessary in "a great human family", such as Dicenta foresees, we will have a heaven on earth; the millennium will have come.

Doubtless Dicenta was more rational and sober when dealing with conditions as they exist than when he let his imagination carry him into the future. Though his outlook on life was a gloomy one, it was more reasonable than his idealistic description of the time to come. His positive nature made him look at everything about him as wholly good or bad; since he saw little that could be wholly good, he had to imagine it. His impulsiveness prevented him from carefully analyzing the causes of the situation and working out a method of improving conditions. Because he sympathized with the individual, he blamed society for his hardships and thus shifting the blame, failed to realize that man is largely responsible for his own happiness. His work, therefore, is not constructive. It is rather a crying out against present institutions and injustice, a condemnation of society, and a wild, unreasonable promise of future happiness, with no convincing connection between the two extremes.

Dicenta wanted to help humanity, but was unable to control his own weaknesses. His yielding to the desire for drink weakened the effectiveness of his work, just as it ruined his life.

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